Nancy Yasecko: This is an interview with Frank Judge Platt. August 27th, 1992 at 2502 Minton Road, Melbourne, Florida. Interview Nancy Yasecko, cameraman Robert Gilbert. Equipment camera, Sony BVP50. Beta SP recorders. Sony BVW35. Audio on channels two and four. Copyright, Brevard County Historical Commission 1992. Judge Platt, tape one.

Speaker 3: Rolling. Do you know where that blank one is?

Nancy Yasecko: Okay. Tell us when you were born and where?

Frank Platt: I was born in March the 26th in 1915. About 20 miles west of here and 10 miles ... That's Deer Park and 10 miles north of Deer Park, at Wolf Creek. I lived there until I was ... In 1920 we moved to Fellsmere. Then we moved back over there. We moved back to Fellsmere and I went to school down there. In the first grade and I come to Melbourne in 1924, in the second grade and graduated from Melbourne High school. I went to school first in Deer Park, to a young teacher. A log train run right by there. I got up in the winter and watched the log train go by. She didn't say anything about it, so I didn't learn to much.

Then I come to Melbourne, we had a dipping vat, right in the middle of ... Where the mall is up there now, the Melbourne mall. A calf pen there and had a calf house. We stayed there in that camp house with an older sister. I think there was four of us going to school. A brother and two sisters. We had to walk out and catch the bus on 192. [00:02:00] I stayed home most of the time. I didn't like to go to school. I didn't learn anything there. Then I went to Fellsmere and I learned something down there.

The schools were quite a bit different then they are now. I think one thing and there was not very many kids and hardly any classes. There were just a few. I think Deer park, they had all the kids from first grade through the 12th in one room, in one big room, for a school house. There wasn't but 28 kids in the whole school. They learned something. Most of them kids learned quite a bit. They taught ... The main thing was reading and writing, arithmetic. They didn't care much about anything else. Social studies or anything didn't bother them. I enjoyed going to school though. I had a lot of friends. I never had no trouble in school.

Nancy Yasecko: When your family first came here, what kind of work were they doing?

Frank Platt: Raising cattle. That's all they've ever known, as they come down from ... I think my great granddaddy brought cattle from North Carolina. Him and an old fellow by the name of Barber drove cattle down. They come through this country here somewhere. I don't know whether they crossed St John's river, but they went over here, just east of Holy Paw. Old man Barber stopped there. Platt went on over to Kathleen, which is right north of Lakeland and it was a town then. There's a town south of it, was Mulberry. It was there at that time, they said.

They stopped there and my granddaddy was born there in Kathleen. He was born in 1843. Then they had come down there about 1820 or 21. They bought land from Kathleen west, towards Tampa. Around where Plant City is. On Old Abstracts, most of that land has got Platt's name in, way back. Then they moved to little bit west [00:04:00] of Kath ... East of Kathleen and one of my granddad's ... My oldest uncle was born there. My dad was born in just west of Kissimmee, on Ready Creek, down south of Kissimmee, south west of Kissimmee.

He was born in 1872 and they moved to Deer Park. They build the first house in Deer Park. My granddad built it. He stayed there until 1895. He got married and moved over here. He bought land over here, but he had been over here, ever since he was a kid. They always came over here. He even had some cattle over here. Then he built a house over there and he sold it to my grandmother. He built a house out here, what's called Livingston Hammock. There weren't any trees. It was all open county then, just grass. Very seldom you'd see a pine tree somewhere and that was about it.

Maybe an oak tree, now and then, very few. There was a big hammock out there. He built a house out there by it. That's where my oldest sister was born there. The rest of them, he had houses over there. The next one I think was born over there, just south of Fort Christmas. That's south of 520, if you go across from Cocoa, in a place called Savage Place. He bought it from Henry Barton. Either Henry Barton bought it. I believe he bought it from Henry Barton. He give him 30 head of hogs for a house and 40 acres of land. That was pretty high price.

A hog was worth probably two to five dollars a head. Land wasn't worth probably three cents an acre. A house didn't cost much, to get the lumber to build a house, it didn't cost much. Labor didn't hardly cost anything. They had most of the houses were built by just a bunch of people get together and built a house. Two, three fellows done most all of the work. They had a lot of help and getting around. They hauled all their material

in ox wagon. Very few [00:06:00] people had mules or horses. They used them for cow work, but not for ...

Not the mule now. One man had a mule. It was real good. One of the best animals to work a cow. You ever saw was this mule and some fellow that had a 101 ranch, I think was Zack Miller. Come down here and he went back and somebody interviewed him and he wrote a book. He had a part in a book. He said he was in Florida and introduced horses. Everybody was riding mules, but there's only one man. That was a ... The mule could run as fast backwards as it could forward so in parting cattle, you didn't have to turn around.

A mule can't turn around as fast as a horse. That mule would back up and head a cow, or go forward. He could go forward pretty fast. Some old mules can move pretty quick. He was impressed with that mule. Later on he wrote a book and told about that mule.

Nancy Yasecko: What about the house that you all built? You built a house here in Melbourne, or did you [crosstalk 00:06:57] ...

Frank Platt: No, it was built in 1914. He bought it in 1923, I think. It's still standing. Seven bedrooms, two story. Nice house in a pretty place and big oak trees. When we moved there, there was no trees around. Now then I guess they're probably 60 foot high and wider than that. Some of the limbs I imagine are 50 foot long on it. You don't have to hurry up to make a forest. It grows pretty quick. I can remember when there wasn't any here. There wasn't hardly any trees here. It was ... You could see for mile in most any direction.

Right over east of us there, there was a sand ridge over there. A high sand ridge, white sand. You can see a gopher over there crawling on that sand ridge. Now and then you can't see 50 yards in any direction. It's grown up in palmettos and everything else. Very few palmettos. There were little round patches of palmettos back then. We used to like to rabbit hunt when I was a kid. Get some little old dog, with some kind of ... They'd run them and they'd run them from one [00:08:00] rye patch to the other.

You couldn't shoot one standing still. We had 22 single shot rifles. You had to let him run from palmetto patch to kill him. We had a lot of fun. We got there and we usually spent the night and eat most of what we kill. We didn't have too good a luck, I guess you'd say.

Nancy Yasecko: What other impressions did you have of this area when you were a boy?

Frank Platt: One thing was that open country. You'd see cows for miles and we worked cattle all the time and rode horses. It was an enjoyable life. You got to like it, to be in the cow business. Everybody can't be ... Even farming, everybody can't do it. I've known some people that had owned a ranch. They're granddad owned it and then their dad owned it. They didn't have anything to do with it. They went off to school. School wasn't too good around here. One boy, I remember, he went up to Wisconsin, went to school. Graduated up there and then he come back.

For 30 or 40 years he run that ranch and cow hunted nearly every day. He was more in the way and was help, whenever he helped you. One thing about it I remember real well, I went and helped him a lot. Especially when he got in bad times. I'd go help him. He would always rode an old crazy horse. He got in the middle of a bunch of cows. 1000, 1500 a head. He find one and run out. He'd run that cow just as far as he could and run all the cows over. You had to wait about a half hour to go gather then all back up.

He knew cattle. He knew what one was worth, down to the penny, what the cow would bring on sale, or if you butchered it and carried it to market. He knew all that part about cattle. He was a good cow man. Everybody praised him highly as a ranch foreman, you might say, even though he owned it, while he run the thing himself. He was real good at it. It takes long to be a cowboy I think, then anything you want to do. One thing is, there's no books, like one story they tell about, over here at the Mormons.

They brought some fellow from Salt Lake city over there. [00:10:00] They were telling, they had about 1,500, 2,000 head of cattle to pen. He went ... Got up to the gate. They were pretty wild. They’s come in off the marsh and they were pretty wild. He brought them up there. When they got them right up to gate, they were just about the time they started in, while he run up in front of them and holler, "Wait a minute let them see what it says. On page 22." All the cows went back, it’d take a couple of days, to get after them again.

I thought that's pretty good, but it's about that way. There's so many things you got to learn. You got to learn how to ride a horse real good and how to break a horse. You got to learn all these things, work a dog and work a whip. Then you got to be a good animal husbandry man and a good veterinarian. You got to be a good farmer. You got to know cows.

Some people can put 250 head of Brahma White heifer K's in a pen with their mother. They would stay with them about 15 or 20 minutes, outside of the pen as they're bringing them up.

Maybe take an hour to pen them. They get them in the pen. They cut all the calves on one side and all the cows on the other. They run those calves down a shoot. The guy was standing there and tell them which cow that calf belongs to. Maybe there's seven or eight different marks and brands. He also knows the number of that cow and everything about the calf. That's about he knows it. Now you don't learn this, you got to be born with it somehow. There was about six or eight of these people, it's all I've ever known, that could do that.

Everybody learns to mammy one, when you got a cow with pied calf and their white face, or black nose, or maybe he's a little crippled. He's got a spot on him somewhere. You can remember that belongs to such and such an old cow. When they're all the same color, all the same size, look just alike. I don't see how they mammy him.

Nancy Yasecko: Tell us about the whip? Tell us about the whips and how they were used?

Frank Platt: The whip was a real necessity tool to the cattle [00:12:00] business. A lot of these old marshes and sea myrtles and old black myrtles we call them, were real thick and a lot of saw grass in place. The cows would have trails to go down and they wouldn't come out. They used ... The whip used to, was right 20 or 22 foot long. Somebody would ride down there and pop out that whip and scared all them cows. They'd come out in the opening, where they could get them, where they couldn't hardly go in there and get them.

Then they had the dogs to hold the cattle up. You handle the dog with a whip too. He knew to stop, when you hollered and pop that whip, or he know to come back to you. The dogs are real good. They were mostly better than the cowboys. They worked, they liked that cow business, them dogs did. They were raised out of a special stock, of dogs ... I remember we started, when we'd still have some of that breed, that we got back in 1920 or 21. I'm sure that that's the same dogs. I think most any cow dog has got some of that blood in them. Everybody got a puppy and they all scattered them around.

All of them looked alike anyhow. They're yellow. Some bob tailed and some long tailed. Yellow ones usually have a black mouth. The black ones have a yellow mouth. Some are bob tailed. Even you breed two bob tails

and you get maybe all long tailed puppies. You breed two long tails and you get all bob tailed puppies. That's all of the same stock I'm sure. Then the whip, another use of it was, it signals from houses. People didn't live close together. Somebody popped a whip three times and leave about a minute between times. They knew that he was in trouble.

They go help him. Maybe his horse is bogged down, or house is on fire. Anything, why that's the signal they used. It helps to drive the cattle to you. You can be ... Cattle start to drift off in a direction, when you driving a lot of cattle, 1,000 head or more. They would drift [00:14:00] off towards a ... The way you didn't want them to go. You could start up the side and pop the whip. In wars type, whip the wards in that way. They would swing back the other way, so it helped out. A whole lot fewer people could drive a bunch of cows, if you used a whip.

It's pretty hard, some people learn to use them, but then it comes natural. With me, I was four, I could talk I reckon. I was trying to pop the whip. Today the whips has got down to where about 10 foot long is all they are, maybe 12. A long time ago they used 20 foot ... Something else too. They could kill a big rattle snake with that whip, or cut the end of a bull's nose about off. Split it with that thing. They were real good. They could hit anything they ... Whipped at. I think a lot of them mow the grass down with it, whip that grass and cut it right off.

It's a really handy thing. You can make an old cow go. If a bull is fighting or something, you can ride up there and whip him in the face. A lot of time a cow, or bull run at you and you got the whip already in your hand. You can hit whip the ... Hit him in the face with it and they'll turn them back. Probably a lot of horses were saved. I don't think anybody, because a man can out do a cow. He can get out of the way. Most people don't think so and they're scared of them. There's nothing any funnier, then a man about to get hooked in a cow pen.

Everybody else sitting there, but it aint fun to him. Everybody just die laughing if a cow bout catch somebody. Sometime they do catch then. I've seen ... One of my brothers ... We were going to cut a bull's horns off and the rope broke, just as he went ... Tie to him a post, at the bottom of a post inside of a cow pen. You throw a rope under and put it back through the rope and pull it down on his hind legs and pull his feet out from under. He fall over on his side and you hold them. Just as he threw the rope under there, the bull whipped back at him and broke the rope.

He run about, I guess 30 yards. There was an oak tree there with a low limb. He hung his hand up on the oak tree and the bull [00:16:00] hooked in his belt and went all the way down to his shoe. Tore his britches all the way down and never put a mark on him. Then another one had one run at him. It was a big old steer and caught his belt. Right beside there, caught the belt. Of course the belt broke, so it didn't hurt anything. The people have a ... I don't know I guess, they're kind of like football players. They're kind of immune to getting hurt or something. You guys pile up out there and ordinarily kill somebody.

They do it hundreds of times every weekend and nobody gets killed. Some of them gets something broke. Well the cow people get something broke too, but not hardly anybody ever gets killed. I don't know wheres they stay in shape. They work and go and do something all the time. 10 hours a day and in good shape. I've seen bulls get after somebody and almost had him hooked him all the time and he'd get on the fence, before the bull could hook him. Something, a man can out do the ... I had a uncle that said, that a man could out do a hog, or a cow, or a dog. The dog can't bite you, if you don't get scared and do something wrong.

A hog can't cut you, if you don't get scared and do something wrong. It's about the same way and a lot of accidents people have in cars. They're driving a car down the road and all of sudden something comes up in front of them. They just throw up their hands or holler, "Oh my God." They're hit. If they had went somewhere ... Old man Hudgeons out there said, "Anybody that parted cows would never wreck a car, unless something mechanically went wrong." He'd see a place to go, because when you're parting cows. There'd be a cow over there, or a horse over there and a horse over here and a cow over there. A cow is going to go.

That guy over there is going to head her and this guy is going to head her. They all run together. If they all hit, they'd kill somebody for sure, maybe all three of them. Just at the last millionth of a second [00:18:00] something happens. Nobody knows what happens. The cow go one way and the horses go the other way. Get ride to that edge and then they give up, or something. I don't know what happens.

Nancy Yasecko: Tell us a little bit about hunting. You probably did quite a bit of hunting around here.

Frank Platt: Yeah. We've hunted at the same place over here, about was it? I guess 25 miles west of here. I think I started hunting some time ... I know it was in the late thirties. I don't remember the year. Probably 38, or somewhere

along there. We hunted over there every year since, except the three years I was in the army. I didn't go, but my brothers and them hunted over there.

Nancy Yasecko: What would you hunt?

Frank Platt: Deer. We hunt deer all the time. That's about all we ever hunt. We run dogs and ... Like a slow dog and we'd ride horses and we'd keep up with the dogs. Surround areas there going into. Get there ahead of the dog. Then if the dog jumps a deer, we have to catch them all. Catch them, if we got one dog we catch. If we got three we'd catch them. If it's a buck and somebody shot at him. Well we discuss where they maybe hit him or not, or whether they think he's gone, or not. We put the dogs back on him and run him and see what happened to him. We catch the dog and then go hunt another trail. We usually find a track, a buck track and put the dogs on it.

A buck track is ... Sometimes you probably couldn't tell the difference. Usually the buck walks more on his toes and he has a wider back foot on it, on the back foot. He's wider at the back end. It doesn't come as sharp, a doe is real sharp. The buck turns out at the back, so you can tell it's a buck. Then the weight of the deer, how the dirt is and how much sign he made. After looking at for 30 or 40 years, well you finally get to notice, a little bit difference in the tracks. Especially if you're gone and get to kill a big old buck. Well you remember what the track looked like.

We had a lot of fun at it. We run down the creeks. Now we got walkie talkies, where we talk to one another all the [00:20:00] time. A long time ago we run a lot of big old swamps in Hammocks and creeks and branches and places. The dog was coming down the creek, where you can't tell what's on the other side, but always knew who was over there. Because the same people that run cows together all the time, are ones that hunts together. I knew what the man across the creek was doing, whatever he was doing, because the way the dog was barking.

How the dog was barking. He'd be way up, if the dog was going fast. If the dog was really slow, he'd be further back behind. Sometimes we only hunt with just two people and six and sometimes as many as 12, but that's very rare. They don't try to kill a deer. They just go along and hear the dogs bark. Really if the dogs bark, we'd have a better day then we do, when we kill a deer, if the dogs don't work too good. The dogs working is a whole chase. If you ever run deer in horses and dogs, you're never take a stand anywhere, or climb up in a tree, to wait on the deer to come.

I wouldn't wait 10 minutes, just kill the biggest deer in the United States, up a tree, I tell you. He won't come for a month if I get up there. I wouldn't hunt like that. I don't think very many people had ever hunted on horseback, but they were hunting. They may go maybe once or twice a year, something like that. They know there's a deer and they can get them. Of course they never do.

Nancy Yasecko: Did you ever run into any alligators?

Frank Platt: Yeah, there used to be a lot of alligators. We used to go across here, when they first made 192 out through there. A lot of times we'd cross there. There wasn't room for all of them to get up on the bank, laying, alligator to alligator for three or four miles, on both sides of the river. They'd be up there sunning. Some of the big ones. Some of them are 18 foot I guess, big alligators. We had one over there one time. This is some time back in early 20's, I guess, about 1920. We were coming in an old model T Ford and the alligator was across the [00:22:00] road. His tail was in a ditch on one side and his head was just about the ditch on the other side.

They figure about 22 feet. He wouldn't move, so we couldn't get by. We couldn't run in the ditch. There wasn't any room to go through the ditch anyway, there's a fence there, on the other side either. They threw sticks at him. Wouldn't let me even get out of the truck. They were afraid, I guess he'd catch me. Probably been a good thing if he had. They threw sticks at them and everything. All he did, just throw his head up, open his mouth up and blow real big. He wouldn't move. We backed way off down the road. My dad was driving. He said if we backed off and left him alone, he'll move pretty quick. We backed off down the road, a quarter of a mile or so. Pretty quick the old gator crawled on off.

I never seen him anymore. I think somebody shot his eye out. He stayed down there on the old trussle, where the railroad runs in there. The old trussle, stayed down there for a long time. A lot of people saw him. They would go down there just to see him, because he was real big. Some of the caves over here on Merrit Island, somewhere over there in that country, is big enough that you could lead a horse down in and get water. There's some big alligators over there at one time, or something. I don't know. It may have been some kind of dinosaur. I don't know if any of the pre-historic animals that lived in caves like alligators.

Nancy Yasecko: What do you mean caves?

Frank Platt: They'd dig a hole in the face of where they can get in a cave.

Nancy Yasecko: Gators do that. They have dens.

Frank Platt: Yeah, they dig a hole and he'll dig a hole pretty deep down. Then he'll go dig out a great place in there. Wash it out and bring all that dirt out, wash it all out. Then he comes out and fills up his stone with air and goes in there and puts air in. He's got air in there all the time. I killed out here. He was 16 foot after we had the hide salted for a couple of months. We stretched it out and it's still a little over 16 feet. It'd probably brought [00:24:00] up ... I don't know how much a big alligator that much. The man that bought it said that it would draw up a lot. He was a lot bigger alligator then that.

He had caught ... A man saw him catch, he said one of the biggest steer out there, which would've had been at least 1,400 pounds. He said it was dry weather and he reached out to drink water. The alligator take nearly all his whole head in his mouth. He said of course his steer jumped and they went in the water. He said, alligator went to roll him over and over and over. He turned his steer over and over, he was that big. Then he never come up. He looked for the steer to float up. The alligator couldn't possibly eat him all. After he never did come up. He was hunting and he lived right there on ...

He had a camp and his camp was right there on the bank, where the alligator was. Then I killed this alligator there, about 10 years after that. I believe he was big enough maybe that, but he said that he had a cave big enough to take the steer in. He probably didn't come out of it for a year. He stayed in there. There was a big one over there in Gene Green, on about eight miles west of where this one was. My brother in law, they were catching the calves, the big ones. He found where he went down the cave. He put a bunch of posts and a whole lot of logs and stuff up there in front of the cave, where he couldn't get out.

He went back about a year and all the posts and everything was there. He said, "Well I'll pull these up and get another one. Another big one ... It was a big cave. Another one big one would go down there and I'll get him. Three or four days he went back to see if one had went there and that one had come out. He had lived in there that whole year, without anything to eat. He stayed in there. We used to get water at the gator caves, when it's really dry weather. They always have water up close, because things come that they can eat.

Hogs and rabbits and things that they can eat, come to get water, while they catch them. He has this thing I was talking about, a cave. If he puts air [00:26:00] in there and keeps that water right up to the ground level. You can go there and the water is good to drink.

Nancy Yasecko: The caves right there along the water, right along the river bank or?

Frank Platt: No, they may be way out here 10 miles, from the river in an old pond or something, but they keep the water up there to their thing. It's always sandy. There's no mud around. It nearly always got sand. They go somewhere to get the sand and have it, when he crawls out, he crawls out over a sand bar, nearly every time. I guess it's on account of hogs and things coming to drink. They don't want to go in the mud too much. Maybe rabbits would normally get in that mud. He'd come up on that sand to drink. When it gets dry, he's got the sand there already.

Nancy Yasecko: Did you ever run into any big snakes?

Frank Platt: Yeah, I've seen some awful big rattle snakes. Two that I remember real well was over eight foot long. They were out here in the marsh. We were hog hunting and they had a boat and was loading the hogs in the boat. They were down between the bank. It was on the berm between the canal and the bank. The heaviest switch grass there and we caught, I think about 15 hogs out of the switch grass. It wasn't very big. Load them in the boat. Somebody had left a jacket, went back to get it. He said, "my gosh there's a big rattle snake, right in the middle of where we had all been." They killed him and we didn't have any way to measure him.

This fellow was about six foot three. His arms went way below his knees. He held him up as high as he could. He was still ... The tail ... He had him by the head and the tail was still on the ground. I figured he was eight foot. We went right on back, went around and stopped at the same place that the guy seen the alligator catch the ... Stopped and went there. There's a big hammock out there. We going to stop there to see if some hogs there. We walked up on the bank. There lay another one, just as big as that one. That was the two biggest I've ever seen, except then one ...

There was over there, this side of Holy Paw. There is a big long pond, they call Rattle Snake Branch. I believe it was Rattle Snake Pond, one or the other. There was about a six foot one and a big one [00:28:00] there. My brother in law killed them. I didn't see the snake then, but I was back in a few days and the bones were all there. The six foot one was, he'd be this wide and this other one was twice as wide and looked like twice as long.

That's the biggest one I've ever seen. I don't know where he came from. I don't know if he's a different kind of snake, or what happened. I think we have more than the kinds they think about. Some of them will bite a dog and there's a certain look in a kind of snake.

He would die in a few minutes and then one of the others that don't look like that one. They're not as round, they're flatter on the back and their color is different. The one with the dark ... The flatter back is not as round will stop at anything. It gets close to him, while he'll coil up and joy his rattle and hold his head back ready to strike. The other will try to get away. He'll run. It may be a female and a male, but I don't think so. I think it's a different breed. One of them is a lot more poisonous then the other one.

Nancy Yasecko: What would you do if there wasn't a doctor around? If somebody got bit?

Frank Platt: Well there wasn't any doctors back in my time. What you had to do is split the little hole, so everything would come out. You want all the blood to come out. They say don't cut out, but if you don't get it out, it's going in. The best thing to do is split the place, each one of the little holes there, unless it's this, where you split them both in one if you want to. Just so the blood comes out and try to make it bleed all you can. Then you put ... Always carried soda, baking soda, because somebody always needed baking soda for something.

Anyway you put on a little rag or something and put it on it. Then put a bunch of salt. We always had salt too. Put a bunch of salt on it and pour ... If you got kerosene is the best. If you don't have it. Turpentine if you got that. If you don't have that, why just put water on it. You can't take it off in 30 minutes and all the soda would be black. [00:30:00] There would be black on the some of the salt, then it goes to a greenish color. Nearly all the salt will be that color. Change this about every hour.

We saved a lot of dogs. Never saved anybody. Never had anybody bit that I was there at the time, or know of anybody. I know of people being saved with it. I saved a lot of dogs, that I know would've died pretty quick if I hadn't done something.

Nancy Yasecko: Okay, we're right near the end.

Speaker 3: Can you show us how big around the snakes were?

Frank Platt: That one over there. They ... I'd just seen the ribs, but they were wider then my hand like this.

Nancy Yasecko: Interview with Judge Platt. 20502 Minton Road, Melbourne, Florida. August 27th, 1992. Interviewer Nancy Yasecko. Camera man Bob Gilbert. Equipment camera Sony BVP50. Beta SP recorder. Sony BVW35. Audio on channels two and four. Copyright Brevard County Historical Commission 1992. Judge Platt tape two. Tell us what the first transportation was like, that you remember around here.

Frank Platt: Most of our first transportation were horse and wagons, or ox wagons. My dad had an old model T. It run sometimes, sometimes [00:32:00] it didn't. It didn't make no difference. We go somewhere and if it stopped, we walked on where we were going and never thought nothing about it. We had plenty of time. We would go to visit somebody. We usually spent the night. You always eat with them. They were insulted if you didn't eat with them when you come. Stayed late and eat whatever it was. Back in ... I must have lived in the best time a man could live on earth. From my ox wagon to see a man on the moon and you could get in an airplane.

I think it's a little over ... A little less than three hours, you could be in London. You could go cross the Atlantic in that short of time. Transportation has sure changed, from when I was little. We crossed ... Come across the river out there. Sometimes the bridge would be floated up. We'd have to run up on a little piece and then go see if it was down on the right post and everything. Go a little further and a little further. It takes 30 minutes, maybe an hour to cross the river. One time we brought a bunch of hogs across there. I don't know what happened. The bridge kinda slipped over a little bit.

They shifted and we had them in a box on the truck. The cooler we had the hogs in was just on the back of a flatbed truck. It fell off in Plains and what of my brothers got the thing open. All of the hogs got out and went to shore. We caught them later. None of them ran. He went across with the truck. We didn't cross with nothing else. I don't know if anybody else had any trouble crossing or not. It wouldn't let you cross later on. The water was so deep. We always just put a spread on the front of an old model Tor model E. Some kind of a canvas and go pretty fast.

The water would take the fan belt off and water in there would get up into the motor. We just pushed the wave of the water ahead of us and go right on across. Across the old creek in places, like that all the time and in

canals ... Go in and cross it. That's a long haul across the [00:34:00] river out there.

Nancy Yasecko: You mean you went across the river in a car?

Frank Platt: Yeah, well see they had a bridge there. This was after 192 was built.

Nancy Yasecko: Okay.

Frank Platt: Even back before they really fixed it, they had an old bridge there and a grade that you could go on. Most of the time it was under water, you couldn't go. It was ... You could go through it part of the time.

Nancy Yasecko: You could drive ... Literally drive across the river?

Frank Platt: Yeah, yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: The Indian River?

Frank Platt: No. St Johns.

Nancy Yasecko: The St Johns River.

Frank Platt: Yeah, yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: Okay that makes more sense [00:34:33] ...

Frank Platt: It was a long time before ... After that, before they ever built a bridge across the Indian river there. It was a little old narrow bridge. I remember one time it burned out down there a piece of it, and they didn't say anything about it. Some woman came over with a car, run into it and drowned. That bridge was burned. Then when they fixed it, they only put two ... I guess they were four by eights or something across and you drove across on them two pieces for a long time. I don't think anybody ever run off of that. They either had a sign up there to slow down. They get across.

Nancy Yasecko: You used to drive through town in Melbourne?

Frank Platt: Yeah. It was old sand, all bad sand. In Melbourne you could get stuck. We sit down there in a little old park there, where Melbourne Avenue and let's see, what's the name of that other street? Anyhow they come together right at the river. The cars had to go around and come this way and cars went on. They had it ... Sand was real bad. You're always getting

stuck out there. We used to go down there and watch the cars get in there and get stuck. I wasn't big enough, but people there would go help them push out every time. I've never seen one have to lay there. They never even got out of the car. Most of the time somebody just went out there and pushed them out.

The [00:36:00] old model T's was real good about going through sand and the model E's too. That's what most people had.

Nancy Yasecko: That was a form of entertainment watching people [crosstalk 00:36:10] ...

Frank Platt: Yeah, yeah, watching the ... There were people sitting there. A lot of them playing checkers and talking. A lot of benches out there in that little old park. They had a big pool. There build up with coquina rock around it and water pouring in and had fish in there. All the kids went down to watch the fish. Also they got to see the cars pushed out, or get stuck. That model T would throw sand up real high and that would tickle all the kids. Anyway to see that sand fly and they get all over them people is pushing and what not and digging them too.

US 1 was all dirt road. Down there at Grant there is a big high sand hill down there. They were always getting stuck down there. Especially people from New York. They'd run into that sand every time and get stuck. I don't know how they pulled them out. Maybe with horses, some of them, or something, because couldn't hardly anything else get up there but horses. Maybe oxen. They had a lot of oxen at that time. They probably pulled them out with oxen.

Railroad run across here was Union Cypress Company Railroad. They hauled logs from over on the side of St John's river back then. There's an old man with the name of Jim Mildret run one of the trains, an engineer. He could blow quite a few of the old religious song. My Country Tis of Thee and several more. He could play. When he passed our house up there, he'd blow one of them, when he went by. Every morning he come by, he'd play a tune on that whistle, train whistle. He'd stopped and let me ride with him. I had an uncle who lived out there on the river. I'd get in the old cab with him and ride out to the river. He'd let me out there. If I wanted to catch him back, I'd catch him back. He was a character anyway. [00:38:00]

Nancy Yasecko: Did you ever go out on any of the boats that were down in the river? [crosstalk 00:38:03]

Frank Platt: I didn't go on the boats very much. There was quite a few big boats in my time, it was still coming down. 1896 a lot of water, flood come and stopped up most of the river, where those big boats couldn't come in on St John. I never went ... I don't believe I ever went on one in the Indian River. I didn't know much about the Indian River. I went down there some. We used to go out there crabbing all the time and catch two or three, of those little crabs. When we get ready to leave, we'd throw then back overboard.

We wouldn't eat them. Nobody would eat them. Shrimp, catch a lot of big old shrimp over there at Banana River. Nobody would ever eat them, always throw them back. They know they were good, didn't know people eat them. Wouldn't eat anything like that. We wouldn't even eat catfish, these freshwater catfish. I guess I must have been 16 years old or more, before I ever eat catfish. I found out they were the best fish in the water. We'd throw a lot of them away and give them away to people, be fishing and throw them out, so it'd leave more room for the other fish.

We're throwing the best fish away. They were better than the perch we were catching, or bass was pretty good. Not very big ones. About eight in size was all we ever caught. This log train here. They had ... Somebody has got a picture of it somewhere. Cypress tree, they'd cut down. I think it was three or four car loads in that one train. The butt of the tree, the first one on it, it filled up one whole car. That's all they could get on it, that one log. I guess it was 150 feet high, or something like that.

Nancy Yasecko: Not too much Cypress left.

Frank Platt: No. Another thing too. I got some boards, cypress boards that was cut in 1914. They threw all the pecky cypress, they called it away and burned it. [00:40:00] They'd give it to you to haul it out and away. Some man got a bunch of it over there and build that house and built a barn and some sheds for the horses. Him and old man Gagner lived across, his name was Campbell. They got in a fuss. He went and bought some of that board. I think they were eight foot tall and build a fence between their houses there, for about, I guess it's 300 or 400 yards, where they couldn't see on another. I thought that was weird.

I got them boards and build a little shed out of it and got some out of here and the barn out here. It was cut in 1914, old pecky cypress. They burned it, thought it wasn't any good. It was the best lumber they had. They thought the worms would eat it, but there was no worm could've eat it. It just grew in that tree somehow.

Nancy Yasecko: Let's see. Do you remember any of the early doctors, or dentists or anything?

Frank Platt: Oh yeah. That old fellow George Crawford used to ride a horse in 1920, 1919. 1920 and 21. I don't know where he come from, but he came to our house from Fort Christmas and he'd come south. I remember he had plenty of castor oil. He had cream of tartar and salt. We had to take that every spring, on account of malaria fever. All the owners had to take it. He always had asfidity, that was if some of the kids got sick. You had to tie a little ball of asfidity and put on a twine string and put it around your neck and tote it.

It'd stink my goodness. I guess it came it off, because I don't think I ever had any of those kid's disease, everybody had. They went ... Back there then, if a kid had the measles, or mumps, or well even whooping cough, especially the one that makes the little old sores on you, chicken pox. They would go to the house, so they're kids would get [00:42:00] them. They'd have them when they were little, because if you get old and get that, it would kill you, or make you bad sick. They would take their kids where that was, so they get it and get over it. It didn't hurt the kids very much.

Then the German measles come along and I guess it killed a lot of people. It took quite a few people, the German measles, when they first got it.

Speaker 3: What did they do for Malaria? Which here was there ...

Nancy Yasecko: The stuff that you put in your neck, what was it called?

Frank Platt: Asfidity.

Nancy Yasecko: Is that a plant or?

Frank Platt: It's a gum. You can get it in liquid form and take it. My goodness, you had never tasted anything, it taste so bad. I take it ... Touched it, to my tongue and take some of that. I'd rather have the disease then have the medicine. I thought ... It was bad. I remember that old man Crawford though. My mother had a ... She had bruised her finger. It swelled all up and was real bad. He said, "I got to lance it. I got to lance it." She said, "No it'll get all right." He said, "No I got to lance it." Well if my dad or some of us, I let her take a sharp pocket knife and stuck a little hole in there and it would've been all right.

He lanced it and he lanced it this way. Her finger dried right up on her hand like that and stayed there the rest of her life. Got all them liters too. He wasn't much of a doctor. I guess he saved a lot of people's lives in a lot of ways, in things he'd done. He carried a lot of worm medicine. I remember I had hook worms one time. They thought I had them, I know if we never checked or not to see. Anyhow, the doctor ... This was Doctor Been. He was an old doctor here a long time. He delivered most of nieces and nephews.

He give them, I think 14 of them pills. They did give them to dogs a long time, before they give them to people, but they even quit giving them to dogs now. They were about that long and about as big as the end of [00:44:00] your thumb. They were a yellowish looking color. The stuff in them was really yellow. One of them would have killed all the worms in me and it like killed me. I was supposed to take 14 of them things, I think it was. One every day for two weeks. I got along about the third or fourth day, when I start swallowing, it'd go down and come back up. I swallowed it and go down, directly the bus and go all over the place. Then I'd throw up everything I had.

I didn't take very many of them, before I quit. I said I couldn't take more. The hook worms weren't near as bad as the medicine, I tell you right now. The hook worm ... That cream of tartar and salt too for malaria was a bad dose. Every spring we had to take a bunch of that. They'd mix it up and take it. Salt is a good medicine for a lot of things. It's good for horses. Then like a poultice like putting it on a snake bit. It's real good. You can put [crosstalk 00:44:56] ...

Nancy Yasecko: Epson salt?

Frank Platt: Yeah, put Epson salt on it, or put it in a real thick liquid like your feet and put it in it. It draws out real good. There's an old woman lived this side of us. Penny Simmons, she was a savage, before she married Mike Simmons. She knew all the things to take the herbs and stuff. She growed some and she go out in the woods and pick them and make some kind of medicine that you put on stuff. She could cure about anything. She was a good doctor. One of her nephews got his head about cut off. It cut one jugular vein all the way in two ... There's just a little string holding it.

Her boy stuck his finger down the side, was pumping the blood out and there was a big hole cut in the other one. They carried her ... There were over here out from Cocoa there, across the river on Lake Winder, on the west side of Lake Winder. They went in horse and wagon back up there,

where they lived up in Wolf Creek, was about six miles. When they got there, she sewed that place [00:46:00] up and put something on it. Something she had ... Probably something she had made, because she made some mighty good medicine. Hog lard and put everything in it that you could think of.

You could get that stuff, today now you can't get it, but it's better than most anything you can get from a doctor. Anyway she fixed him up and they carried him in an old model T then to Kissimmee. The doctor over there and I think his name was Hicks, the same as the doctor over here. I believe Hicks over here is his daddy. Carried him over there and he said ... He looked at it and said, "Well I don't know what doctor you carried him to, but he did a lot better job then I could've. I put some ..." They had some old sheets wrapped around it and pads. He said, "I'll put some bandage on it and you better carry him back to him. That was this old woman. She delivered me when I was born.

Nancy Yasecko: There were quite a few Indians that lived?

Frank Platt: Yeah, there was ... When we lived down in Fellsmere, before my time they lived down there. My dad built a house down there in a place called Frank Mayob (?). My have been even before Fellsmere was there, because it wasn't there until 1910. It may have been before that. There was Polly Parker. She was a real famous Indian Chief out in Oklahoma. She was there. She was a Chief of this little tribe. She's Chief of the whole bunch, but she had that little tribe there, village is all it was. She come over to the house one time, wanting to see my dad. My mother told her, said, "No he's not here, but he'll be back in a little while." Figured they'd leave. She says, "We'll wait." And sit down.

He didn't come back for a couple of days and she stayed there. That was in 1905. My brother was born, just a little boy and five or six of them were along there. What she'd come for was to tell him that somebody was stealing hogs and it wasn't them and told them who was doing it. They had walked across the marsh. We didn't know anybody could cross, but she come [00:48:00] across with ... There was five or six of them. There were two girls with her, I think she said and four men had come across the marsh. That's all she had come for. Then they supposed to have an uprising and my dad had a bunch of people to haul in ... They had big old ox wagons. They had three yokes of ox to pull each wagon and big wagon.

They pulled in lighted wood into Sebastian, for the train to run on lighted wood. They hauled that in there. They had ... The Indians were supposed to come and wipe them out at Fellsmere. They had two guys go out there and they were supposed to holler, if they had seen the Indians, while they were going to give the alarm. They got lost off one or somewhere and the other. One of them done something and hollered and that scared the other. He run, told them the Indians are coming. Everybody bunched to leave and my dad said, "No. Polly isn't going to let them bother me. Polly won't let them bother me. I'm not going."

They left and there was one baby born in the wagon as they were going to Sebastian. They had a little fort built over there. One of those old fort was left there. I don't even know where it is anymore. Anyhow they all went over there. My dad stayed and they didn't come. They had seen him after that. He'd seen her and she said, "No there was nothing to it. Somebody got the story out." It scared them people pretty bad.

Nancy Yasecko: When do you think that was?

Frank Platt: 1905 or 1906, because my brother was born in 1905 and he was real little. They wanted him, begged my mother, said he would make a good Indian, a good Indian. She'd say take him, take him. They do that. They give kids to one another. The Chief's son, that isn't his son. That some kid he liked and take it up with him and that's his son. That may not even be any kin to him, not even any of his relatives. I am not too sure that Chief wasn't pretty good with doing things.

Nancy Yasecko: They kept cattle too, didn't they?

Frank Platt: Oh yeah, they had a lot of cattle. Talking about the cattle and [00:50:00] the Indians. The people came down here a long time ago and they wrote a lot of books about it and tell you that, all you had to do to go to Florida ... In Texas they had a show. John Wayne went out there and marked all them cows. My uncle and them, they remember most of this, because they were down here way back. Their daddy and them and they said, all the people that come down here and mark the cows, were hanging out of oak trees somewhere. They'd didn't believe in letting a man off if they caught him stealing cows. The first oak tree they come to, they threw a rope over a limb. They jumped his horse out from under him and rode off and left him.

There wasn't a whole lot of stealing, I don't think went on during that time. They didn't have any law down here. The old timers said Gainesville

was the last law. Now they had Sheriff's. They were rough characters. They couldn't get around all the people. It was mostly families, like family feuds and things. Maybe somebody did steal somebody's cow, but that's because they had other problems. They were stealing from a family. They weren't stealing from a man, or stealing because they wanted to. Some of them I have known that they told about, would find somebody else's cow. Killed her and get the liver and put it up beside the fire and he probably wanted to do that and just leave the cow lay there. Pick out a good fat cow, a good cow and kill her.

Some of them they would cut ... The dewlap hangs down under the throat of a lot of these cattle. Especially some of them, a lot of them are Spanish type cows. They had a dewlap on them. They would split that and stick the front leg through it, so the cow couldn't get up. Then the guy would find her after she died. It was a family feuds more than it was ... Now they did steal cattle and when the stole them, I understand they sold a lot of cattle. Like out in Texas, I understand [00:52:00] if they had drove all 50 head of cattle, they had a pretty good haul. Down here they didn't start off with less than a 1000. They had to drive them from Kissimmee, or south of Kissimmee, they had to drive them all the way to Jacksonville, before they could sell them.

It wasn't any use. They had to go a long ways with them and it would take a long time. I remember one time it was down there and some fellow went to them. They imported, during these feuds that they had going. They had a bunch of them going, all at the same time, some of them. Some of them lasted out the others. They had imported all the bad men they could get out of Dodge City, or Tombstone Arizona, in Texas. They paid them big money to come down and people had a lot of money. They'd hire these people to come down there. I think every one of them was killed, except Willie Mess Harden. I don't think he ever made it back to Texas. I think he died up there somewhere in north west Florida.

He had a store up here, one of them little old towns out east of Ocala. He run a store there for a long time. He killed some bad men there that would come. I think they were from Texas. The Sheriff, they wanted to do something and the Sheriff wouldn't let them. They were going to kill the Sheriff and he went out there and shot them, two of them.

Nancy Yasecko: Tell us a little about the scrub cows.

Frank Platt: They were a fighting type of cow that they brought ... I guess that's about all they had in Spain. They brought, I think there was 200 head of cows

and 200 head of horses, was brought in ... I believe that was about what 15 and 13, or 15 and 14 15, somewhere right along that area. I don't know why they didn't do much with them. It seems that most of them all got away and then there were a lot of wild cattle. By the time in early 1800's, somebody had marked all them cows and claimed them all and also all the hogs. They were all marked. There were no wild hogs. They were all marked.

Nancy Yasecko: How would they be marked?

Frank Platt: They would catch them and put a mark in their [00:54:00] ear. Cut a little ... Mine is a small fork on a bit crop, or a small fork on a loose crop. The smaller fork is a thing like that in the end of the year. The owner have to lose his thing, just about like that, half of it in the bottom of the ear. Then you could have a upper bit. You cut out a piece up around part of the ear, or under bit around the piece. The Indians, they marked theirs, where they start up next to the head and cut a little bitty place out and each one had different. It'd have a three little notches and then a space and three more little notches. On the bottom same thing. They didn't cut a very deep one, they just cut a little one.

There's looked real funny, but nobody ever learned to read them. They didn't know who's hog was who's. Everybody knew the mark and brands of people. Their marks and brands. All the white people marks and brands, why everybody knew. I had a fellow work for us, way back then. He had a book and he had over 500 marks and brands of everybody that he knew. Their marks and brands and connected with them. Some of them had ... People living in Ocala. He knew their mark and brand too and they'd see him with their cow somewhere. One thing about that mark and brand. The Mormons bought a lot of cattle from old man John Parton that lived up there in Guulf Hammock. I don't know how many thousands of cattle he delivered to them.

They were given more money for the cattle then they were worth. He kept delivering these cows. Kept hauling them. One day the old man ask him he said, "When are you going to quit hauling the cattle?" He said, "Whenever you all mark and brand them, so I'll know that thems some you already bought off, all of them back. You all turn them loose and they go back and I haul them back to you." He had a lot of cattle. It was a joke, but they didn't think it was a joke. Every cow they got after that, they marked them. They thought he really meant it, but he was pulling their leg. The cattle wouldn't go back, it's too far.

Nancy Yasecko: They're [00:56:00] pretty sturdy stock, those scrub cows?

Frank Platt: Yeah. One of them get bogged down ... They were bad to fight. They would hook you, or a horse, or anything. Especially if they had a little calf. You had to always watch, stay away from them. They would live off of anything and they could live off of palmettos, where these other cattle starve to death, they got fat. When you bred them up ... They weren't very big, when you put the Brahma with them, they got a lot bigger. That was the first cross we had, because the fever ticks killed everything else. The Brahma was a little bit ... I don't know where it was ...

Their skin, or where the tick didn't like the smell of them or something. Maybe they wouldn't get on a goat, I don't know. They had that smell to them. They didn't kill the Brahma as much as they killed the others. The scrub cow was immune to them. They didn't kill any of them. I've seen on them so thick, you couldn't have stuck a pin in a cow, without sticking it through a tick. The scrub cow would live and then her offspring would live. They were ... That's one thing that helped us a lot in the cow business. We had raised a lot of calves and had a lot of land. We had cattle all the way from Fellsmere up to Titusville on this side of the river. From the other side, from way north of Deer Park, all the way to Road 60 down there. It was all open range just about it. Had cattle all the way.

Take us about three to six weeks to make the round. When I got through ... I was talking to somebody the other day, when I finished down there at Road 60, it was about 70 miles home. I'd been riding two or three weeks and start heading home. It was 70 miles to get home. That was pretty hard days. The times were pretty hard. We enjoyed it. You have to enjoy it, or you never will be a cowboy, or you can't stay with it. It will eat you up. A cowboy is [00:58:00] just like playing football. Everybody does his part and a little bit more. It's kind of game. If the cattle gets away, that's the same thing if a guy didn't tackle a guy and he made a touchdown. You got the honor behind you. You got to head that cow and get back and head that other one, before they get started off.

They're all wild. The old scrub cows even after they were bred up and had some better blood in them, they would get in a bog hole and bog down. You could go pull them out. We used to go cut a bunch of palmetto fans and pile them up, usually wet, anyway around there. We couldn't pull them up to dry ground. We put palmetto, so they had a better footing if they got up. Come back and they'd be eating the palmettos fans and go on. Most cattle wouldn't eat them see, but they would eat them. They were good marsh cattle. I've seen them out here in this marsh, when the

water was ... Just their backs were sticking out of the water. They'd stick their head down and leave it a long time.

When they picked up their heads up, they'd blow two streams of water out 20 feet. It looked like that, it was a big bunch of water come out of their nose. I don't see how they held it all. They'd go right down. They stayed fat, my goodness. They were as fat as they could be. They got something under that water was real good.

Nancy Yasecko: They were eating something.

Frank Platt: Yeah, real strong, high protein, or something that they got. They were the worst cattle though to fight. They would even run in. I'd seen one out here run at my brother in law, a little bull. He jumped out of the way. There's a cabbage tree there and he ran around the cabbage. The bull stuck his horn in the cabbage so far, he couldn't pull it out. It held him. We went and put a rope on him and cut his horns off right at his head. We always carried a little piece of saw blade. Hack saw blade, or a meat saw blade and put it up under the back of the saddle. Then your wrap a handkerchief or a bunch of grass or something around it. You could saw a horn off right quick. We carried one all the time.

If we got a cow that was a bad [01:00:00] to fight. Even bull, we roped a lot of big old bulls and sawed their horns before we got ... One we come from ... My dad bought ... This old man John Parton I was talking about. When he left Kissimmee and went to Osceola County and went to Gulf Hammock. He sold my dad all the cattle he left over there. We didn't know where to get them. My brother had a bull over there that had went from somewhere west of Deer park, over in that vicinity. They brought the bull in there and we got in Deer Park and we couldn't do nothing with him. He was a bad ... Had a big long horns. We finally got to Kemfer's butcher house there and pens.

We got him in that pen and we run him in that shoot and was going to get their meat saw and saw them off. It was drastic. We had to saw them off. Couldn't bring him across the river with the horns on him. We were scared to try it. Had to get the horns off. We got in there and there wasn't no saw or nothing. There was no lax there. We pulled his head up over the side of the pole and cut his horns off with an ax. We never had no trouble. We drove him right on Fellsmere without any problem.

Nancy Yasecko: Okay. Let's cut. Right at the end of the scene. ... Interview with Frank Platt. [01:02:00] 2502 Minton Road, Melbourne, Florida. August 27th,

1992. Interviewer Nancy Yasecko, cameraman Robert Gilbert. Equipment camera, Sony BVP50. Beta SP recorders. Sony BVW35. Audio on channels two and four. Copyright, Brevard County Historical Commission 1992. Judge Platt, tape 3. There's a correction on the address. Instead of 2502 Minton Road, it should be 2505. I guess mosquitoes were pretty bad.

Frank Platt: Sometimes they were real bad. Old man said you could swing a cork can around, all the way around you and come back and have two quarts of mosquitoes in it. They must have been pretty bad. I've seen cattle that they killed, with quite a few cows were killed by mosquitoes. They smother them to death. Those mosquitoes are so thick, so you can imagine. They don't ever last long enough to suck enough of blood out of one. Over a period of time, maybe a month or so, if they don't slack up. They usually slack up see? They get so many of them, they breathe them down in their nose. Whenever the cows dies, they all pour out. I've seen balls that big around and probably six foot long. They would come out of their nose. They were that much packed in there.

Speaker 3: How big were they?

Frank Platt: Oh it was probably an inch through and maybe more than a diameter. More than an inch. Probably an inch and a quarter diameter. They'll be 15 or 20 dead here and over there, three of four miles, there will be four or five dead like that. I don't know where the cows got most all the mosquitoes, because there's other cattle around there. Maybe some of them had somehow or another blow them out. If they could ... If they coughed or something. A calf can't [01:04:00] breath through their mouth. No animals can breathe through their mouth, I don't believe.

Nancy Yasecko: What about people? What would you do with all ... How did you keep them ...

Frank Platt: We had mosquitoes bars and built smokes for the horses and dogs. Didn't have no school out for the horse, the dog, but we did for the people. We always toted ... That was one thing for sure. You carried your had a, small blanket and a mosquito bar and an extra suit of clothes. You always had a slicker. That was about all you could do, because a horse is heavy. You had to carry a lot of feed. We had tote all our own feed most of the time. We put a ... 30 quarts to feed. We fed the horse two quarts night and morning. We built smoke for the horses at night. We'd go around the place ...

One problem we had there, the cows would come to that smoke and get in all there with horses. Sometimes a mosquito bar and everything there ... Another thing that was funny thing about mosquitoes real bad, the cows would get scared to something and run through camp. You call that a stampede. Then you run out of that mosquito bar and tore it up. That usually turned the cow, but when you come back to them, the mosquito bar is tore up. We had to wrap up the best we could. It was always hot. I'd never seen it ... You couldn't get under the blanket it was too hot. That mosquito would get under there with you anyway, pretty bad.

Nancy Yasecko: What would a mosquito bar look like?

Frank Platt: It's a mitten, like a cheese cloth mitten. The top of it was usually on a bowl of homps and cloth. It was about 24 inches at the top. 6 foot long and then the bottom part of it, was real ... It would cover an area of six foot across it at the top and seven foot down the side and six foot across the bottom. In other words, you could put two beds under one bar. [01:06:00] Another thing if you had a hole in it, like I was talking about. You just take a twine string and pull it up and wrap it around it and the hole would stick it. If you have one little hole in it, all the mosquitoes will find it in a few minutes. You have to get a palmetto fans or something and kill all them in the bar when you get it down.

They're always in there whenever you get in there. I've seen it, a mosquito bar be plum black. It would be light where you could see. Maybe just before day light and it'd be on that mosquito bar plum black. The horses didn't seem to mind em as bad as they do now. Maybe they were used to them. The cattle didn't seem to mind them. There weren't any mosquitoes where the cattle were. I never could figure that out. You never could get in a bunch of cows to sleep, they're always wild, run off. The mosquito bar we put a ... Usually found something to tie it to, but if we didn't, we just stuck four cabbage stalks in the ground. If it's something to tie it up high, you tied it up high, because it was cooler.

If you didn't have anything to tie it to, you stuck them in the ground and tie it just where you roll over, where you wouldn't touch it on the top. It didn't get on the top much anyhow, they were around the sides. I remember one time we were over here and they were that thick as the guy where he caught the two quarts in one quart can. We were bringing some cattle from up there in Orlando and cattle in Fellsmere. There was a boy that come with us, that helped the other guy and he didn't have a mosquito bar. Somehow or another his got left out of his bed roll. He put

the bed roll on. I guess his mother probably take it. He was a young boy and take it out to wash it and she didn't put back in.

He didn't know that, he come off of without that. We got over there just across the river from here. Dan Kempfer from where he lives there. There's a cow pen and everything in there. We stopped there and the mosquitoes were about as bad as they get. I tell you they were bad. He didn't ask much, so I moved mine over a little bit and let him sleep with me. Ever since that, me and him have been good friends. One way to gain to friend, don't let the mosquitos [01:08:00] get after him. That's a pretty good way to gain a good friend.

Nancy Yasecko: I guess natural disaster wise, they were a few hurricanes that came pretty close.

Frank Platt: Yeah. I remember the first one was in 1920 or somewhere there about. We lived at Deer Park and there was a big hickory nut tree between our house and the barn out there. It had been there for several hundred years, because there was big old scars all over it. It was a big old tree. It blew it down right towards the house. It was like about 10 feet getting to the house, the top of it. That's about all I remember about that, except the high water that we had, during that same time. We couldn't creek the cross to get out. You had to swim a horse across to get out. We had ... We were going to school. When the high water came up, we were at school, so we couldn't get back home. There was an old camp house up there, about half way from where we lived to the school house. We camped there and went to school.

Wore the same clothes we had and everything all week. Went to school and water on down that time. Weekend we got back to the home.

Nancy Yasecko: What about around here? Any bad storms come through?

Frank Platt: They say that we got a high pressure area, or a low pressure area or something, that keeps them away. Some kind of pressure area. Keeps them off of Melbourne. I remember one ... We went to South Florida, somewhere around Naples. We went all the way up to the Pan Handle, Panama City and turn around and come back to Tampa. My daughter went through Tampa and then went to Okeechobee and headed for Melbourne. The next thing they knew about it, it was 100 miles west of the beach over here, west of Melbourne, I mean east of Melbourne. Out in the ocean. Another one we had not too long ago. Come up, hit Miami and come up the coast. Went out to Fellsmere and was headed for here.

All of sudden it was gone. They didn't know where it was headed. They find it about 50 miles out there in the Atlantic.

We get a lot of [01:10:00] water and our problem is little tornadoes. Nobody didn't know anything about it. I knew they come through, because I had seen where they struck. We only had 65 mile an hour winds, or there will be some place really tore up, a little area. I've even seen it blow the palmettos out of the ground and blow lighter stumps out of the ground. It must have been a mighty strong tornado to have done that, but it didn't hit anywhere, only in the open spaces. It wasn't any houses or anything. I don't know what it would've done to a house. It'd probably demolished it, or maybe taken it off, pull it off.

Nancy Yasecko: What about bad freezes?

Frank Platt: Freezes, we've had several of them. They claim that their [cloves?] was killed by the freeze here lately. We had in the 30's. I forgotten what year it was. We were going to school at the ... They just built the new Ruth Hennegar building. That was before the 30's. Must have been in the 20's sometime. The water spicket was leaking out the side of the building and it was froze all the way down. The water pipe was frozen. It was noon and the next day at noon it was still frozen and it didn't kill the [cloves ?]. That was colder than anything we've had here lately. We had, I think it was about 58, we had a bad freeze. Everything was pretty well frozen in the afternoon.

Our water pipes all frozen. We had a sprinkler that was running all the time. It kept sprinkling and we had a little bush out here in the back. Nancy went and got the ... It had frozen up on top of it and all the way down to the ground. She went and picked off a lot of the icicles and put them in a deep freeze and kept them for several years, because she thought they were pretty. I've never seen any snow on the ground except in ... I've been up there in Canada, that glacier and walked on it. I've never seen it snow and it'd be on the ground then. I was also in New Zealand at Mountain Cook up there. It was snow there and [01:12:00] got pictures made, but it hadn't snowed in two or three weeks. It was nothing but ice and frozen ground.

Nancy Yasecko: Okay. Moving onto a new subject.

Frank Platt: Okay.

Nancy Yasecko: I bet you've seen a little change in the land values around here.

Frank Platt: Oh yeah. I remember a land ... I don't think it was worth three cents an acre, to tell you the truth, but none of it didn't sell. The County took nearly every bit of it. It was two or three cents an acre for taxes. Nobody would pay the taxes, just let the county have it.

Nancy Yasecko: Was that during the depression or?

Frank Platt: Yeah, during the depression. Nobody had any money to buy it with anyway. They didn't have the three cents to buy an acre. There was some talk about ... Later my brother bought a bunch of this land down here for five dollars an acre. Miami Herald, because he owned the bonds of the drainage district. He bought that piece of land from the drainage company. They were going to say that the deeds weren't any good. That he would have to give the land back to the drainage company. Anyhow, I guess he would have to give it back, but there's a Colonel over here at the beach, that happened to hear about having a trial. Happened to hear about it, so he came over there and said, "He wished he knew that Platt wanted the land." They tried their best to sell it to him for three dollars an acre. He wouldn't have it, or nobody else would.

He could have had it for three dollars and the Judge threw it out of court. That helped that land deal some. Then he sold that to, let's Mac, I think he sold it too. Then he started general development. That was all the general development land was what he had. I think it was 62,000 acres of it to start with.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah I guess it's [crosstalk 01:13:34] ...

Frank Platt: The land here then ... Just before that, land was 5,000 dollars an acre. In 29, boom everybody was in ... Nobody didn't want to sell no land. Nobody but the county owned it and they wouldn't sell none. People that owned land ... What really changed the value of your land so much, was the Murphy Eye's tax, they could take your land if you didn't pay the tax. Before that if you owned a piece of land and you didn't [01:14:00] give nobody a deed, you can sell it to 100 people, but you never put a deed on record. A lot of people see, they didn't ... The courthouse was down in Kenansville. You bought a piece of land up in Titusville. You didn't want to ride a horse all the way down there, to put it on record.

You thought, "Well I'll go down there next week, or next month, or next year and put it on record. Well if somebody come along and buy it and you'd give them a deed. Yours was never on record. Okay way on down here, 30, 40 years, somebody owned the land, or some of your

grandchildren, or great grandchildren come up and say, "They never put this on record." Go down and take the land. Whatever you had built on it. The land was yours. They didn't get paid for any improvements or anything. That changed that situation a lot. The county got a lot of land through the county taking it back ... Give them the power to take the land too.

I reckon they owned nearly all of Brevard country, because one year there, I think they didn't pay the school teachers for three months, or any county workers. Nobody had no money. They couldn't buy land or nothing. They couldn't even pay the taxes. The railroad and I think that was maybe even the light company, I don't think paid any taxes. The railroad paid most of the tax. My dad paid a pretty good portion of it in that time.

Nancy Yasecko: What about lately?

Frank Platt: It's gotten real bad. It's one thing that really had got me worried, is this storm water tax they put on. That's seven dollars an acre and we own a lot of land. They're never going to do any good. They've never done anything to help me. Anyway, that's just money like throw it away. Taxes have got really out of line. Like I tell everybody, you can't tax a place into the economy. You can't get it up by taxing it. You got to start on the other way around. Lower the taxes. Something has got to be cut out. I don't know what it's going to be. [01:16:00]

Nancy Yasecko: If it's a small lot with a house, that makes more sense I guess, for that use of property.

Frank Platt: Yeah. Well, I don't see too much that they can do. They already got a drainage district and the flood control people, that's enough taxes for water. Why did they want to put on a storm tax, that's not going to do very many people any good. Now if they want to put a storm tax in the city of Melbourne and run some pipes into the Indian River and let it go out. Build them some kind of a refined plant to fix that stuff they run through there, that can go into the river. That would be all right. None of my stuff is going into the river anyway.

Nancy Yasecko: I guess a lot of land that used to be ranch land is now houses.

Frank Platt: Oh yeah, nearly every bit of it, it's not ranch land anymore. The only the one I know left here, would be my nephew out there at Carlisle. He's got quite a bit of land left. What didn't sell ... I sold most of mine, but the

government take this endangered wetland. What it's endangered from I don't know. It's been there for millions of years. It hasn't changed a whole lot. They're talking about the water situation. You got rain you got water. If you don't got rain, you got you might say a desert. He's got quite a bit of land left, but they've taken a lot of his land too, all along the marsh out there. Actually I think it was better when the cow people owned it, because there was a lot more hogs and deer and wild life on it then. As quick as the government gets a hold of it, first thing they do, is open it up to the public.

These poachers got out there and pretty quick there's nothing left. One of your stray calves gets off of there, why he's in somebody's deep freeze pretty shortly. You know what happens to everything else. The deer and the hogs and everything disappear fast. I don't know ... [01:18:00] Taxes is the only way you can keep a place going, but you can get carried away with it. Too many things that people want and they say, "Well we'll put a tax on and get it." They could do without that. A whole lot better than they can do without something to eat. They've taken all the farmland and people are not going to have nothing to eat. I think they plan on importing it, but then you have to have money to import it. Where are they going to get the money.

Nancy Yasecko: I was going to ask you if you'd be willing to play us a couple of tunes on your harmonica?

Frank Platt: Oh yeah, yeah. I blow that thing all the time anyway. One more little bit wouldn't hurt. I used to carry that in my pocket, now I chew tobacco. Blues stay with me. [Platt plays three songs on the harmonica]... Okay. You want another one. The dogs, we'll run the dogs. ...[01:20:00] Oh blues struck his tail. ... Treed him. Run right up the tree.

Nancy Yasecko: You carry your harmonica with you?

Frank Platt: All the time. I've carried it for ... Somebody wanted to know the other day, could I show him how to play the harp. I said, "Like I play it." I said, "No, but I can tell you how." I said, "Get you an harp and start practicing on it every day for about 70 years. You can blow it as good as I can." That's all there is to it, it's just simple as that. I don't know where the idea come from, or nothing. Other people were blowing one and I picked it up and started blowing on it, when I was about five years old. Been blowing on it ever since. My dad blowed one and he would buy ... You can buy it anywhere. Every little commissary and every little old place. If they sold

anything, they had a harp. It was only 10 cents, these good ones. They cost 20 something dollars now and you can't even buy them anymore.

They don't even make them anymore. There's none like this. There's a lot of people who make them, but there not like this one. Anyway he buy it and blow four, or five tunes and let it up on the shelf. I'd [01:22:00] leave it there for a week or two and I'd say, "If you're not going to blow that harp, how about letting me blow a little." "Yeah, go ahead and take it." I would go and hide and wouldn't let nobody know it. Long time, I guess I've been blowing the thing for 30 years, before some of the family even knew I could blow a tune. A lot of other people knew I could blow it, but the family didn't know it. I'd let them hear me. I was kind of bashful about that harp blowing back in that time.

It's like smoking or anything, habit. This is a lot of company. I camp by myself a lot. Cow hunting and school one time. I'd go a long ways and do a lot of camping. Come in and maybe get through kind of early, before dark and get supper all ready to go to bed. Too early to go to bed, I'd take that harp out and blow it three or four hours and then I could sleep all night. It's a lot of company. It's like anything else. If I was out there, you always had a dog and a horse and something you could talk to. They always said, "It's all right to talk to your horse, or your dog. When they start talking back, you better do something." I thought that was pretty good. Get to talking back to you, well you better do something.

Nancy Yasecko: What kind of things would you have in your pack, when you went out?

Frank Platt: Like I said in the bed roll, you had a blanket. Sometimes a thin like sheet that you could cover with. If it's real hot, you pull the sheet over you sometimes. One thing that was, is the dew fell on that and it run down the middle of it and you had a drip on it. If you had a sheet, something real thing, where it would keep that water off you. Your saddle pockets you had everything you had to eat, would carry it in the saddle pockets. They were pretty big. You can put a lot of stuff in if you packed it down there. Biscuits and we always carried a boiler. That was a little tomato can. Tomato cans were better than anything else. They last longer, it didn't rust out.

You carried coffee. You had plenty of coffee always. Our coffee [01:24:00] though was a little bit on the strong side. You put the water up in it and it start boiling. You get all you could hold in it. You'd have one cup of coffee and put all the coffee in your hand in that boiler and let it boil for a while. Then you always had in your cup, you had a little water. You put a few

drops of water and then all the grounds went to the bottom. Some of them just set it off and let it cool a little bit and then drink it out of the boiler. Most of us poured it into a cup. You could pour the last bit of it, the last drop and not get a ground in it, after you get used to doing it all the time. It's no problem.

Like somebody was telling me not very long ago. I showed him how to saddle a horse. To go around on the other side and check the girth every time and I've never checked the girth. He said, "How come you tell me to go around and check that girth and you just reach around." Well I said, "Well after you've done it for 60 or 70 years, you don't have to go around. You pull it down and you know where it's at." If you haven't been doing it, or even a new saddle, I would go check a new saddle, because I wouldn't know how ... That old saddle, I've been putting it on for 30 years and jerking it down. I knew where it was supposed to come anyway, that where it was right, so no problem.

Nancy Yasecko: You mentioned you carry a knife and matches.

Frank Platt: Matches and you always had knife, I mean a match box, or something to keep them from getting wet. Rain and everything, you always build a fire. I don't see how they build it a lot of time, or how I build it is, everything is wet. The wind is blowing and you get a fire going somehow. I guess the Lord must have helped them. Of course you always had the hat and some kind of shoes. The hat was usually better than your shoes. Your old shoes, about wore out, you still wear them. One thing, the most comfortable thing, is a wore out pair of shoes, or a wore out old hat. Everybody likes to wear them all the time, as long as they would stay together. The main thing was a pocket knife. You used it more than anything else, because you had to cut everything you eat. Just about all the meat and everything. You never eat without meat. You always eat meat.

[01:26:00] The main staple was bacon, white bacon. If you go off in the woods with smoked bacon, then about a week, you get up in the morning and it's got a nasty taste to it. You don't want any more. White bacon, you can eat it three times a day for six months. You leave home, I never did, but I've seen a lot of old boys leave home. It was on the fat side and after about three weeks, he had lost 30, or 40 pounds. When he left, he couldn't run 100 yards without sitting down and resting. He'd run a half mile, or catch 40K's. When he left 3K's would get him out. After he was stayed out there, about three weeks eating that white bacon. We had sweet potatoes and mashed potatoes. We used to put them, they were

smaller and we put them in that boiler and boil them at night, after everyone started to go to bed.

We'd boil them and sometimes we put ... Where the fire was, we'd dig it out and put the potatoes and then cover it over the next morning. We usually always, one potato would do for two people. We carried can stuff, like canned tomatoes. One of the small cans of tomatoes would do for two people. Each man had to carry his own bacon. You would tote the can today and I would tote one tomorrow, put it in your muzzle, where you had your horse's feed. We had a wallet. Very few people knows what that was. It was a piece of canvas sewn together and it was about a foot wide and sewn all the way around. It was about eight to ten foot long. You put ...

Well you actually some time, you put a half a sack of corn, which was about 80 quarts in one end of it. In the other end, wrap it around the horn of the saddle and let it hang down on each side. We usually would go the first two days, we'd been going to another cow pen. Then maybe we'd stay there a week, so you fed up a lot of corn. The second day you didn't ... You have to just worry two days, is about all.

Nancy Yasecko: Okay.

Frank Platt: [01:28:00] Very seldom I carried any silverware of any kind. No spoons or nothing. You cut a ... If you had beans or tomatoes you were eating ... You cut a palmetto stalk and cut it and make a spoon out of it. You can eat with this as good as you can. In a lot of places we had a cook pots and stuff and even rice buried. Sometimes we'd take grits or something and took it. Beans, white beans and we'd cook them in there. Sometime we had ... People would take your silver, but they never bothered our old big iron pots and stuff, until the Navy come over here. They got the jeeps and they run through the thing and they got every one of them. I guess they were the ones that got it. There always jeeps out there and they are the only ones that had any jeeps, so we thought that maybe the Navy did it.

We were about quit anyway at that time. We were selling the land and moving out quick. My dad sold Duda that piece that got up to where they're building a court house and all that. He sold him 62,000 acres I think it was for two dollar and half an acre. He had about 125,000 acres in that pasture. Duda wouldn't have the rest of it. All that up there, by Pineda, on north up to Cocoa. They wouldn't have any of that along the river. They just wanted that out there west.

Nancy Yasecko: How would you get the news?

Frank Platt: Word of mouth. There wasn't any newspapers and I don't think anybody read them anyway. If they put out a newspaper, there wasn't nothing in it, so nobody didn't read it. Word of mouth. Everybody knew everybody and they would ride the horse over to tell the next family and they would go to tell the next family. Two, three days, like a killing down in Arcadia was all the way up to Ocala in two days. Quicker then they could've got it printed and got the paper out. Why pay for it. They knew about it. Most anything happened. If somebody died, everybody knew it right away.

Nancy Yasecko: Didn't hardly need a telephone.

Frank Platt: No, I tell you, it's kind of funny thing. We had telephones around here, way before my time. I guess I [01:30:00] must have been 30 years old, before we had a phone, or even had running water in the house. No electricity. We had a carbide deal that a gas run stove and lights. Pretty good time back, but that all went bad before long and rusted out and what not. We didn't even renew it. We just got one plant, put in it one place and it didn't do what we wanted it to do, so we quit.

Nancy Yasecko: Okay and we're at the end. Let's cut.