

MATHESON HISTORICAL MUSEUM
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: Lyman Long, Sr.

Interviewer: Louise Brown

Transcriber: Ruth C. Marston

August 27, 2003

B: My name is Louise Scales Brown, and I am interviewing Lyman Long, Sr. at 16722 N.W. 20th Avenue, Newberry, Florida, on August 27, 2003, for the Matheson Historical Museum Oral History Program. Mr. Long, please state your full name and birth date for the tape.

L: My name is Lyman Long. My birth date is the 5th month 24th day 1913.

B: Mr. Long, the goal of the Matheson Historical Museum Oral History Program is to collect and preserve the history of Gainesville and Alachua County by interviewing longtime residents of the area. You and your family have been longtime residents of the Jonesville community in Alachua County. It's a pleasure to visit with you in your home today. Please begin by telling about your early childhood, where you were born, your parents' names and your brothers and sisters. You might want to tell what your father did – anything that you would like to tell me about your early family life.

L: The first thing I would like to say is that I remember back in 1916 when some policeman got killed and they were accusing Boise Long Randolph. The only reason he was raised by Squire Long. He was a Randolph by name. One evening some people came to our house. Me and my sister were only two and three at the time. We were playing in the yard. They wanted to speak to my dad. Dad's name was Casel Long. They told him that they heard that he kept a Boise Long. My dad told them he hadn't seen him. After they left, he got kind of afraid and thought maybe somebody had told them that he kept Boise Long Randolph. But nothing ever did come up about it. After then, we moved from one place to another and Dad kept a small farm with a man named Will Ross close to the Dudley farm. That was for about a year, and then we moved to the Becker Perkins place east of the Dudley's old house. I don't know whether my Daddy worked for the Dudleys or not. He might have, but anyway, he was close to Dudley's farm. We stayed there until my father finally passed in 1921. After he passed, we moved to my grandparents' home, and that's where we stayed until I was married.

B: What were your grandparents' names?

L: My grandparent's names were Sam James and Annie James. She was called Peggy. We stayed there and I started working on the farm growing different things. Along in the 30's, my granddaddy must have told one of the Dudley men, Ralph Dudley, he had learnt me how to lay out rows. He had a row for me to lay out, and it ran about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. I laid the row and then he hired me to work there for quite a while. I don't know exactly how long, but anyway, in 1939 we were married and I started working for the Gay's. Horace Gay was a young man. I worked there, and then after that I worked out at the Williston Shell Rock for a while. Along in '41, I left the farm and went down to Cross City and worked a year at a saw mill down there. I bought my own horse and came back and started doing my own plowing. I did that until the 50's. Along about '52, I started

driving a school bus. I drove the school bus until about 1957. In '57 I had taken sick and I spent about five years recovering without any work or anything. When I recovered fully, I was hired back by the school as custodian and did that until I retired when I was 65 years old.

B: Do you remember what year that was?

L: 1978.

B: In 1978 you retired.

L: Yes. Back to my schooling, I went to the 8th grade. When I finished the 8th grade, I wasn't able to go to high school because they didn't have busses so I wasn't able to ride.

B: You were living in Jonesville then?

L: We were in Jonesville.

B: Where would have been the nearest high school for you at that time?

L: The closest high school was Alachua. We didn't have a black high school in Newberry at that time. Most of them that went to high school had to get their own way. There wasn't no bus running.

Later on, doing a little farming and working out a little bit to keep things going. After my sickness, I managed to be able to support myself by doing a little farming. I sometimes had to half-crop with some people because I didn't have money enough to buy fertilizer, so I had to half-crop. I done that for a couple of years. So that's in my coming up to where I am now.

B: When you did this farming, was this on land that was in the Long family?

L: In the James family. That was my granddaddy's.

B: Where is that land now? Is it where you're living? Are you now living on that land?

L: I'm living on part of it.

B: How many brothers and sisters did you have, Mr. Long?

L: I had three sisters. When my father died, I had three sisters and one wasn't born. My father died in August 1921, and she was born in February 1922. That made four sisters and one brother. All of them were raised in my grandparents' house.

B: These were your grandparents James, weren't they?

L: Yes. Sam James.

B: Now, you had some Long relatives that lived nearby, didn't you?

L: I had one of my daddy's brothers. He lived pretty close to us, but he finally moved to Gainesville.

B: What was his name?

L: His name was Spencer Long.

B: Okay. Do you know when the James family came to Jonesville?

L: I don't remember. They had been here, as far as I know, a long time.

B: Was your mother born in Jonesville?

L: She was born in Jonesville, from what I understand.

B: Do you know what year she was born?

L: She was born in 1894.

B: How many children did the James family have?

L: They only had two daughters.

B: Was she the older or the younger?

L: She was the older one.

B: So you know that they were here in the 1890's.

L: Yes.

B: Is all the property that they owned still in the relatives' possession? Do they still own all their property?

L: Yes, they own it all – forty acres. I bought twenty acres that was mine, but I deeded all of that to my children.

B: Tell me about your wife. What was her maiden name?

L: Ella Mae Hall.

B: Had her family lived in Jonesville for a long time?

L: She lived in Mt. Nebo Settlement.

B: Where is that?

L: About three miles south of Alachua.

B: Is it there along on the Farnsworth Road?

L: Right along there on 241 Road, they call it.

B: 241. In my days of being a social worker out here, I think 241 was the road that I had always called the Farnsworth Road.

L: Oh, that's right.

B: Yes, so that dates me. I've been around here a little while! You were married to Ella in 1939. Did you bring her here to Jonesville then?

L: Right here to Jonesville.

B: How many children did you all have?

L: It was ten, but one passed away at about eighteen months old. I have nine living children.

B: You have nine living children. How many of those are boys and how many girls?

L: Seven of them boys and two of them girls.

B: You're very fortunate. That's a wonderful family. Where are your children now? Are they all here in the Jonesville area?

L: One lives near Gainesville and one in Cocoa, Florida. One lives in Detroit, and all the rest live right here in Jonesville.

B: What are their names?

L: Lyman, Jr. "L.C.", Jasper, James Benjamin, Ralph, Velma Long Hughes, Hurley, Harvey Clifford, Aaron, and Yvonne Annette Long.

B: Would you like to tell me a little bit about what each of the children are doing?

L: Well, let's see. Lyman, Jr. has retired. The next one, Jasper, is in Detroit. He retired because he had something wrong with his foot.

B: What did he do before he retired?

L: He was a cook.

B: Very good.

L: The other one who retired worked in a mall as a custodian, I guess.

B: At the Oaks Mall?

L: Oaks Mall.

B: Custodian at the Oaks Mall.

L: One of them, Ben, worked for the City of Gainesville, but he has retired.

B: I think I met Ben. Very good. So that's three of your sons.

L: L.C. retired from the Oaks Mall. Jasper was the cook. Ben retired from the city. The one in Cocoa is retired, too. He was in the Army.

B: So he retired from the Army.

L: I guess. The State of Florida.

B: Well, your children have done well. So that's four sons. Now you've got three more that you need to tell me about.

L: One of them, Aaron, is working for the University of Florida. Hurley is working on the railroad. Harvey was in the Army, too, but I don't think he quite got to retiring age yet. Harvey worked as a Florida state trooper.

B: Now I know you're very proud of your two daughters.

L: They're wonderful. This one stayed here and waited on her mother for four years and a day or two.

B: I was sorry to hear that your wife had passed away recently. I know that it's been wonderful to have your daughters nearby to help take care of both of you. Mr. Long, I wanted to ask you a little bit more about the years that you were sick. Were you hospitalized during that period of time?

L: Yes, I was hospitalized.

B: Where were you in the hospital?

L: I was in the hospital in Orlando.

B: During that period of time, you were able to take some courses and you were actually considered to be in school?

L: Yes, I was going to school every day.

B: Tell me a little bit about what the school and your classes were like there, and how far you got in those classes.

L: I took all the classes.

B: You got the equivalency of a high school education?

L: I think that was what they called it. I don't have a diploma. I went long enough to have it.

B: Well, the illness that you had, when you left the hospital, was it cured or controlled?

L: It was supposed to be cured.

B: Well, that's wonderful. Do you remember the name of the hospital?

L: It was a TB hospital. That's all I can say.

B: TB hospital in Orlando.

L: I came home and stayed about eight months and had to go back. I went back to Tampa.

B: Actually, the last time you were hospitalized was in Tampa?

L: Yes.

B: You've been well ever since then, so that's great.

L: Yes, I had surgery in the Tampa hospital.

B: Now you had a special birthday this year. Do you want to tell me about that?

L: My 90th birthday.

- B: That was wonderful. Did you have a party?
- L: Yes, they had a little get-together here. All the children were here except the one in Detroit.
- B: That was great. Eight of your children were here, and your wife was living then but she was not well. Was she able to help you enjoy that day?
- L: No, she wasn't able to help me enjoy it.
- B: I'm sorry about that.
- L: She could talk sometime, but she didn't hardly ever say anything.
- B: I want you to tell me a little more about when you worked on the Dudley farm. Can you tell me a little about what the farm was like then in comparison to what it looks like now, since it has become a state park?
- L: At the time I was working there, they was breaking corn. I think I was pulling fodder there. I don't guess you've heard tell about that.
- B: Pulling fodder? Oh yes, I know about pulling fodder. I grew up on a farm in Alabama, and they gathered fodder. Did you work there the year around or just during the farming season?
- L: Most of the time. Sometimes I worked the year around, and sometimes I worked part-time, like gathering watermelons or grinding cane. I spent a lot of time grinding cane. I had to get up about 3:30 or 4:00 o'clock and go down to get the mules fed and ready to work the mill. I began grinding the cane for the juice and waited until they could put it in the kettle and start cooking it.
- B: When I visited the farm, I think I saw that old mill. Don't they still have it over there?
- L: Yes. We was out there. We had it in action.
- B: That was quite a social event to go to a cane grinding.
- L: Yes.
- B: Mr. and Mrs. Dudley had several children, didn't they? Do you remember how many?
- L: I don't remember exactly how many, but I can name a few of them. Mr. Ralph and Frank. They had one other named Harvey. They had daughters: Winnie, Edna, Dora, Myrtle, and Dolly were some of them.

B: How far is the farm from your property here?

L: If you go straight, it is about a mile.

B: But if you have to go back out to Newberry Road to get there, how far is it?

L: About a mile down the road and then about a quarter of a mile to the house.

B: So it wasn't that far away. I want to ask you about the road that the contractors who are going to build that new community out here were closing this year, that you and your neighbors opposed. How near is that to your property?

L: Well, some of the properties would be right on the road.

B: Is it in back of the church that's nearby?

L: It's where you leave the church and go straight down a quarter of a mile. Then you turn and go all the way out to the Alachua Road, and then it goes on across that road to one that used to come out down at 122nd Street. It was called Parker Road and is down just past the golf course. It used to come out to that regular highway.

B: Which was the highway to Alachua?

L: Highway to Gainesville.

B: The Newberry-Gainesville highway. I see. So that's now State Road 26, isn't it?

L: That's right.

B: So it went all the way out to there? About how long is that road that they're closing?

L: A lot of that has been closed – other than about a couple of miles of it from the highway back this way.

B: How many miles?

L: About two miles, I guess. This one going out from here to Alachua ain't ever been closed.

B: Is that the one that goes on by your mailbox out there?

L: No, it doesn't go by my mailbox. It's that other road down there.

B: What is the name of the church that's nearby?

L: United Methodist Church – Pleasant Plain Church.

B: Are you a member of that church?

L: No, I'm a member of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

B: Very good. Where do you go to church?

L: On N.E. 8th Avenue.

B: Is that in Gainesville?

L: Yes.

B: Oh, in northeast Gainesville near Duval Elementary School. That's quite a distance for you. That's great that you have a church there. This United Methodist Church has been here for many years, hasn't it?

L: It has been here as long as I know.

B: It's been here as long as you've been here. Well, ninety years is quite a while, so it was here before that, wasn't it.

L: Yes.

B: This is a beautiful area out here. I love its live oak trees. They're so big and so beautiful.

Is there anything else that you would like to tell the tape about the years that you've lived in this area and the changes that you've seen occur?

L: One of the main things I've seen in my life here is my sickness back in '59 when I was in the hospital. I came out and was baptized in the Methodist Church. I had a positive sputum, they called it, and I was taking medicine all that time. Then I had to go back to the hospital, and that worried me a whole lot. I thought there must have been a reason, so when I got back in the hospital during my stay there, one of the night nurses who went on at 11 and came off at 7 saw me reading my Bible and asked me did I want to take any Bible lessons, so that opened my eyes to Saturday as the Sabbath on the seventh day and opened my eyes to unclean meat and several other things like coca colas without caffeine.

B: You changed your diet.

L: I changed my diet all the way around.

B: You changed your diet completely, so that must have something to do with your longevity.

L: I believe it did.

B: Absolutely. I'm sure it helped. You certainly look very healthy now.

L: Sometimes I have a cold or something, but I ain't been sick enough to be in a hospital in a long time.

B: That's great. Well, I have certainly enjoyed talking with you, and I would like for you to tell me if there is anything else that you would like to see changed about the Jonesville or the Alachua County area?

L: Well, I didn't want to have the road closed over there. I would like to see a road left there instead of closing it to build a subdivision. I think a lot of the people will have to move out.

B: So you would like to see some of this encroachment on your property rights stopped.

L: I would like to see it not go through this property but go around this property. That's what I would like to see.

B: You feel that they could have done their development and left the road so that they could have gone around the property instead of closing the road to go through it.

L: Yes. That's what I would like to see.

B: I'm sorry that happened, but from what you're telling me, they've actually closed the road?

L: As far as I understand, it is closed.

B: Mr. Long, I would like for you to tell me a little more about when you were ill and you returned to the hospital. Could you tell the tape how you were feeling then and what it was like to go back and some of the people that you got acquainted with during that period of your illness. You mentioned Mrs. Laura Tucker. Could you tell me a little bit about her and how your family managed while you were gone?

L: Shortly after I became sick, I found out I had lung trouble. In two or three days they fixed me to go to the hospital and I went to the bus station. My brother-in-law took me to town, and I was boarded on the bus and went to the hospital. I stayed there for almost three years. They wanted to do surgery on me, but they

found out that it was too risky. I had infection in both lungs and they didn't think they ought to cut both lungs, so I was discharged later and came home and stayed about eleven months. I had a positive sputum and had to go back. In about two or three months, the doctors recommended surgery again. That time I prayed about it and one scripture was opened to me. "If your right hand offend you, you cut it off, so it won't spoil your whole body." I thought about it. They wanted to take off the lower left lobe of my lung. I got satisfied and had the surgery. In about three more months, I was home and have been home ever since. Laura Tucker was the one that seen about my family and seen about the children and was always thinking of others. She was a real nice lady.

B: She was instrumental in helping many people during that period of time. I knew her through my social work career, and she was very helpful and very active in the tuberculosis program in Alachua County. I certainly appreciate your telling us about that experience. Do you remember your children going with you to the Health Department on one of the trips when you went back to the hospital?

L: No, I don't remember that right now. Anyway, I prayed when I went to the hospital to take my mind off my children and my wife and not let me worry about them. So I went on to the hospital and stayed there very peaceful until they decided to do surgery. I said, "Do the surgery," and I've been home ever since. They said I wouldn't be able to do nothing and I had to take medicine all my life. I took medicine about a year and I was starting to forget it and I thought maybe I don't need it. I went to the nurse in the Health Department and she told me that if I felt like I didn't need it, don't take it. I got kind of afraid and took one dose and said, "I ain't trusting the Lord." I stopped taking it and that's been at least 35 years now.

B: That is certainly quite a testimony as to how healthy you have become.

Mr. Long, we haven't talked a great deal about your years as custodian at Newberry High School. Could you tell me a little bit about how you got the job and the years you worked there?

L: Yes. I was around here and running around "in the woods" and finally the head custodian told somebody he needed another man part-time. The man I was buying groceries from recommended me, so they hired me for part-time for about three months. After three months, the man said he hated to see me go and that I was as good as the one who hired me – Johnnie Woods. Anyway, he asked me if I get you a job, would you work? I said yes, so before he gave me a job that he thought he would, he was told that he could hire another custodian. So he hired me as a fully experienced custodian. I worked with him for quite a while until they moved him and they built a new high school. Mrs. Getzen, the principal of the elementary school, asked me, "Lyman, would you like to be my head custodian?" I said, "Yes, I wouldn't mind. There's one thing that might hinder my working on Friday nights. I'm a Seventh Day Adventist." When she told me,

“Your job comes first,” I changed my mind and said I would have to hunt me another job now. But she didn’t worry me. She kept me on there until one evening they had a carnival that ran until after sundown. She asked me, “Lyman, we’re having a carnival. I want you here.” I said, “Mrs. Getzen, I tell you what I’ll do. I’ll go home and come back and stay until nearly sundown and then I’ll leave.” She said, “Do that, Lyman.” I did that and I didn’t have any more trouble about not working on Friday night or Saturday.

I prayed a prayer when I left to go to the hospital, “Lord, keep me alive until all of my children are grown.” He did that. Now I’m 90 years old and I just ask that He keep me close to Him so when the time comes, I’ll be right there with Him.

B: That’s a beautiful story, Mr. Long. I certainly do appreciate your having me in your home today and telling me your story. It has been a pleasure to talk with you. Thank you.