



A Tale of Two Women

Marjory Stoneman Douglas and Marjorie Harris Carr

Segment: Speech by Marjory Stoneman Douglas about use of water in South Florida

Source: Interview with Marjory Stoneman Douglas and Marjorie Harris Carr. Videotaped in Islamorada, Published 1985.

Length of Segment: 00:07:52

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TRANSCRIPT

Celete: Next I'd like to introduce Marjory Stoneman Douglas, president of The Friends of the Everglades. (clapping)

MSD: No, I'm gonna stand up.

Celete: Well, speak into the microphone.

MSD: Yes, I'll speak into the mic. Yes, yes, well greetings everybody. It's wonderful to be here. What a wonderful day we've got; typical, a typical Key day. Couldn't be better with the air and the sun and all that. I'd rather think, is this thing working by the way? Is it working alright? I rather think that I'm one of the few people here, or perhaps the only one, who ever went to Key West on the train. When I first came to Florida, I, of course, promptly, back in 1915, one of things we did, first of all, was come down to Key West on a train. And I remember trundling down feeling as though it was a completely new world and seeing it for the first time from Mr. Flagler's train windows. I found Key West to be a completely different city from anything I had ever know in my life, and I was aware from that time on. And I knew so many of the people: The Harris,' The Williams,' and all kinds of people, the Otto's, so I had friends in Key West and came down to visit very often. But I always thought Key West was a city sort of off to itself. A city that didn't realize that it was part, that it had anything to do with the mainland of Florida. And in the early days of working in the Everglades with the attempts to prevent the poaching of the wading birds whose nuptial plumes were still being sold to milliner's in Havana. We had quite a bad time with the courts of Key West, because we could take the culprits who would be arrested with the things that they shot, the birds that they shot, and witnesses and all that, and that them down to the court in Key West, and the court in Key West would dismiss in completely, because they didn't think we had any business in interfering with the natural business of killing the birds in the Everglades. I find that spirit has been in the Keys, still, for quite a while, and we've had a good deal of trouble with the Monroe

county commission, frankly, and getting the things and our fighting of the latest menace down here: Port Bougainvillea, which Michael Chenoweth has represented us so ably. We find that that same spirit among elected officials has obtained, and that the whole idea is to get more people and get more taxes and more growth. But at the presence of this conference and of you all, has greatly encouraged me to believe, as Mrs. Carr said, that this is at least is a turning point, and that you have seen, and the terrible problems that have been imposed by port Bougainvillea, which we're still fighting by tooth and nail, The Friends of the Everglades and all the people. They have posed such problems that only a consensus of the people of the Keys themselves will help to solve. The, of course I always have to talk about the main problem of this whole South Florida area, which is water. When, I think, Michael Chenoweth and I came down years, years ago, after the Navy had put in the pipeline from the Homestead Airfield to Key West, we came down to fight the enlargement of the pipeline, because we said if we get more water you're going to have more development, because you're not fighting off the development as you should, and you're going to have more trouble. Well, we lost, and you got the bigger pipeline, and you got more water, and because you have more water in all the development of the Keys, which is so bothering you now. Now I don't need to go on about the dangers of all that, you are here to discuss that. But I would like to say, that I'd like the Keys, which I've always loved and I've known for so many years and I've come down particularly to Islamorada, which is one of my favorite places in all of Florida. We want you to particularly realize that you are part of the mainland, and that our problems of water are your problems, because some time ago, the Florida Water Management board decided that the Homestead Airbase could not supply enough water for the Keys, and it had to be switched to the Miami Well Fields. Now the time is coming that we haven't got enough water for the people that we have, and the time may come when we don't have enough water for the Keys. I can remember when the Keys had entire cisterns. Maybe you'd better be building more cisterns for the rain that is now raining, because it may be that we're all gonna be cut down on water. That would be both a bad thing and a good thing for you, 'cause I think you can go back to cisterns, which would be a great help. But our problems, in the Everglades, in the Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades are so great, that we are fighting for our life, for all our lives, to have water enough. I am highly of the opinion that too much water in the area is going to agriculture. Everybody thinks, oh, agriculture is so lovely, you know, and all these beans and tomatoes and everything are just so fine. But you must realize that the Water Management District gives the first choice of water to the agricultural people around the lake, and when we get limited in our rations, the agricultural people do not get cut down. My opinion is that in time, agriculture will have to go. That we have no place for agriculture in this area, where the land is being used for people and for buildings. Where it is much more valuable than for vegetables. Nobody comes down here to Florida to eat vegetables, or to grow them. Let the vegetables be grown in Mexico where they can be raised more cheaply and the people need the work, but let's not get into all that. But agriculture must go here in South Florida. We will see less and less of it as the time goes on. The sugar people are going to have to leave because they've destroyed the soil, because they don't belong here in Florida, anyway. I understand there's 10,000 acres of rice coming in around the lake. That may not be so bad; it doesn't use up so much of the water flow. We've got to consider ways of getting enough water, not only for us but for you, because Monroe County is completely dependant on Dade-county for its water. So I beg you to pay attention to the fact that you are closely related to the mainland, and that we need your help in getting the Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades basin fixed so that we can all have enough water. You must realize that water, without water, you couldn't live here at all. And you certainly will have to go back to cisterns if we cannot supply you enough. So please help us, please help us with our fight to get the area of the Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades fixed up so that we can get enough water, otherwise it's great to be here, and it's such a perfect day, I can't help keeping on talking about it. Thank you very much. (Clapping)

