

HFE 54

Interviewee: Aris Tillman

Interviewer: Joe Allinder

Date: May/June 1982

A: Tell me your full name and when you were born and where.

T: All right. My full name when I was born I was named Ilene Aris Tillman and I was born May 23, 1888. I was born on a farm where my parents had lived since soon after they were married and they were married, I think that they were about twenty-two years old when they married, twenty or twenty-two, and I have a record but it is a little trouble to get to and they homesteaded a place in Citrus County, Florida about six miles southwest of Inverness, Florida and it was about three miles southwest from Floral City and it is about a mile and a quarter I think they called it from the public road that went from Inverness to Floral City.

A: Is that where you were born?

T: That is where I was born, on that farm.

A: On a farm in Citrus County.

T: In Citrus County.

A: In 1888?

T: 1888.

A: May 23?

T: Yes.

A: Where did your parents, where did they come from before they lived in Florida?

T: My father was born in South Carolina and came to Florida with his parents when he was three years old. He was the youngest in that family and they came by boat to Jacksonville and there they, their slaves and all their furniture and stuff came by covered wagon and met them and they all came on to Ocala.

A: Did his parents have a farm in South Carolina?

T: Yes.

A: And on the farm did they actually have slaves or were they just servants?

T: They had slaves.

A: Slaves. And the slaves brought the furniture down by wagon?

T: By wagon.

A: Your dad and his parents come from?

T: Jacksonville to Ocala in their wagon with their slaves and they settled in Ocala. The house they settled in Ocala had had, as far as I know has always been the county seat of Marion County and it was laid down in city blocks, the courthouse was just two blocks from where my grandfather's home was, that is where he lived. Now he had a farm at which became known as Fellowship out from Ocala. I do not know exactly the direction, the place is there yet and they still farm there but of course, he has not. They owned the farm until after my grandfather died.

A: Your dad lived in Ocala until he and your mother got married?

T: Well, practically that. They lived there until after the Civil War anyway and during the Civil War he was only fifteen years old.

A: That is a good point there. When was your dad born?

T: 1847, July 27. And my mother was born in the same year in March before that, the first day of March and she was born in Florida.

A: Whereabouts in Florida? Do you know?

T: Not too far from Lake City. It was in that county.

A: In Columbia County?

T: Columbia County, that is it. And her parents were also farmers but they came, in fact her mother was a child, I mean she was born in Florida but her grandparents came earlier probably than my father's parents, I do not know.

A: About what year did your father's parents come to Florida, do you know?

T: Let us see, he was born in 1847, it seems to me that he was only three years old.

A: Well, then about 1850 then when they came to Florida?

T: Yes. Of course they all had orange groves. After they came to Florida it was the first thing planted, I think. But they still, because they did not find cotton, they made gin _____ and the slaves were freed even before that. Now, I never heard my mother speak, but one woman that was a house

A: House servant?

T: House servant. That as a slave I never heard her speak too much because most, I never saw any of my grandparents, they have all gone, but her father was still living after I, that is, I do not remember. I may have seen him. He was still living but he was

A: When you was born in Citrus County, your dad and mother, they got married in Ocala and moved to Citrus County later or?

T: I think they met probably, my father was a messenger boy doing very well. He rode a horse and carried messages to General Dickerson. He never left Florida and he was only fifteen but he was used as a messenger boy during the war and as far as I know, he never went back to stay in Ocala. He just liked to hunt and he liked to fish and he just fooled around until after he married my mother and she was an only child. I never knew but one of his sisters and one brother and they were both older than he was. In fact they, the sister was fifteen years older and the brother was ten or twelve years older. There was quite a distance in their ages and my dad was, I imagine he was kind of a happy go lucky, never did anything until after he married my mother. She was a go getter. They homesteaded the land and they built the house. he builded the house. I think first they had a log house, the neighbors helped, you know, build those things and then I do not remember any of that. There was a log barn on the place that might have been part of the house.

A: Do you remember living there in Citrus County?

T: Oh, yes.

A: How long did you live there?

T: I lived in Citrus County till I was eleven years old but I lived on the farm until I was nine.

A: Was any there any part in that period in Citrus County that you went to school?

T: Yes. I went to school. I remember the first day of school that I went to.

A: How old were you your first day of school?

T: I was five and it was in the fall before I would be six in May so I was just five and I was so, I wanted to go to school all my life there. See, all my brothers and sisters that lived to be grown were, the youngest of the ones that lived was eight years older than I was, the youngest one, the reset of them were older and they were grown. I cannot remember any of them that lived to be grown and married people. All of them married in their lifetime. There were not any of them married too young but them being older and had _____ and you had story books

and they were made of cloth, not paper.

A: The covers or the pages?

T: The pages, all of it.

A: All of it was made of cloth?

T: I wish I had saved one. And I had all their ABC books and so on. And I guess I drove them wild because they would stop and teach me and I could read every one of their story books, that is I knew it by heart. I did not, I could not, but I knew my letters and I could count to ten and and I wanted to go to school. The girls that I grew up with and the only one I had to play with because we did not live too far, too close to each other. She lived about three or four miles. We could not walk to each other's house, we had to be carried, but we were together at school and she was going to start school and there were two boys in the neighborhood that I knew of. They were older, all of them were older than I was and they were all starting at school and I was having a fit because I could not go to school. The teacher was a woman that had been raised right there in the neighborhood. I knew her and she taught me in Sunday School and so on and I just knew I should go to school. It was a little one teacher school and it was to the side of the main road between Inverness and Floral City, a mile and a quarter from the home. My older brothers and sisters that had not, well I think all but the two oldest were going to school and they were much bigger than I was. There was the one next to me was four years older than me and she was going to school at the time but she died about a year later. My parents pitched in to go and buy Christmas at a store that had opened in Hernando which was not too much further than Inverness and it was called The Racket Store. It was about like what we had called Five and Ten later, and they wanted to go there to get Christmas and I was too big to go and watch them trade. My eyes was too gig too. My youngest brother was living, he lived to be nineteen years old and he was three younger than I. They could take him but I was five and they could not take me so I had to go to school with the girls, there were three going to school, Edna, Nell and Margaret, Margaret is the younger. So the only way to do was for me to go to school with the kids that day and the three that I had wanted to go so bad because they were going were having lessons and she had a chart up there and I could read it and on that chart I learned my letters and I could count. I was with them all say in class because I wanted to be and she let me come to class and that afternoon when I went home I carried a note to my mother to let me come to school, not to keep me back because I was only five. So that was my first day of school and I went on.

A: How many kids was in school that?

T: From what I can remember it was a small building. I can never remember it being full. We never had but one teacher and that teacher did not teach but that year because she got married for one thing and she had about four that were nearly grown. They would have been high school students. The county runs the schools, the county paid the teachers but they had three trustees for a school and they chose the teacher. They had a school superintendent and he visited the schools regularly. He used to come to our place and spend the night.

A: Do you know what his name was?

T: Harrison.

A: Harrison.

T: And he was superintendent of Citrus County Schools. The next teacher was a teacher with a better certificate. I do not suppose there was a dozen teachers. I know there was not in Citrus County, there was nothing but _____. They had a certificate above a second grade, something like that. You see, we did not have colleges in Florida. There was not one in Florida that I know of. The first one that I did know of was the military college in Lake City. I did not know about it when I started school. That is because it never had registered in my mind but it did later. Now the schools, as I said, were run and paid by the county but each community had these trustees and they, as I said, the superintendent visited the schools. They would come out there and stay all day and eat dinner. Usually we all spread our lunch when the superintendent come and eat together. Other times we had our own little bucket and usually a family had a basket of some kind for each fellow, I know my family did. I went to that school until I was about nine years old when the freeze came you know when. First in 1895 then in 1897 and finished things up and that freeze that I remember very well, the 1897 freeze that finished things.

A: When you were going to school there, was the farm that you were living on that your dad had, was it also a citrus farm like the one your granddaddy had?

T: Yes, he had his own orange groves.

A: And did he have, slaves were pretty much out by then.

T: Oh, I never saw a slave.

A: Okay, but did you have Negro servants, black servants?

T: No, we did not have any servants, we had a big family. The family took care of everything. Occasionally my daddy would have a colored man to come and cut the oaks in the spring.

A: When he had people come to gather the oranges did he have?

T: The family usually did that.

A: The family did that.

T: See, they had five boys but the two older boys died before I was born. There was Mel and Paul and Claude and my daddy worked the four of them. Claude did not, he was too little. He was younger than I was, but somehow we always managed. Occasionally he had somebody else come in that planted, cleared land, did some extra planting and I know that he always had an old colored man cut the oaks. He cut them with a ____.

A: Sickie. When you were talking about going to the store to buy Christmas presents, did they trade for the Christmas presents or had they sold the crop?

T: They sold the crop. They hunted bargains like everybody else, I guess and they thought that was the place to go to buy the Christmas presents that year, to Hernando and it gave me a change to go to school and that is when I started school.

A: You went to school there about four years?

T: Yes, I was nine when my dad give up trying to grow an orange grove. He worked at that and kind of a hopeless thing but he kept at it until, well, when I was nine years old, Citrus County was a young county that had been king of, I do not rightly remember, I might have been born when it was formed. But all I remember is them talking about a big celebration they had when a county, seemed like Pasco but it was cut in three counties--Citrus, Hernando and Pasco were the three. Citrus County itself was a small county and I do not reckon the freeze had hurt it same as it had everything else. As I remember, Inverness was a, of course I made trips to Ocala all through my life but they were made in a horse and wagon or a horse and buggy from our farm to Ocala.

A: About how long did you live in Citrus County, until you were about nine?

T: I lived there until I was eleven.

A: Eleven.

T: We lived but my daddy was hired to take care of the roads in Citrus County. Road overseer he was called.

A: Road overseer?

T: Yes and he had bought a tent and he had a crew of men that went with him and all the kind of roads were so muddy and horse and wagon roads and they were just put up through the woods and they had public roads they bragged about. They had one to Homosassa. I know that we used to drive on them and they had a road to Ocala and there was bike paths and they were worse. Limbs fell across them; they were not even graded. He made what he called causeways. I remember that because he explained it to me. I was a question box and they put where there was a muddy place where I know _____. I remember going to Homosassa with my daddy with _____ as far as I remember once a year he took his family to the salt water _____, usually Homosassa or Bayport. They were both on the _____ sea coast and the salt water and camped from one to two weeks. My mother seemed to like it but my older sisters and brothers rebelled and _____ and I remember the last trip they went. They did not want to go, they did not like camping but my dad, as I said, he was a happy-go-lucky and he liked hunting and he went and he used to fish for mullet and cooked down on a barrel that was a half, what you call a half barrel, held half as much as a big one and they called them half barrels, of fish, salt mullet and brought them home. They were in the smoke house and every once in a while we go out there and get one and soak it all night and have sigh the next day, that salt mullet.

T: Salt mullet.

T: Well he did that, of course we killed hogs salted bacon down. We lived at home really and, but when he got that road, my two older brothers both of them, they gotten jobs for themselves. _____. He was not going to farm. They were kind of disgusted with the farming anyway. They began to work. One of them worked at a phosphate mine. I do not know what he did. Seems to me he guarded convicts over that were digging that phosphate which was dug out, no machinery whatever. _____ they, that they used _____ said he was a phosphate hound and they loaded _____ and had it shipped out of Florida. In fact, I think history says Florida was the only place they could get phosphate.

A: You say shipped out? Now are you talking about boat?

T: Train.

A: Boat. Now the oranges my daddy grew were shipped. We lived on, well about as far as here to Billy's from a, from the lake, a big lake _____ and people lived around that lake. We used to cross. They used boats to go to see each other and nearly everybody, well there are about three families that went to school that did not live on that lake and the lake came close up to the school house and it was the name of the school was Fort Cooper School because during the Civil War there had been a fort on that lake.

A: That was the name of the school that you went, the name of the first school you went to was Fort Cooper?

T: C-O-O-P-E-R.

A: What was the building? Was it a building used for more than one thing or just strictly for a school?

T: Church and public school and

A: Was that a community church where each . . .?

T: It was not, it was community. Sometimes there Methodist--

[End of the tape]

T: . . . they stayed at our house. I think my daddy knew them and they stayed there and held a revival and I know that Methodist preacher. My dad's father was mostly Baptist but he went to any church and any preacher that came there; everybody went.

A: People were not really Methodist or Baptist, everybody went to the same church. Was not sort of the way it was?

T: Yes. We all went there and there was Sunday School nearly the year round and Mr. _____ Boswell, it was his daughter that I played with. They lived about three miles from us and on the other side _____ we lived about three miles from the school on the other side of the school.

A: Did the school have town meetings in it too or was it just for?

T: There was not any town, it was just a community. There was not stores or post office. We got our mail at Inverness or Floral City. Of course we went to one about as much as the other and we went there, oh, usually once a week to get the mail and I do not remember having a newspaper until after we left the farm. Not many, yes we had magazines that used to come.

A: Do you remember any of the names of them?

T: Comfort was one of--

A: Comfort?

T: The name was Comfort and it had all sorts of recipes, stories and some of them had continuing stories.

A: Various soap operas in them.

T: Let us see, there was, I think there was, I remember I was packing that magazine. As far as I know, there was not any really daily papers but three times a week, the Inverness Chronicle came out. That was, now we moved from, my dad took that job with the county and my mother went to work. My older sister had, was working in Ocala with my aunt. She had a dressmaking establishment and my sister had been with her. Well she went there when she, I think my mother said twenty-two. I did not know she was so much older than I. She was there and so left my mother with just the youngest brother and me and the two and my next two sisters were teenagers. They were only two years apart but they were eight years. The youngest one was eight years older than I was and both of them took jobs clerking in the stores in Inverness and my daddy moved us into Inverness into a rented house and I would know the house if I saw it now.

A: How big was the place you all moved from? Were your mother and dad homesteaded? How big was the place? Did it cover acreage and that sort of thing? Do you remember?

T: I do not remember the acreage. It seems like I remember him saying that he had thirty acres in oranges but all I remember too much about, I know where the grove was. I remember the grove and that it was gone and I remember the, but right around the place we _____.

A: The main reason you all moved from the farm to town was because most of the children.

T: We did not have any money crops.

A: That was after the freeze came that the money crop had _____.

T: We had chickens and eggs and we had--

[Interrupted by music]

A: The freeze came in 1897, somewhere around there?

T: Well, the last one was in 1897.

A: Was that when you all moved or did you all move after the first one?

[Interrupted by music]

T: . . . and I really was _____ up but we drank and as far as I was concerned it tasted

all right but it does not today. It does not taste good to me now but I got the other water but of course we got our water out of the well. My daddy dug the well.

A: The well had been dug, right?

T: _____. Sometimes you had a hand pump.

A: Just a pump?

T: But I do not think we had one. I do not remember us having. We always _____ for the water. We had another one, we had a lever that let the water up. You did not have to pull it up, the lever would pull it up but we did not have that always, the thing was too much trouble and but when we moved to Inverness and I went to school in Inverness for two years. It was a three teacher school and it was a big high school which was county.

A: So it was a high school?

T: It was supposed to be a high school.

A: Did it have elementary school or did it have such a thing then.

T: It had three rooms high school, middle grades and permanent and three teachers and the teacher that was principal taught their high school.

A: One teacher was a principal and a teacher, carried two jobs.

T: Right. I do not think, as well as I remember I was learning algebra and Latin.

A: Was what?

T: Algebra and Latin conversation, something like that, about as far as would carry.

A: You say they taught Latin in high school?

T: A little, if the teacher could teach it. In Inverness they did teach it to me.

A: You had been in what?

T: I had been about seventh or eighth grade.

A: That would be middle grade.

T: Yes.

- A: What kind of subjects did they teach then? Do you remember what kind of classes you had?
- T: Yes. I had reading, spelling, arithmetic, geography and history.
- A: Reading, spelling arithmetic, history.
- T: And geography.
- A: Geography. That is basically all they taught in the middle grades.
- T: Yes, and _____, United States History and a little about Florida history mixed in.
- A: Before we get too far, what kind do you remember? I know it is an early time in your childhood but do you remember what they taught you in the school at Fort Cooper, what kind of subjects?
- T: I started off with numbers they called it. But I went up as far, I remember very well that, and she remembers visiting one day, and I was adding fractions on the board and he asked me what I was doing and I said working arithmetic and he said yes, but what kind of arithmetic, what are you doing. I am adding fractions, I am working fractions, that is what I said because we had just started in fractions and he asked me what I was doing with the fractions. Then I said well, I was adding.
- A: And you said the teachers in the Fort Cooper School, how far had they gotten, what a second grade education, the ones that are teaching you.
- T: Well, at that time the superintendent's niece was our teacher, _____ Harrison, and he had brought her there, the first teacher after, Jessie Russell was the first teacher, that was one of the neighborhood girls. Then we had the second teacher, we had Miss Beulah Birch and she had a better certificate but she was mad the superintendent brought his niece.
- A: What educational level were they as far as in school? Had they finished high school?
- T: They had finished high school and they had Florida certificates and now I do not know whether you know about certificates or not.
- A: I want to cover that too, about certificates.
- T: Well, until Florida, any school that I ever went to was, now Inverness was the only one I went to that was a Florida high school. We moved from there when I was eleven years old.

A: You moved from Inverness when you were eleven?

T: And we moved to Desoto County to the Zolfo.

A: Zolfo. And that is in Desoto County.

T: Desoto County and Arcadia, it was a big county. Arcadia was the county seat at that time. It was about twenty miles from Zolfo where we moved to.

A: You all moved from Inverness now to

T: Zolfo in Desoto County.

A: Zolfo. Any particular reason why you all moved from?

T: Well, my daddy did not like that road job and he decided that if he would get to south Florida he could grow another orange grove. So he went there with that in his mind and he drove a horse, him and another man drove a horse and wagon, and the camping outfit. He had that camping outfit that he had used with road work and he took that and went and was about a month or so before he made it as far as that and decided that is where he was going to stay. The orange groves look nice and that he had a job there. He had gotten in with a man that was a blacksmith and my dad had been his own blacksmith and I have seen him put a rim on a wheel and all such things as that and shoed his own horses such as that. So he went to work in that blacksmith shop and he sent for us.

A: He went down before you all did and sort of got settled in?

T: Then he sent for his family but the family was pretty well scattered. The girls working in the stores in Inverness, both of them. They both came down there pretty soon after we did. We left them in Inverness but they did not stay, they came.

A: How many of you all went down? You and your mother and?

T: And my youngest brother and my youngest sister, the sister next to me, Annie, so there were four of us.

A: Four of you, your mother and three sisters.

T: My mother and my youngest brother and my sister and me and when we got there there was not any schools, any stores.

A: No schools around you?

T: No school in Wachula or four miles north of us was the only school in the station

and we went there I think, seems to me we went there in January of 1900.

A: You went to the Wachula school or to Zolfo?

T: No. I stayed at home but my mother, I had lessons for every day of the world because she did not let us stop school. She just went in there and she found out Claude and me would not be going to school.

A: You said though you went somewhere in 1900?

T: Not to school. We moved to Desoto County in 1900.

A: Okay. But at that time, when you moved there you did not go to school, the first time not into a school building?

T: Not until the next, there was not any school nearer than Wachula and it was four miles away so my mother just said you will have school. There was not anybody else going around us there. There was a little school three miles south of us in Rosco Friendship and there was the lost children's school. Well, I think next year there was a school about two miles from where we lived and just a little, it was more or less like the school at Fort Cooper. There was a one teacher school and she had had a third grade certificate.

A: What does that mean now, a third grade certificate?

T: That means the lowest certificate she taught.

A: Does that mean she could only teach up to the third grade?

T: Oh, no. That meant just as far as she had been herself but she could her pay came according to her certificate.

A: Oh, and third grade certificate, like third grade or second grade, that depended on the pay scale of that?

T: Yes.

A: Okay. I was wondering if it had to do with the amount of education.

T: Well, in a way it was. The was people got to teach, they had three times a years the state of Florida, twice, twice a year, June and September, they gave teachers examinations in the county seat of the county. Now I do not believe they did in Citrus County. I think they had to go to Ocala to take the examination. As well as I remember, I was not taking it then so I do not know but I remember the teachers and their grades they taught, I mean what the salary depended upon

what kind of grade.

A: Did you happen to know any of their salaries when you was in that younger years?

T: I do not know if I can guess the rest or not, I do not suppose it was over twenty-five that I started on. Then Beulah Birch came and somebody said, I believe I was told she had a first grade certificate. I know she taught, there was three or four pupils that were studying Latin and algebra, but then I did not do anything but look at the board. She put algebra on the board and I wondered why did "x" mean equal in algebra and I could not get that across my mind but I know she taught algebra to three pupils in school, my sister was one. That was Beulah Birch and when the superintendent's niece came the next year and she stayed until we moved into Inverness, I had her and then when we got Inverness, she was still my teacher at the time, Inverness, she taught my grade and was still _____. Then in Desoto County, they kept seem to be run the same way and the second year, the first year after I got there, we had this little school in it. It only lasted three months.

A: The school that was was about two miles away only lasted three month?

T: But I went to school.

A: Why did it last only three months? Just not enough participation or something?

T: I do not know. Maybe they did not have enough money or just the county paid the teachers, you know. So and they usually paid the one with the higher certificate the more money they got. _____ eight or ten dollars difference in their salaries. I do not believe that niece, Mamian MacAlare was her name, a niece of Mr. Harrison's who was the superintendent and she taught me in, I think she got thirty-five and then she got thirty-five when she taught at Fort Cooper the last year and I think she got the same thing in Inverness.

A: Thirty five dollars, for how long?

T: A month.

A: Thirty-five dollars a month?

T: Yes. And it never mattered higher. I knew any of them gets and they _____ for me. I do not know what, I knew what she got, all of us got the same pay and my dad kept on saying this, I do not know whether he was a trustee or not, I know he had a lot of say about it. Anyway, another superintendent would stay at our house at night. He would come there in the afternoons, spend the night, go to school with us the next day. I wish they all did _____. But he usually stayed all

day and in Desoto County, I never saw a superintendent, I just saw this teacher and she ____ this somewhere. I know that I was the best of any of them in my school. I knew more than anybody else there thought I was not the oldest of the teachers.

A: Now, sort of summing up some of the schools you went to, were there more girls or more boys or equal number or from the time you was at Fort Cooper till the time you was in Desoto County.

T: It was about the same, I guess, until we went to Lee County. We saved memory notes, I mean in Zolfo. I guess we stayed there about three years because it was the school in Zolfo that left.

A: That you left.

T: The next year after I went to that level, three months of school in Zolfo.

A: That would make you about fifteen when you left Zolfo?

T: Yes. And I went to school that last year there then my Annie had married and her husband had belonged to Sanibel. She met him there at Zolfo, married him, and from that fire burned Jacksonville come his history. He went there to work and then that did not last very long ____ and he came back and he went to Sanibel Island to grow _____. Everybody was talking about the mild climate and nothing got killed. We had the covered beans and so on ____ price of beans on a sale and probably broccoli. _____. And then this son-in-law ____ went to Sanibel and they were gone about two months. _____. They made good money on tomatoes. ____ and they had to get it off and they came to ask me ____ about the move to Sanibel Island

A: What was the name, Sanibel? Sanibel Island, was it an island?

T: It is an island. Now it is a famous tourist resort.

A: What is it called now, the same thing?

T: Same thing, Sanibel Island.

A: Is this in Lee County?

T: It is in Lee County. It is in the gulf up from Lee County.

A: It is part of Lee County even though it is.

T: Part of Lee County.

- A: And you was about fifteen when you moved here?
- T: I was sixteen when we left Sanibel.
- A: You were sixteen when you left?
- T: We lived there about eighteen months and then we moved up to Alva still in Desoto County.
- A: And you moved back to Desoto?
- T: I mean Lee County.
- A: You went from Sanibel to Alva still in Lee County?
- T: Yes, in Lee County. Sanibel is supposed to be in Lee County and they are a mature Alva. It was ____.
- A: In the schools, did they allow any black people in school?
- T: Oh, no.
- A: No blacks went to school.
- T: Well, blacks had a school of their own where there was enough of them. They had a school in Inverness.
- A: They had a school in Inverness?
- T: Yes. There was one beside the railroad that had been settled by slaves.
- A: Settled by slaves?
- T: They were not slaves, they were freed.
- A: They had once been slaves but?
- T: There was one side of the railroad which was mostly nigger houses.
- A: Do you know who taught them? Was it a black teacher or a white teacher?
- T: It was usually a black teacher.
- A: A woman or a male?
- T: Woman.

A: Woman.

T: Mostly. ____.

A: The northern black person come down here and taught?

T: Them. And then went on when, marriage went out for eighteen. I just went one year the hell of it. Married the principal of my school.

A: Married a principal?

T: Yes and the first year we were married I, when we married, his father was ill and had been. That is the reason I quit teaching, to come home and take care of his dad and he never had farms. He had been teaching since he was seventeen years old.

A: He was a teacher and principal, was not he?

T: Yes.

A: That is Mr. Tillman.

T: Yes.

A: What was, Oscar?

[End of side A1]

T: The first two years I ____ at that time it might have been the same year or maybe ____.

A: How long did the school year last when you were still in school?

T: Never over five months and I think that when we went for a ____ of five month school, that was considered one of the best ____.

A: How about discipline, was there any discipline in the classroom in the school when children misbehaved or were all good?

T: They told me, the teachers that I had, all of them were women teachers until I went to Zolfo and I cannot remember that they ever. Occasionally they were kept in for misbehaving but not much. Does not seem to me there was very much discipline had to be done. The ones that went to school, there was a lot of kids that never went to school back in those days. They were not forced to go.

A: School was not enforced here then?

T: No. It never was enforced in classes until I started ____ they had to go to school.

A: The kids you went to school with, were there parents farmers, were they business people?

T: Nearly all of them were farmers. ____ Desoto County where I had ____.

A: And were most of the parents, I do not want to say rich but were they mostly kids that had families sort of, not well to do but they were not in poverty or poor.

T: Middle income.

A: Middle income?

T: Yes.

A: I see.

T: I do not think that I ever went through anybody I considered, well a lot of had more money than my daddy had because we never had much. We were poor people all our lives _____. We even finally had to _____. I was too young to know too much about it, I heard them talk about it but they had money to spend and they their own.

A: Was there many, this is now before you get married, why was the reason the kids did not go to school and it was there and most of the time I suppose the school was built somewhere close to where people were living.

T: I turned out as a poor fibber. I cannot remember anybody that did not come to school that lived around there. They all went to school but even when we went to Inverness there was kids running around the streets that did not go to school.

A: You do not have any idea why they did not other than they just did not have to go.

T: Did not have to go, did not go and some there I found that someone might go three days a week and did not care and they usually

A: ____ they wanted to.

T: Right and they found out about ____ and so they would come back next year in the same grade ____ and my youngest brother ____ because he did not understand the reason ____ and I had just--

[Portion of tape inaudible]

A: We were talking about _____ things and _____ a while ago. The superintendents of the local schools were trustees of the schools and the trustees sort of selected the teachers.

T: They select about, sometimes _____ because they did not know. I know at Fort Cooper _____.

A: Did they have the superintendent, do you know sort of what his job was. If he was superintendent in the local community and they were just regular people, what was the job of the county superintendent?

T: That is over all the schools and he had to find a _____ at that time.

A: And he had to know where the money came from.

T: Out of the county.

A: Now that would be from county taxes or regular county taxes.

T: Well, I think we had a special school class in Citrus County and I did not hear too much about that in the photo time because I believe that he owned _____.

[Portion of tape inaudible]

T: I felt like I was in prison on the farm because the little old school we had was only a three month school and I needed somebody to teach me—

[Portion of tape inaudible]

T: The problem was, how many acres are there in a square tract of land that contains a _____ as well as boards on the fence. The fence is four boards high and the boards are eleven feet wide. Now you tell me _____. I have not ever gotten _____ the square root and I think the two sections that were written out, she covered it out _____, they took that problem out of it for a good reason. I taught that book, no I did not, no. I am not sure if I did. There are two arithmetics. One for the first six grades and one for the higher grades and when we had that drill on the arithmetic and I have never seen that work and it was moved out of the arithmetic. I never saw another arithmetic that had it in it. It had another problem that I finally worked but it was an interest problem and you had to _____ and I could not get the answer to that but I worked it and I finally got it.

A: What kind of entertainment was in the communities you lived in? What did people do in their spare time when they were not working?

- T: Well, they would have parties where you played games or events where _____. I went to those _____. Now on Sanibel we had a couple play a fiddle, one could play a fiddle, the other guitar and they just made music for us and we had parties only at a home.
- A: The parties were always home?
- T: Somebody's home. My mother had _____ five or six girls, not that many boys _____.
- A: How about church activity during that time?
- T: When we were in Sanibel, we had church where a preacher could finally come over from Fort Myers to preach which may be once every three months.
- A: Do you remember any of those preachers names or anything like that you can remember?
- T: One was named Shand and he was _____.
- A: How about Cuckoos, were any of the Cuckoos ever ministers where you went?
- T: No, _____. There had been one in Fort Cooper but it was before my time. I heard _____ and he was the one who went around. He did not have one place and stay there. The other people said _____.
- A: Would you say that you and your family and that most people in the community made the church the life of their activities?
- T: Everybody went to church when we had church. Nobody stayed out on _____. Never had a church; it was at the school house.
- A: The school house was known as the church.
- T: There was no church there. I worked because I had no trade skills.
- A: How about when you were in Zolfo?
- T: Zolfo?.
- A: Yes.
- T: We had school in the church.
- A: Had school in the church?

- T: The church was in the Bethany Church and it was built for a church and the church was there and then we moved it. That was in ____ five miles from Zolfo. ____ but we lived a mile from Zolfo, we did not live right in the town and this church was built in the town but the church was there when we left there. That church was built the year I went to that three month school out there from where we lived between ____ and ____.
- A: Was that church a Methodist church, at that time was there a Methodist ____ church and a _____. Which one did that happen to be _____?
- T: Well, I would not know enough about, well we did not have church but once a month _____.
- A: And the school that you went to, they sort of had two purposes, they were the school house and a church. Was these in any sizable community?
- T: Inverness was the largest one I have here.
- A: And the school and the church was still in the same building?
- T: No. They had two churches. They had Christian church which was a form of a Baptist church. They used to call it ____ because a man by the name of Camel had founded this church and it was a _____. And because of the people who belonged to that church called themselves the Christian church and that is what my parents belonged to but they did not have church but once a month.
- A: Did they have two buildings separate?
- T: The school building was separate. It had three separate rooms.
- A: ____ the biggest community you lived in?
- T: Yes. Except for Alva. Now, when I went to Alva there was a Baptist church, Methodist church and a school building.
- A: How long did you go to school in Alva?
- T: Just one year.
- A: One year. When you were about seventeen going on eighteen then.
- T: Seventeen I was. I was eighteen in May and got married in July.
- A: How about in these early years, do you know who did they have a school superintendent here in our town.

T: I do not believe they did. And the town was not that big. He could not handle it, it was connected by boat.

A: The county school system came in with election?

T: Yes. And the county clerk and the county judge had a county school superintendent and a county _____. Let us see now, he was called Clerk of the Court.

A: How many, you may not know this, do you have any idea on how many schools were in town?

T: I have heard how many there was in Citrus County _____ because _____ was always and my mother was interested in school.

A: Did it seem like from where you lived, did there seem like a lot of schools?

T: No. Not too many. Let us see, I _____. I believe in Citrus County, right on the edge of us—

[Interview largely inaudible.]