

**MATHESON HISTORICAL CENTER**  
**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

**INTERVIEWEE: Ann Brown**

**INTERVIEWER: Mary Ann Cofrin**

**TRANSCRIBER: Ruth C. Marston**

**March 4, 1999**

C: My name is Mary Ann Cofrin, and I am interviewing Ann Brown for the Matheson Historical Center on March 4, 1999, at her home at 1125 N.W. 109<sup>th</sup> Drive in Gainesville, Florida. Ann, would you please state your full name and birthdate for the tape, please.

B: My name is Ann Towson Brown. I was born September 29, 1918, in Lynchburg, Virginia.

C: Tell me a little bit about your parents. Who were your parents?

B: My aunt, who lived in Gainesville, was Mary Norman Towson, who married Samuel McKinstry Mixson and came to Gainesville in 1917. She came to Gainesville because her brother, Harry Towson, some years before had married Susannah Price Lambert from Baltimore, and they ended up in Gainesville. I don't know how that happened, but they did. Harry Towson was from Lynchburg, and Aunt Sue was from Baltimore, but they moved to Gainesville, and soon after, she invited her sister to come to visit and she did and she met Sandy Graham and they were married, and then they lived in Gainesville. Not too long after that, they invited my Uncle Harry's sister, my Aunt Mary, to come to visit, and they introduced her to Sam Mixson, and they were married and lived here. So that was the beginning of the migration here.

I think it was in 1925, I was just seven, I came to live with my aunt and uncle from Lynchburg because my mother and father had separated and they moved and were not together, so my home was broken and I came and lived with my aunt. I lived here until I was married in 1942. Gainesville was a wonderful place to live, and I have enjoyed being here a long time.

C: Tell me what were your parents' names?

B: My father was Matthew Edward Towson, and he was born in Lynchburg, and my mother was Ruth Morgan Towson. Her maiden name was Morgan, and she was born in Danville, Virginia, but her family at some point moved to Lynchburg. I'm not really terribly accurate about these dates. I do have some written information, but I don't remember those things.

C: Well, they're not so important to the history of Gainesville as the Mixson family and you. You were how old when you came then?

B: Well, I entered third grade, and the first person I met, Mary Parker McCraw, worked at the school in the principal's office, and she took me out at recess on my first day at school and introduced me to Sunny Dell, and we've been friends ever since. My classmates were Martha Baxter, Jane Bishop, and Mary Swearingen, and a girl named Billie Rawls, whose father was a captain in the Army and stationed at the University, active in the R.O.T.C. They were here a few years, but then they moved on when he was transferred. Bill Graham and Sunny were a grade ahead of me, and Finley Cannon and Mae Hampton were a grade behind me at school, so I knew all of them then and they were my playmates.

C: You went to Kirby-Smith, then known as Eastside School, and it went from Grades 1 through 6 in those days. The 7-12 grades were at Gainesville High School on University Avenue.

B: I suppose they didn't have Kindergarten then.

C: I don't believe they did.

B: Well, I started in third grade. My teacher was named Mrs. Eldridge, and poor Mrs. Eldridge ended up in a mental hospital the next year.

C: What did you all do to that poor woman?

B: I don't know. We all remember that she had a big crush on Billie Rawls, who was a very attractive little girl, and I think we all sort of resented that she was the teacher's pet. So maybe we gave her too hard a time.

C: So you went from third grade on through high school or sixth grade there?

B: At seventh grade we moved over to Gainesville High School.

C: They had opened that school by then?

B: Yes.

C: So you finished high school at what is G.H.S. Was it first called Westside School, do you remember?

B: It was always G.H.S. From there I went to Tallahassee to Florida State College for Women.

C: Tell me a little bit about your younger days when you were a student -- your activities and where did you go in the summer?

B: Well, I'll tell you, we had the most wonderful time. I would think it's sort of a Huck Finn/Tom Sawyer life that we in our group led. The woods behind Uncle Sam's house were totally undeveloped and stretched on to the north for miles. There was an airport at the end of what was Roper Street, and the woods were behind his house. He lived on East Seminary Street, and that started where the old Seminary was, which was the Methodist Church then, and went straight east all the way to Waldo Road. He lived east of the Duck Pond, about three blocks. Behind there was all woods, so on Saturdays we wore what we called overalls, which were the regular old-fashioned overalls with the bib and straps over the shoulders, and

we would play in the woods. We would cook -- our parents let us -- we built fires. Of course, we thought we were way out in the woods. Actually, I'm sure we could be seen from the back door, but we felt we were way out in the woods, and we would build fires and we would bake potatoes and they were usually raw in the middle and charcoaled for about half inch from the outside, but we took out whatever we had to drink -- fruit juice or water or milk -- but I know we cooked and we had hamburgers and hotdogs, and we had fruit and cookies. We did that on a regular basis quite a lot, and then we would build camps. Sometimes they were tree houses and Uncle Sam showed us how to make a little cottage out of straw, like a wild wheat that grew wild, and we would cut it and it would be a long length, and we would have a frame made of string and stakes that we drove in the ground, and make a little house, and then we would play in our house. Sometimes we would make the house out of palmetto fronds that we cut, and we would make a house. We would play various games. Sometimes it would be a house in the jungle and sometimes we were Tarzan and we would swing through the trees, we thought. We would trot through the woods; there were a lot of paths that went through the woods. We would trot through with our spears and our lassoes, being Tarzan.

C: Did you ever camp out overnight?

B: No, not overnight.

C: You would probably be junior high school at that time?

B: Oh, by about twelve I think this had pretty much stopped, because by twelve, of course, we all drove cars because there was no license requirement and as soon as we could drive cars we gave up these other games, but until then we played. I think I was about sixth or seventh grade when Santa Claus brought me -- we didn't really believe in Santa Claus, but it was safer to cling to the belief -- an electric stove, and then we would gather in our kitchen and make toast and tea and whatever else we could think of to cook on a little electric stove. We thought that was a lot of fun.

These games included not only Mary, Jane, Martha, Mae, and Sue Bryant, who had moved over to this part of town by then, but we had Finley Cannon and Bill Graham and Harry and Louis Towson, and other little boys from the neighborhood, and we just all played together and had a good time. The boys weren't in all these things; it was more often girls.

Then at one point, Gainesville had a group of Follies that came every year. Gene Trader=s Follies, or something like that, and all the talent was local. They taught us to sing and to dance and to do little scenes, and everybody was in it. It wasn't a children=s thing. The whole community took part with all these skits. So that was great excitement for us. One year there was a skit. I don't remember the thing, but it was two adults and one of the characters was a French maid, and she was in a little black uniform with a white ruffled cap,

and her line was, AOui, madam,≡ and we were very impressed by this foreign language, so we played French maids for months. We would build a little house in the back of the garage that was our playhouse, so we would take turns wearing some kind of costume, being the maid, and saying, AOui, madam.≡

C: Did they charge admission for this? I suppose they did.

B: The Gene Traders, yes. They may have been a benefit. I=am sure there would be a record because it went on for years. I think it was still going on when I was through high school.

C: What year did you graduate from high school?

B: 1936.

C: So this would have been the early 30's. I haven=t heard anybody else talk about it, so maybe we=ll find out. I=ll ask somebody else.

B: There must have been a lot of newspaper records. Surely they wanted publicity. For us it was a little girl=s kind of thing. I remember in the old parish house at Holy Trinity Church, where we had our rehearsals, they had a balcony and the boys= thing was to do a farmer-type song and dance. They wore overalls and kerchiefs and sang a country kind of song. I can remember the boys would stand there and watch the little girls sing. I can still remember the song, but I can=t sing any more. We were fairies. AFairies fleet from yon cool retreat.≡ So they would watch us and we would all stay and watch them do their routine. It was sort of a big deal.

C: Was there just one performance that they put on usually?

B: I think maybe they had two. I think probably on Friday and Saturday.

C: Do you think people came from out of town?

B: I don=t know that. I know all our parents were there.

C: Yes, and of course some of the parents were in it.

B: Oh yes, it was for the whole community, so the more people in it, the more people came. It seemed like a very big thing to me.

C: Where did they put it on?

- B: In the high school auditorium. It was the new high school then, the one that's no longer there.
- C: Now, you started going to dances and dating somewhere along in high school or junior high school?
- B: I think that I was fourteen when I had my first date and I went to a Little Women's dance, and they used to have quite a few of those. I remember the person that took me to that first dance was Henry Chitty, and that was very exciting because he was very tall and sophisticated. We were fourteen!
- C: And he was fourteen, also?
- B: Yes. We were in the same room in school. That was quite exciting. As I say, we all drove so we came in cars.
- C: Now, very few had their own cars, so did they drive their family car? Most families had only one car, and you'd get to drive the family car on special occasions.
- B: That's right. The family would send me to the grocery store, which was George Dell's downtown near the square. It was on University Avenue around the other side of Vidal's Drug Store. Anyway, she would send me for maybe a loaf of bread that she had forgotten. I would get in the car and go pick up Mary and Jane and Martha and Sue and Mae to ride with me downtown. As long as we were downtown, we would drive out University Avenue and come back, so this errand which would be a ten-minute errand could take as much as an hour.
- C: And you would drive out and see which University boys you could see.
- B: Yes.
- C: By the time you got to be in high school, you knew University students as well as local boys.
- B: That was later, of course, like eleventh and twelfth grades. I don't think I dated University boys until then. It might have been tenth, but I remember eleventh and twelfth. Some of the boys we knew were out at the University.
- C: So Gainesville was a fun place. Now what did you do in the summertime?
- B: My mother had remarried by then and lived in New York City and I was with her most of the summer, and that was a lot of fun. I learned my way around New York because by then I was fifteen and I knew how to get downtown on the bus and how to get to the theater

district. Then I would go with her and her husband, my stepfather, who was a wonderful man -- a lawyer in New York -- to Virginia Beach for a month. They had a place in the Catskill Mountains, and we would go there for a month. I loved both those places and had lots of friends, so that was fun. I liked that.

C: Did you go home for Christmas?

B: I was here. This was really my home. My father lived in Clearwater, and he by then had married again, and I would visit him from time to time. Sometime in the summer I would be down with him for a while in Clearwater, and I liked that, too, because then I would go to the beach and have a good time.

C: But you ended up feeling more like Sam and Mary were your parents.

B: Well, they were but it's a funny thing. I had six parents and I thought that was a pretty good ratio - 6 to 1. I had no competition, so I really found that a very good situation.

C: You were an only child.

B: Yes.

C: Were you ever in Gainesville to go with your cousins who had property on Kingsley Lake?

B: Yes. Bill Graham and I share mutual first cousins. His mother's sister married my father's brother, so we were all raised as cousins. Bill was remembering not long ago how on weekends the Graham family, which was extensive, and the Towson family and various other extension related people would go on picnics to Poe Springs and to some of the other springs around town like Fanning and Worthington Springs..

C: Where is Poe Springs?

B: Well, I don't know. It has recently I think become a county property. Uncle Sam had a Model T, so we could get there in a Model T without too much time involved. I can remember that the water was always cold. We went to some of the other springs around.

C: Magnesia Springs, do you remember that one?

B: Yes, I do remember it, but that had a swimming pool. These were natural springs, and we used to go to Magnesia and Glen Springs but not at that time. We had a wonderful time. Martha and I reminisce a lot about the things we did. I used to play dolls a lot. All of us played dolls and we played Adress up≅ and I remember being in the Bishop's attic. That was a play area, and we would dress up in older family member's cast-off clothes and we

had high heels that would fit over our shoes, and we would clack around the sidewalks. We would play dolls; we had all kinds of dolls. We had baby dolls and we had girl dolls, and we played paper dolls. We were very busy. We had roller skates. By the park, you know the park at Oak Street and Seminary Street?

C: Right behind the Methodist Church. It's still there and I think it's called Roper Park. Isn't it called Roper Park?

B: Not then.

C: No, it didn't have a name.

B: I don't think it did. Mae Hampton lived on one side, and Martha on one side, and the Graves family right by your grandparents. So anyway, we used to play there, and we roller skated in the park, and that was something we did every afternoon after school. We'd roller skate around and around the park, play tag, and then at one time we played hockey. We used tin cans for the puck and bamboo sticks for the hockey stick. It had a curved end, and we would cut the bamboo sometimes out of the bamboo in the park, and we would have to dig up the root, and we would make it the right size. We loved that. Sometimes we would play over on Palmetto Street in my neighborhood because we walked everywhere, so from that neighborhood to my neighborhood was five or six blocks, so they were two separate neighborhoods.

C: Right, and you could go down to the Boulevard and play in that area with the Duck Pond. I guess the Duck Pond was there.

B: We could have, but I don't think we ever did. We did play on Palmetto Street in front of Bill Graham's house, and this was a co-ed activity. Boys and girls played together.

C: Did you walk to school?

B: Yes, oh yes.

C: You walked to G.H.S.?

B: Yes, I remember. Not every day because the White sisters lived right on the corner near my house and they were very generous and took me and some of the neighbors named Gibson. I also used to play with them. There were five of those children, and we would play together. The White sisters had a back seat and they would take as many as would fit in the back seat, which was three probably, and I was one and some of the Gibsons would be in the car, too.

C: And then you would walk home from school dawdling all the way?



B: Yes. It was a long walk. They would take us in the morning and for lunch. You know we all came home for lunch, and we had our dinner in the middle of the day. Of course, I didn't eat with my family at noon, because Uncle Sam's lunch hour was later. Later when I was in high school, if you had a certain grade level you could have an examination exemption and you could have a study hall exemption, so I had my study halls right after lunch and I had exemptions, so I would come home with the Misses White and then I didn't have to go back for two periods after lunch hour. I think our school ended at four o'clock and I wouldn't have to go back until 2:30 or 3:00 probably, so I would have my lunch and then I would sunbathe, which is too bad now, but I loved it then. Then Uncle Sam would drive me back as far as Baird Hardware and then I had to walk from there to the high school after lunch.

There was a while -- I guess maybe in junior and senior years -- when Finley Cannon had a car and he had it full of children from the neighborhood, and I was one of those that would get a ride with Finley back and forth to school, so I didn't really have to walk every single day the whole way. But I consider walking a part of my school career.

C: Who were your favorite teachers in high school? You mentioned the White sisters.

B: They were wonderful. They taught English Grammar and Literature, and they were absolutely wonderful, first-class teachers. Then I had Miss Beana Shannon in seventh grade for Math, and she taught my Uncle Sam when he was in school. She was an assistant principal at Buchholz for the lower grades, 7, 8 and 9.

C: You say Buchholz, but it was G.H.S.

B: Yes, G.H.S., but Professor Buchholz was the high school principal and she was the assistant principal for the junior high.

C: Then they had a grade school there, too.

B: Yes, but that had nothing to do with us because we moved over to G.H.S. in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. At our grade school, we had Cornelia Madchen, Theresa Graves, and Mrs. Hudson.

C: Now they didn't have Physical Education at that time.

B: Well, yes we did. Not the way they have it now. Miss Madchen taught Physical Ed and we would go out on the playground and do jumping jacks and knee bends and that kind of thing.

C: Did you play many games? They didn't have any sports facilities for girls.

- B: No, we had no sports and we didn't play games. If we did, I didn't play them. We sat on the sidewalk and played jacks. Jane Bishop was very good at jacks.
- C: Well, the boys played football, I guess.
- B: I guess they played on their side. We were divided, and they played on their side.
- C: Well, I've heard the story that Professor Buchholz drew a line in the sand and the boys had to stay on one side and the girls on another. Is that something you remember?
- B: Yes, I do remember that in high school. I think that was true. You may want to ask somebody else. It seems to me that we walked in different lines in the halls and so on, the boys and girls.
- C: Your dances were held at the Women's Club right across the street?
- B: Yes, and at the Legion Hall.
- C: Which is now the Matheson Center.
- B: I did not like Kirby-Smith. I didn't like my school work or my teachers very much, but I loved the teachers in G.H.S. Miss Dorothy Smith was a math teacher. She was a wonderful teacher.
- C: Did you have Roxie Baker?
- B: Yes, she taught Physical Ed at G.H.S., I think. I might be wrong about that, but she taught English.
- C: Yes, I thought she did, but she might have been Phys Ed, too.
- B: Then they had more of an organized thing. We played basketball. We never had uniforms. We just played in our school dress, and we all wore dresses. We just played in our school clothes. Of course, Thelma Boltin was our speech teacher and she taught us poems we all still remember and can recite. We had to recite in unison. It was great.
- C: You didn't have art classes or music?
- B: No, I don't remember that. We had art in sixth grade, which consisted of having crayons and paper that we would color, but not any organized art.

C: So all of your time with the Mixson=s was spent in their home on Seminary Street, which is now N.E. 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

B: It is 820, but it was 1138.

C: We haven=t talked a whole lot about the Mixson=s. We have an article that was written in Jess Davis=s book, which I=m not going to read but we=re going to enter it into the transcription of this interview which tells about Sam and about his parents and so on, so we=ll have that in the interview as an addendum.

Both the Mixson=s died after you were gone.

B: Yes, Mary in 1963, and Sam in 1975.

C: After you finished high school, you went away to college at the Florida State College for Women, and you stayed there for four years?

B: Yes. I graduated there.

C: What did you major in?

B: Journalism. I always thought that I would go to New York and get a job somehow joining the field of journalism because I was really interested in it, but I never got around to going. I talked about it a lot, but I never left Gainesville. When I finished, my first job was at the student union building. Billy Matthews was the director and I worked as a secretary.

C: Tell me that year.

B: 1940 or 1941. Then I left that job and I worked for Garland Powell at the radio station, WRUF. At that time it was just before World War II. He could see that it was coming. Actually, I suppose it was 1941 and we had been attacked, and he could see that the boys that did the announcing would be drafted probably, so I went to apply for a job as a secretary and he gave me a test with a microphone, and I thought, AWell, that=s an interesting way to interview for a secretary,≡ but it wasn=t any problem, and he hired me to be an announcer. I had some secretarial duties but I was going to be an announcer. I thought that was wonderful. I loved that. It was quite a lot of fun working there. I was the only girl, and these boys were very serious about their work but they also played tricks on each other like setting your script on fire as you were reading. There was this news thing that would come over the ticker tape and it would be a long thing, and the bottom would start flaming! They would do things to distract you.

C: Did they do that to you as well?

- B: I think they did, but you know it wasn't a danger. It was just a terrible, disconcerting thing. Everything was done manually. You put a record on a player and then you had to rewind it to program it so it would come on at exactly the moment you wanted it to. I had a program that was aimed at the soldiers at Camp Blanding. There was a very popular program called ARevelry with Beverly≅ that came over one of the national things, so I was an imitation of that kind of thing. I was to be on when the boys were waking up in the morning and could listen to the radio. We had certain restrictions because of the war. If someone called in and said, APlay >Moon over Miami= at six o'clock Thursday morning,≅ we couldn't do that because maybe that was a code. They were at that time having submarines off the coast of Florida, so there was a reason to be cautious. We could play it someday unannounced but not on request.
- C: Isn't that amazing that they would think about that. So you were a disc jockey as well as a newsperson.
- B: Yes, I had a script.
- C: Did you date some of those boys that worked out there?
- B: No, I didn't. The Powell=s would have parties for the staff and we all go together, and that was fun. As a result of that, I took some speech classes and I was in some of the plays. Dr. Constans was the Director.
- C: That=s Phil C-o-n-s-t-a-n-s.
- B: Right. The theater there is named for him. Well, he was the director and producer of the plays, so I was in some of those.
- C: Now, you were not a student but you still participated.
- B: I was working at the University and I was taking speech.
- C: Now that was even in the wintertime even though the school was not co-ed.
- B: That=s right.
- C: They did take some girls for certain things, probably just because you were working there.
- B: They had other girls in the cast.
- C: But as far as classes, they would not have a lot of women in the classes, would they?

B: Maybe they didn't. I don't remember that too well. I remember the plays that we had. They were fun. So I did that, and then at that time I met Hunt, my husband, who was from New York City and was in the Navy. He was a Naval Aviator, and he was being trained in Jacksonville. I used to go to Jacksonville a lot for dances. I had friends there, and they would come here. When we were in college, I always had a lot of friends who would come for the weekends at the University. Some of them were from Jacksonville, and I used to visit there. On one of those visits, I met Hunt. My friend, Pat Stewart, had arranged a date for Hunt to take me to a dance. So that's how we met. We were soon married.

C: What year were you married?

B: July 1942.

C: The war was still on, and you were married in Gainesville?

B: Yes, we were married at Holy Trinity.

C: Did you have a big wedding?

B: Well, it wasn't a big wedding, but it was a nice wedding. We had four ushers and a best man and the boys were all in Navy whites because they were Hunt's friends from the service. Addison Pound was an usher because at the last minute one of the ushers was sent overseas, so he filled in, but he was wearing Navy whites at that time, too.

C: And you had bridesmaids?

B: I had just one because all of my friends were away. Very few of my friends were here.

C: Do you think most of them had gotten married?

B: They had gotten married. I was one of the last to be married, even though I had only been out of college for two years. But the war speeded things up, and there were very few of us left.

C: Who was your bridesmaid?

B: Uncle Sam's niece, who was sort of a cousin. She had been married in June in Orlando, and I was in her wedding and then she was in my wedding in July.

C: Her name was?

- B: Louise Jourdan from Orlando. She=s mentioned in Uncle Sam=s obituary. By then she was married to Linton Waterhouse.
- C: Then you quit your job, I guess?
- B: Yes, I did.
- C: Hunt had been stationed in Jacksonville?
- B: Yes, but he was transferred to Miami and he got his wings there before we were married.
- C: Did you ever go down to Miami to visit?
- B: Yes, I went and visited Louise. She was living there. Her husband was stationed there, and I visited her just one time. I returned to Gainesville and when Hunt got his wings and his commission as a Lieutenant Junior Grade in the Navy, we were married. Then Hunt was sent overseas in June of >43 and during that period from June of 1942, he was stationed around the United States, almost in a complete square. We started in Norfolk and we went to Chicago, to Seattle, to San Francisco, to the desert in California, and then he sailed from Coronado, which is part of San Diego.
- C: That was over a period of one year?
- B: Eleven months.
- C: In eleven months you moved that many times?
- B: We figured out it was twenty-nine times. It might have been twenty. Maybe we moved more than once in a town. But we enjoyed that. We didn=t enjoy having the war, but it was there and you made friends and the officers had a bond. They depended on each other and were all in training.
- C: Now most of this moving around was special training?
- B: Yes, they were all fighter pilots, naval aviators being carrier trained.
- C: So they were training from one facility to another, so the same group went at the same time, so it wasn=t a matter of making new friends?
- B: Theoretically it wasn=t, but the Navy would take people out or switch one to a different squadron. I think Hunt was in about three squadrons during that time.

C: So you got to know the ones in each group.

B: Yes. Then they went away, or you did. Great Lakes Naval Air Station was where they did some carrier training. I guess that showed how desperate the service was because they took an old paddle boat, a side wheeler like they have on the Mississippi, a very slow-moving, clumsy boat, and put a flight deck on it and the boys had to learn on it. They lost men that we knew. One day we would see them and the next day they were gone. The boat just didn't move fast enough and they had a lot of accidents.

C: That must have been traumatic.

B: Yes, it was terrible. Then we were sent to Seattle, but that was a very short duty. They called it permanent, but I think we were there three or four days. Then the whole squadron flew to Oakland to an air base out there. We were there almost a year -- six or eight months -- and that was very nice. We had a cute little apartment and we went into San Francisco a lot, which was nice. We would run into people from Tallahassee or people we were stationed with. In Coronado, I ran into a girl from Tallahassee and I ran into George Lewis in San Francisco. We were at a hotel.

C: Where was he from?

B: Tallahassee. The Lewis Bank in Tallahassee. He married Clifton Van Brunt.

C: Where did you say he left for overseas from?

B: From Coronado, which is by San Diego.

C: So you went down there and saw him off?

B: We were stationed in the desert. The Navy in its wisdom had a base in the desert. The weather there was good for flying. You could pretty well count on the weather. But there was no carrier so they had to stake out an area in the field, and that's where the pilots would touch down and take off as though it were a deck.

C: Now you say in the desert. Where?

B: The desert in California. El Centro. Palms and Palm Springs, I think, are nearby. This was El Centro, which is nothing like either of those. But there again, we found a little place to live and we had good friends, and we had a lot of things to laugh about. From there we went to Chula Vista, and then to Coronado.

C: What year did he go overseas?

- B: June of '43. The wives all went down on the dock and waved goodbye as the ship pulled out at dawn. They were trying to be so secretive and yet there we all were. Of course, it was a Navy dock. You weren't supposed to be in the Navy yard without having good reason to be there. Still, there you were, and this little carrier loaded to the gills. They had so much stuff on it, so many planes and equipment that it was not flyable. It had no escort and it was a converted cargo ship. It didn't have armored sides or anything, and hundreds of boys were packed in. Hunt hung a hammock on the deck. Some of them did that and slept on deck as opposed to being packed in below. They ended up in the South Pacific. To fool the enemy, the Navy issued winter flight gear to all the flyers so the spies would think they were going to Alaska because the Aleutian Islands were under siege at that time. So the boys carried their heavy winter flight gear to the hot tropics of the South Pacific.
- C: When they got there, I hope they got some lighter clothing?
- B: I think they did.
- C: Where did they land?
- B: They were based on Munda and escorting bombers over Bougainville.
- C: They all went on this one cargo ship but then they must have been assigned to regular carriers?
- B: Once they were there, they switched. Hunt was sent to a new Navy fighter squadron flying a new plane, which was called the F6F (known as the Hell Cat) and this was the first squadron to take them into combat. So they were based on Munda and they flew from there.
- C: Where is Munda?
- B: It's a little island, one of the Solomons chain. There were two chains of islands. They were all Melanesian, not Polynesian islands. They had a few natives there. They weren't exotic like the Hawaiians, but anyway these young men went there, and their job was to escort bombers that were bombing Bougainville. The Japanese were entrenched on Bougainville which was an island a step nearer the United States, so they were getting rid of it. They would be shot at and engaged in dogfights with the Japanese zero planes. The bombers would drop the bombs and then go back -- I don't know where they were stationed. It was not on Munda. The fighter planes have a shorter flying range.
- C: They went off from a carrier.
- B: No, they went off from the island.



C: And they got over there and they were stationed on an island so they didn't really fly off the carrier, even though they had been trained to do that.

B: Yes, but I guess they didn't have to.

C: So his time was all spent on the island.

B: Yes, it was. Of course they were all being attacked. I don't know how many of the squadrons they lost, but they had pretty heavy casualties. Hunt was shot shortly after he was there, and he flew his plane back. Bougainville was 200 miles from Munda, and he was shot over the island in a dogfight. Of course, they were trained for certain tactics and procedures when they were fighting, so Hunt was shooting a Japanese plane that had attacked another plane in their formation, and another Japanese plane came from beneath and behind him and shot all the instruments out of the plane, and a bullet went through his arm and his leg. Then another man shot the Japanese that had shot Hunt, so Hunt was not killed and did not crash, and he made a tourniquet of his sleeve. His left arm was totally shattered. He took the stick that they fly with and held it between his knees. Then they had little amulets of spirits of pneumonia and he used those to keep from passing out. One of their survival strategies was to fly as low to the water as possible so that an enemy plane diving on them would have to pull out of his dive before he could get them in his range, so anyway, that's the way he got back to Munda.

C: When you're on a fighter plane, do you have a co-pilot?

B: No. You fly solo.

C: Nobody is in the plane but you. Then he was able to get back to Munda. That must have been a terrible experience.

B: It was, and he did get back. Another pilot friend was hit in the same battle, and he got back, too. Hunt landed on land, and he had no landing gear, no instruments or anything because they had all been shot out, and he had to let go of his arm tourniquet to pull back on the stick to land, and when he did the trigger for the machine guns on the wings of the plane was on the stick and he pulled and strafed the field that he was landing on. He attracted quite a bit of attention.

Hunt: When you land, the plane is in a tail-down attitude, so the bullets went high and across the island and into the ocean on the other side of the island.

B: It was a small enough island that it didn't cause any problem.

C: Well, you were lucky to survive such a terrible accident. That year was what?

B: That was >43.

C: Okay, we've got Hunt taken care of, but what happened to you when he went overseas?

B: Well, I stayed in California and the wives, a group of us, had a little house. I ran into Marian McCrory from Jacksonville. Do you remember her at all? Well, anyway, her husband had gone out. Anyhow, we stayed there because we didn't know whether our husbands were really going where they use that winter flight gear or to the South Pacific. We knew it would be one or the other because that's where the air war was, and we hung around until we got messages. We had little code phrases so they could let us know, and we learned that they had gone to the South Pacific. If they went to Alaska, the idea was that it would be a short tour, but if they went to the South Pacific the idea was that it would be a long time. So we got the message that they had gone to the South Pacific, and we all went our separate ways.

That's when I came back to Gainesville. Then I got a message here. The Navy Department regrets to inform you that your husband has been wounded in action, and I was here in Gainesville when that message came. Then Hunt and I were eventually reunited.

C: Did he come back to Gainesville?

B: No, his family was in New York City and his home was there, and he was sent to the Naval Hospital in Brooklyn. He was sent to hospitals in California first.

C: Did you go back out there?

B: Yes, I did. I got back to San Francisco and we had friends that gave us an apartment and we lived there while he was there.

C: How long was he in the hospital?

B: A year almost. He was shot in September, and it wasn't really a year. He was released the next June.

C: So you stayed with him in Brooklyn with his family?

B: We had an apartment in Riverdale where his family lived. In the beginning he was in the hospital, but later he could commute to the hospital. He didn't have to live there.

C: Did he have full recovery?

B: Yes. Let me tell you this one thing. Last September his squadron, what's left of it, had a reunion and they hadn't seen each other since that event. It was down in Delray, and we went and it was the most wonderful thing. Those men were all so glad to see each other. They had so much to talk about. Some of them were replacements because men were injured and some of them killed, but anyway, the skipper of the squadron was there, and it was just the most wonderful experience.

C: I guess so. You saw a lot of the wives that you knew.

B: No, I didn't.. I didn't know most of those wives. Unfortunately, most of them had been divorced and remarried. One man I remember. His wife was one of the ones who lived with us, and they had been divorced, but I still remembered him. Another man, the one who shot the guy who shot Hunt, was there and I gave him a big hug.

C: You mean the guy who shot the Japanese that shot Hunt? I should say so. Well, he certainly looks wonderful for somebody who went through all that.

B: Yes.

C: Well, had you started a family by then?

B: No, our first child was born in 1944 in November. Hunt came home in September of 1943.

C: So because of his accident -- he really wasn't overseas very long.

B: No, he wasn't.

C: So your child was born in 1944. Tell me about your first child.

B: Her name is Ann McKelvey Brown, and she lives outside Boston in Concord, Massachusetts. She has just become a grandmother, and we have a great-granddaughter.

C: I saw the picture the other day. So when she was born, you were living in Brooklyn?

B: No, we never lived in Brooklyn. We lived in Riverdale on the Hudson River.

C: But he commuted from there to the Brooklyn Hospital?

B: That wasn't much of a commute.

C: Riverdale is in what part of New York?

B: The Bronx.

- C: Okay. So that=s where you lived when your daughter, Ann McKelvey, was born. So you stayed there how many years?
- B: We stayed there four or five years. I loved it there on the Hudson River. It was beautiful there.
- C: So when he recuperated, he started working in New York?
- B: Yes, he went into a bank for a while. Then he worked with McGraw Hill in publishing.
- C: Your journalism and his publishing sort of coincided. But you never worked again?
- B: No, not in a paying job. We lived in Connecticut for twenty-seven years, so our children grew up there.
- C: You moved from the Bronx to where in Connecticut?
- B: Wilton.
- C: And your other children?
- B: Archer was born in Riverdale, and then Mary Bruce, ABrucie≡, was born in Connecticut.
- C: In what year was Archer born?
- B: I need to get my years straight. Kelvey was born in 1944; Archer in 1946, and Brucie in 1954.
- C: So then you raised your children in Connecticut. How many years were you there?
- B: Twenty-eight years, from 1949 to 1977.
- C: And Hunt commuted to New York City.
- B: Every day, four hours a day. He did it partly by train, but then the train service got so bad that he decided to drive, so he drove in and out every day.
- C: Your children loved that area. I suppose they are all three married now?
- B: None of them stayed there. One of them is here in Gainesville. That=s Archer. Kelvey is outside Boston, and Brucie, the youngest, is in New Mexico.

- C: So they=re all scattered. Now we=re going to talk a little bit more about Mary and Sam. So you were not in Florida, of course, when Mary died.
- B: No, but I came immediately.
- C: She died in April 1963.
- B: She died very suddenly. I think she had a heart attack during the night.
- C: Then Sam died in April 1975, and he was a native and life-long resident of Gainesville, it says here.
- B: He knew everybody everywhere.
- C: He was a member of the Board of Directors of First Federal Savings and Loan and retired Vice-President of the Baird Hardware. Now some of this will be in that other article, but I will read a little bit about this. AHe was past president of the Gainesville Golf and Country Club and a U.S. Army World War I veteran.≡ Then it says, AHe is survived by a brother, R.W. Mixson, Gainesville; four sisters, Mrs. Rachel Jourdan, Orlando; Mrs. Alma Bradberry, Gainesville; Mrs. Laura Stewart, Gainesville, and Mrs. Ellen Adams, West Palm Beach; three nieces, Mrs. L. Huntington Brown, Wilton, Conn.; Mrs. Linton Waterhouse, Orlando; and Mrs. James Kilsdonk, Philadelphia, Pa.: and a nephew, John Jourdan, Jr., Orlando,≡ and he was a wonderful man. We all knew and loved him.
- B: Of course, his great interest was flowers. He had roses that bloomed all winter and he was rosarian for the State of Florida at one time. He had roses that bloomed from spring until fall and camellias that grew from fall to spring, so we always had beautiful bowls of flowers in the house.
- C: Well, tell me a little bit about Sam and your memories of him. Can you think of anything special about him that we haven=t talked about?
- B: Not really. I can think of things. He was fun and he was funny and he tried to teach me to fish. I wasn=t a good pupil. The only time I ever caught a fish I thought he had put it on my hook as a joke.
- C: Where did he take you fishing?
- B: Down on the Oklawaha mostly, I think, maybe some lakes. He and AManie≡ used to fish, but I don=t think she was that much of a fisherman.

C: Now, you call Mary AManie≡?

B: Yes. He like to play golf. He used to play in what he called a Agangsome≡ because a foursome is the official limit. In Gainesville now they allow fivesomes, but I don=t know how many were in their group, and they would play on Sunday. Well, he would play with the Hampton=s and I think Reid McKenzie played. He had a group of friends that played golf together, and they called themselves the Agangsome≡.

C: Well, he was very well known in Gainesville and loved and liked by a lot of people. I don=t know whether he ever served much in the government or the politics in Gainesville.

B: I don=t think that he did but I think he was friends with those who did and I think he had some influence. I can remember, for instance, when Hunt was shot and I said, AUncle Sam, you can find out from the government that said >Wounded in action=, you didn=t know exactly what that meant.≡ Uncle Sam did know some people to get in touch with, and we did get information.

C: Well now, they never had property on Kingsley Lake.

B: No, they never had a lake house. I always wished they would, but they never did. I think Uncle Sam liked Cow Pen Lake because he liked a more remote lake. I liked the friends that we were in close contact with at Kingsley, but his idea was to be out where there was quiet and fishing, but he never had a house. He did build a camper-trailer and he towed that to lakes and hunting and fishing camps.

C: Now, Mary . . .

B: She was not a joiner. She was a wonderful mother and wife and her house was immaculately run, and we had a nice woman named Emma who worked for us all the time I was growing up. Then along about the end of high school, Daisy came to work, and I don=t know whether you remember Daisy. She sort of became a city institution when Uncle Sam died because so many people employed her to help with parties and to do things for them. She was wonderful. I know that I was surprised AManie≡ never joined any women=s organizations.

C: She had to join the Women=s Club for you to be a Little Woman.

B: I wasn=t a Little Woman.

C: You were not?

B: No, I felt very outside, but I was invited to dances.

- C: How could you do that? They wouldn't let you do that in my day. Your mother had to join. Did you get to go to all of them or just some of them?
- B: No, just occasionally.
- C: Well, you see, you mother joined just so we could be Little Women. She was not a joiner either.
- B: AManie≅ did a very important research project for the League of Women Voters. She wasn't in the League of Women Voters when I was growing up, but then I guess once she didn't have as much responsibility, she got more active. I can't remember what she researched, but it was an important study that she did for them. Maybe one day I will. But I was living in Connecticut then. I used to come down here and bring the children and they loved being down here. You know it was warm, and the flowers were blooming, and we'd go back and it would be cold and muddy. We loved the snow, but you don't have snow all winter. You have ice, but we didn't mind the ice either because up there they closed the schools so then we all had a vacation.
- C: So you stayed in Connecticut until Hunt retired or even after?
- B: No, he retired, and then we moved of all things to New Hampshire and lived there ten years, but then we began to notice it was cold and dark. Hunt was still skiing when we lived there and sometimes we would have storms and would have to go to the grocery store on skis. We liked that.
- C: So you skied, too?
- B: I could ski that much, but I wasn't ever a skier. I could cross-country a little bit.
- C: Then you moved to Florida in what year?
- B: 1987.
- C: So you've been back here eleven years. It's very nice to have you back in Gainesville.
- B: Well, we enjoy being back, too.
- C: I can't think of anything else to ask you. Can you think of anything that we haven't talked about that we should have?

- B: Well, I remember back in high school when I was there, they had boys clubs and girls clubs. They played an active part in our lives. They had dances about four or five times a year, each one of them. The University boys would come to those dances. That was fun.
- C: It was wonderful having the University be all male in our day..
- B: Yes, 3000 men and no girls.
- C: It was pretty nice. Well, it was a great town to grow up in. I will give you this to edit and you may add anything that you've forgotten or correct any mistakes we have made.
- B: I remember some of the other teachers: Mrs. Olson was our Latin teacher, and she was a splendid teacher.
- C: Clara Olson?
- B: Yes. Clara Floyd was our teacher, too. Clara Olson seemed to be quite elderly, but then everybody seemed to be quite elderly!
- C: Right. She was elderly to me, too.
- B: Phyllis Jarrel Grimm taught French.
- C: Did you take French?
- B: Yes, two years. We all loved her. She was great. The Misses White were very good English teachers. We had very good teachers. We got, I think, an excellent education.
- C: I think so. Gainesville has always had good teachers.
- B: I remember everybody was scared to death of Professor Buchholz, but we all respected him. We thought he was quite an educator, and he had a very good school.
- C: He believed in discipline, and I think that's so important. Well, I thank you very much. We'll edit this and give you a copy of it at the end, and I thank you very much for giving me your time.
- B: Well, thank you for your patience.
- C: Oh, I loved doing it.



## ADDENDUM

### MIXSON

SAM Mck. MIXSON was born in Gainesville, Florida, November 9, 1890, the son of Sam Micajah and Louise Coker Mixson. His father was born in Pinevale, now Williston, Florida, and his mother was born in Newnansville, the first County seat of Alachua County. His grandfather was Archibal Kirkland Mixson of Barnesville, South Carolina. His great-grandfather was John Mixson of Barnesville District, South Carolina and his great-great-grandfather was John Mixson of South Carolina.

Mr. Mixson=s grandmother was Rachel Ann Calhoun of the South Carolina Calhouns. His great-grandfather on his mother=s side of the house was Samuel Calhoun, for whom he was named.

Sam Micajah Mixson moved to Gainesville about 1888 and settled near the city water and light department office (1964), south of S.W. 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and went in the grocery business. He later purchased some farm land east of Evergreen Cemetery. The property lay south of S.E. 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and joined the Jackson land on the south. The house stood about the intersection of S.E. and S.E. 12<sup>th</sup> Terrace where the pecan trees are still standing. Mr. Mixson went in the cattle business with Arch L. Jackson. Mr. Jackson owned the land west of S.E. 15<sup>th</sup> Street from the Mixson land to Paynes= Prairie and the two together owned land lying between Evergreen Cemetery on the north to Paynes= Prairie on the south. The Mixson land is what is today (1964) Sunset sub-division. Mr. Mixson later went back into the grocery business on S.E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. His wife, Sam Mck. Mixson=s mother, died at the home of General Lawrence W. Jackson at 232 S.W. 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.

Sam Mck. Mixson attended Gainesville grade schools and High School but went to work for Baird Hardware Company in 1908 before his eighteenth birthday, at \$30.00 a month. Mr. Mixson was with Baird Hardware Company for forty-eight years. He retired as Vice-President of the company in 1956.

Mr. Mixson married Mary Norman Towson September 3, 1919 and lived for a while at 319 N.E. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue. He built a home at 820 N.E. 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in 1926 where he still resides. His wife is deceased. They had no children but raised a niece, Ann Towson.