

AL 62

Interviewee: Elouise P. Haile

Interviewer: Calvin Russ

Date: March 22, 1973

R: Hello, Mrs. Haile.

H: Hello, Calvin. How are you?

R: This is an interview for the Boulevard Hotel Thomas and during your life. What was it like during the football season.

H: Well, I really was too young to know much about the football season but from hearing, it was about the same as today. It was the big thing in Gainesville definitely, because we were a small town. But, everybody came and I was told that it was just about the same as today only on a smaller scale.

R: Do you know any people who might be alive who worked at the Boulevard Hotel Thomas?

H: No, I do not but some the Thomases are alive and they might be able to give some information on that. I know there must be some around, but I could not give you any names.

R: How was the food?

H: How was it served?

R: Yes.

H: About the same as today. You mean in the restaurants? Is that what you mean? Well, it was the same, I would say. We did not have a cafeteria here during that time, we had restaurants and then each of the hotels had a dining room and that was the main place to go. We had two hotels, the White House, that was up on N.E. First Street and then the Hotel Thomas. Those were the two main hotels and each one had a dining room and that was where, when you really wanted to go out to eat you went there and you were served by waiters and we would have about the same type food, maybe not as fancy as some places today and we did not have the specialty places like you have today. But it was good food.

R: What kind of lighting was in your home?

H: Electric. We had electricity and most places had electricity then. There were some in the outlying districts that did not have, and maybe some people could not afford to have the wiring in but we had regular lights. We did not have pretty light fixtures in my house, we were not well off in other words.

R: What were the changes in the routine of the home when a person was sick?

H: Well, there really was not much in the way of change, we all pitched in and helped. Like if my parents were sick and I was the oldest then I would be the one who would take over and help with the younger children and cook and take care, but that was about the only thing. It was just about, we did the same. You could not really get nurses in to help if you had a serious illness and out hospitals were small, there were in homes, more of the large houses around town. A person would open up a hospital. Now, I was born in one that is right across the street from Hotel Thomas and a family lives there now, the Murphys and then later a house right across the street from Kirby-Smith School, one of those big white houses, that was a hospital at one time, the only hospital. Then over near Santa Fe College on University Avenue kind of back of that, there was a house there that a lady had a hospital and then there was another house. I remember, this is what I was saying, I remember four hospitals, but they were all in big homes and they just fixed them up as a hospital at one time, the only hospital. Then over near Santa Fe College on University Avenue kind of back of that, there was a house there that a lady had a hospital and then there was another house. I remember, this is what I was saying, I remember four hospitals, but they were all in big homes and they just fixed them up as a hospital. There is one on 7th Street just up from the boulevard, on the corner of Fourth Avenue and North East Fourth Avenue, North East Seventh Street. It is still there but it was a hospital and I had my tonsils out in that one when I was about nine. And we had, would you like me to go on and tell about, then we had several good doctors in town we had about three or four but they did not specialize like they do today. I mean, if you had a, if you broke a bone you went to Dr. Tillman, I will use a name was one of the top in our family doctors and you went to him for a broken bone. If you cut yourself, you went to him to have it sewed up. If you had pneumonia, you went to him to get medication for it. Now, we had eye, ear nose and throat doctors and then we had what you call a general practitioner who did everything else. So that is the way, whereas today, you know, you go to a heart specialist, you go to a kidney specialist, you go to a surgeon and you go to a bone man. Well, we did not have that then. One doctor take care of all that other than the eye, ear, nose and throat man.

R: What kind of medicine were they using?

H: Well, they did not have the antibiotics that they have today, that is why the pneumonia is so was so dangerous and typhoid fever and those things because you did not have sulfa, penicillin, aureomycin and all those. I cannot tell you names of any specific thing we had but I know that we have come a long way.

R: Were there any public schools and universities?

H: Yes, Kirby-Smith was there and it was first grade through twelfth grade where Kirby-Smith School is right now, I started to school there. And where Santa Fe, on University Avenue is, that was the high school later on. I cannot remember, but I can tell you later the date when that was built and then they had first through sixth in part of that building. And then they changed Kirby-Smith into first through sixth, but it was the high school during the 1920s, plus elementary. And everybody came from all around to that school. And that is where I went from first grade through sixth grade. And then they had the other high school out on the avenue.

R: How did the children get to school?

H: We had no buses, no taxis, and we either walked, I had to walk because we had no car during that. Well, I could walk to Kirby-Smith because I lived right close, but if they lived far, they had to walk, or else the people who did have cars could bring their children. But most cases they walked. Now, we had buses that would bring the ones in from way out, but that had to be a pretty long way. That is one thing my children fuss at me so about because I remind them how much I had to walk to school.

R: How much homework did you have? Was it much?

H: Yes, we had homework every night. Even in first grade we had homework to bring home practice I guess, near as I can remember, you know, making our letters and our numbers. But we always had some homework but I would not say an awful lot. Of course, today you take a lot more courses, and we did not have all this extra that you are fortunate to have. We had reading, writing and arithmetic and then a little history, and then of course, as we got into upper grades we had more but that was in first grade, and then you had your history and geography, we always had a special course of geography and then we had art, a period and a time for art.

R: How did they dress for school then?

H: Well, we were never allowed, this will be something different, the girls were never allowed to wear slacks, or pants, or shorts to school and otherwise the boys at that time, in elementary school, the boys wore short pants until they were almost in sixth grade. But I guess we dressed, we had to be neat. I know when I was in high school I remember when sunback dresses came out and we were not allowed to wear sunback dresses to school, nor were we allowed to go bare legged to school. We had to have socks or stockings on with our shoes. And I can remember one girl coming to school in seventh grade with a kind of low back dress, but not real low it was not as low as maybe your T-shirt or undershirt but she was sent home. So, we definitely had what you call a dress code and you

had to come neat and with a shirt on. No boys were allowed to come without a shirt. And most of the boys wore ties then, to school, not in elementary grades, I am talking about in like the seventh grade up, they would come with a shirt and tie on.

R: On summer holidays, did you ever go on a family trip?

H: Yes, but we would go by train, we never went by car like so many do today, we go by train and my family would go to North Carolina and that was the place to go in a lot of cases. Or to the beach, we would go to the beach and we would go just for weekend trips, like to St. Augustine and Jacksonville Beach, those were the two places we would go and picnic on the beach, or to the lakes around.

R: Could you state some of the disadvantages and advantages of living in the boulevard area in the 1920s?

H: Well, I cannot think of a single disadvantage, I was real happy and it was close to town. We could walk to town. We could walk to the picture show. We had silent movies in those days and there was not that much to do in town so every weekend that was where we were, sitting in the picture show watching the silent movies. But the advantages I can give you because I think that this is it, I was close to school, the school was right near. We could walk to school. We could walk to town and everything was right around the square. Everything you wanted and everything there was, was right there around the square. Then, at night we could walk uptown to the drugstore. The drugstores and stores stayed open late. And Saturday night was quite a night when everybody went to town and parked, all families parked their cars around the square and then you visited with all your friends and the children would get with their friends and you could go to the stores and the adults, we would kind of visit from car to car. Because all the men were working on Saturday night, they kept the stores open until 11:00 and 12:00 p.m. My dad had a shoe store and this was a real highlight, so that we could get down there. And we had an airport in the northeast section, I do not know whether anyone had mentioned this, it was, you know where the city park is now, the softball fields and the tennis courts, on Sixteenth? Just east of that, where all those houses are, that was our airport. And I lived near Kirby-Smith and we could always tell when a plane was coming in, there were not many, and we would all run from the neighborhood, we would run down and watch the plane come in and watch it take off. And the Good Year blimp would come in every so often, several times a year and that was a real highlight. So, you see, we had things to do but nothing like, and then there were woods all back in there and we would have picnics. All the kids in the neighborhood would

get together and those blueberries and blackberries and huckleberries and we would pack a lunch and go in there and have a picnic and pick our huckleberries and blackberries and blueberries but we did not get home with very many because we would usually eat most of them. All that area was not built up like it is now. And when the duck pond was built that was a real exciting time for everybody and it made the area, and that was Highland. It was one of those big new subdivisions, the first subdivision I would almost say in Gainesville. And they put an awful lot of money in paving the boulevard. Now my husband tells about standing where we live now and it was all marsh, and it was like a swampland because there are woods all up and down that boulevard and all down in that area. And he had a bow and arrow and he used to shoot it across, from his house across the boulevard. There was not anything but field, and across that field have to go get it. But as far as disadvantages I really had a lot of fun, there were a lot of children in the neighborhood and we had to do our own pleasures, there was nothing ready-made for us like we have today, my children have now. You had to make your own, like we would build huts in the backyard and you would have to use an awful lot of imagination. I had a big barn in the back of my yard, my home, and all the children would come over there and we would put on plays and charge the neighbors two cents to come see the play and we would make money to get a coke. I will tell you something else that I can remember the ice wagon. Ice was delivered by horse and wagon and we would, all the children just could not wait until the ice wagon would come by and we had iceboxes instead of refrigerators and you would hand a shingle up to say you wanted five pounds of ice or twenty-five pounds or whatever you wanted and this man would come and deliver and you would not have to be there and you would usually leave your change, twenty cents or something like that out for you block of ice. And he would let us have, you know, he would have an ice pick and he would always let us come and get handfuls of chips, we had an ice-cream churn and we used to get that and then each one would run home and get a, one would get an egg and one would get some sugar and one would get some milk and we would make ice cream, from just the chips of ice he had given us. And then we had, as far as food being delivered I think that was one of your questions, we could phone for our groceries, make our grocery list at home and phone the grocery store and they would deliver our groceries. Of course, you could go get them you did not have to have them delivered. There was a lady, a Mrs. Highsmith, that lived on a farm out of town and had cows and she came around maybe once a week and she had milk and buttermilk and fresh butter and fresh vegetables from her garden and eggs and she had a bell she would ring as she came up the street, and all the people if they wanted something would go out and she would park on a block and then everybody would come and buy what they needed. And she would come on down, you could hear her coming for blocks. But I think really, the ice wagon was one of the most, we just really enjoyed that. So these were all little things that we did as far as, I am speaking as, because I was a child then. But I had a happy childhood during the 1920s. I really did.

Is there anything else you need to know? See, as a child I cannot think of any disadvantages, but an older person like my parents might be able to. They would be able to tell you some disadvantages, but I did, I had a lot of fun.

R: If you could choose a time to live your life would you rather have been a young person in the 1920s or 1970s?

H: Well, just to say quick I would say the 1920s, but then on the other hand when you stop and think there are so many things that you have, many advantages that you have today, that if I could take a little bit of the 1920s and a little bit of the 1970s and put them together, then I would have the perfect time. But no, I think that living today is harder. I think it really is harder, but you do have a lot more. You learn a lot, you have the advantage of learning a lot more, of seeing a lot more of the country, because we just could not travel around like you can today. No, I think as far as advantages, there are a lot more today, I do not know, if I had a choice it would be pretty hard to decide which would be the nicest. Because I think there is so much you can see and do today, yes we had the university then too. It was here, but it was very small. Now I do not know what the enrollment was then, I could not tell you, but now my husband graduated in 1939 and there were 3,000 students then and we thought that was just terrible, just such a big place, you know.

R: Well, that ends my questions, do you have anything else you would like to say?

H: No, I am afraid I have talked too much Calvin, but I have enjoyed it. It has been very nice. If you think of anything else, I would be glad to answer it if I can, or find out if I do not know.

R: Thank you.

[End of the interview]