

**Transcript of an Oral History Interview in the collection of the
BREVARD COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION
308 Forrest Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922**

Nancy Yasecko: Okay, well, we'll just start off and you tell us who you are and when you were born, and where and we'll take it from there.

Roy Roberts: Roy Roberts, Jr. And I was actually born in Carleton Terrace. [00:00:30] My parents rented a house there for this occasion. And although we lived in Orsino [00:00:39], because of the no doctors on the island and so forth, they brought me in. And my mother was attended by a midwife.

Nancy Yasecko: When did your family first come to Brevard County?

Roy Roberts: They came over in the early 20's. They were attracted to, as many people [00:01:00] were, basically free land and the weather. And they came over from Tampa. My mother worked in a cigar factory and my dad had a grocery store. And I guess the free land idea caught their attention first so they came over to investigate and then at that time, or sometime in the immediate area, they went ahead and staked out 160 acres [00:01:30] and applied for a homestead deed.

Nancy Yasecko: And where was their homestead?

Roy Roberts: Well, the homestead was on what's now, Roberts Road in the cape. And it's kind of hard to describe. It would be about 18 miles from Cocoa, north on Merritt Island. Probably 'bout seven miles north of Courtenay, as you would know Courtenay.

Nancy Yasecko: What do you think drew them to that particular spot? There were a lot of empty places.

Roy Roberts: [00:02:00] Well there wasn't too many empty places before the first world war. A lot of renegades, there was a Indian that came out there. There was a German named Peter Von Braun [00:02:15] who was highly educated. And he was on the run from politics in Germany. There was quite a, several large Italian families. And I imagine he staked out this particular [00:02:30] area because there wasn't too much left at that time.

Nancy Yasecko: Okay, well when they settled there, what did they do? They were out in the middle of nowhere at that point.

Roy Roberts: It was in the middle of nowhere. The only way they could get to the property in rainy weather was by tractor or walk. And I'll show you pictures later of the homestead. And my dad got a job as a mechanic in Cocoa, in a Buick [00:03:00] garage. And if you're familiar with the Harvey family, Roy Harvey who started the fruit business, he and my dad was a mechanic in the Buick place. And my mother stayed out on the homestead. And she raised strawberries and they had chickens,

and did some farming till the '26 hurricane came, which I'll show you pictures of what that did.

And after the hurricane, the county came in and dug [00:03:30] ditches across town [00:03:31] and to get drainage. So, never had that bad a problem after that.

Nancy Yasecko: That must've been some hurricane.

Roy Roberts: Well the [shirt-tail 00:03:43] cousin I've got that is from Indiana, he was probably about 12, and he had a memory like you wouldn't believe. And he said my mother and he stayed in the chicken house that night, because they's afraid that a pine tree might fall on the house. [00:04:00] And the chicken house was only had a ceiling about four foot. The water's about two to three feet deep. So it must've been a pretty rough night. Incidentally the house wasn't bothered. It stayed, it took the winds okay.

Nancy Yasecko: Did you ever hear of them tell about what their impressions were of the area when they came? Tampa was a pretty big city at that time.

Roy Roberts: Yeah, but--and they were city folks basically. My mother's from Oakland, New Jersey right across [00:04:30] from Philadelphia. And my dad was from [Mattin (?) 00:04:33], Michigan and he was raised all through Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo and he knew all those areas. And I don't know, whether it's the idea of pioneering spirit or what it was. He certainly had to be a pioneer to go through what they did and all the people that homesteaded on that island.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah. [00:05:00] Well there were a number of little communities out there.

Roy Roberts: Yeah, they had Orsino, which incidentally had 200 registered voters. And there was only about 900 in the whole county at that time. And they could block vote and elect or defeat most anybody in office. And there was Audubon and there was Courtenay, and there was aurant—not Aurantia—Artesia. [00:05:30] There are quite a few small, you can't say town. You can even say village, cause it was nothing there but the post office.

Nancy Yasecko: What was the transportation like? Getting in and-

Roy Roberts: It was pretty rough. Like I say from [Whaley-Hammock 00:05:52] to Cocoa, down North Tropical Trail, was a decent road. But [00:06:00] after you left Whaley-Hammock and going to our place, it was just a trail through the palmettos. That's all it was. They'd dig out the palmettos on the high ground and hopefully most of the time, they could make that trip without having mechanical problems or getting stuck.

Nancy Yasecko: They had a truck or a old ...

Roy Roberts: Well my mother was the second post mistress in Orsino. The first post master [00:06:30] was O.T. Smith. And he was a World War I veteran. He only had one arm. The other arm was a hook that he'd made. And he was the first postmaster. And then, I don't know how she got the job or he gave it up or what, but she ran the post master—she was postmistress and ran the general store. And she rode a mule back and forth [00:07:00] from the home place to the store, cause that was most reliable means of transportation, which I can show you a picture of that.

Nancy Yasecko: Boy, I can just imagine, and you know, it could be kind of wet back there.

Roy Roberts: It could be very wet.

Nancy Yasecko: Did y'all ever use the river with a boat for transportation or was it pretty much-

Roy Roberts: No, it was too far. We were too far from the river.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah, you were pretty far out there.

[00:07:30] Let's see, other transportation, things that were happening in Brevard around then. I guess the train was pretty important for getting-

Roy Roberts: The train was very important, yeah. And you had the post office, which in those days through Sears and Roebuck you could order your baby chicks, you could order baby turkeys, you could order repair parts for your truck or tractor. And that was real life line for us when I was growing up, was Sears and Roebuck. [00:08:00] And I don't have any Sears stocks.

Nancy Yasecko: You'd order it from the catalog, you'd write away and then I guess it would come in on the train and then-

Roy Roberts: Come in on the train. And when I was growing up, a lady named Malone and her husband had been gassed in the First World War. And they had a little homestead. She'd go in Cocoa every day and get the mail, and deliver [00:08:30] it to Audubon [00:08:30], and then bring it to Orsino. And of course, when she got there about 3:00 that was when everybody gathered around to get the mail and their packages and whatever. And she'd brought gasoline in 50 gallon drums at a time, or kerosene. And 50 gallons of gas or kerosene would last a long time. And she'd bring feed, bring groceries. [00:09:00] She was a life line of us, all of us out there.

Nancy Yasecko: She must've had an old truck or something?

Roy Roberts: Yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah, well you don't think about it but yeah, all that would've come in on the train and then ...

Roy Roberts: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah. And Titusville they had Gulf Oil docks. I don't remember much about that, but I guess gasoline was delivered in 55 gallon drums by [00:09:30] boat to the Gulf Oil docks there in Titusville. But that was probably in the late 20's, early 30's.

Nancy Yasecko: What kind of businesses were there? In Orsino, I guess there was just the general store or ...

Roy Roberts: That's all it was. Just a general store. The boards-- floor was laying flat on the ground. And I can remember looking through the walls and you could see outside, [00:10:00] and there wasn't anything else. We had a church and we had a one room schoolhouse that I went to.

Nancy Yasecko: Tell me about the school.

Roy Roberts: Well it was fun. It was from one to six grades, was all. The students varied from five to eight kids for the whole six grades. And teacher was ... [00:10:30] I do remember her. She's a good teacher but I remember when the Second World War started, every time she got a newspaper she would make us try to remember what was going on when Hitler invaded Poland in '39 I believe it was. She was very up to date. This was our basic history lesson. And she taught us and of course she had maps and a world [00:11:00] globe, and she would show us what was going on in other countries.

Nancy Yasecko: Do you remember her name?

Roy Roberts: Yeah, Hutzler. Yeah. Her son owned a newspaper business in Grand Rapids, Michigan at one time. And her husband, we called him Uncle [Willie 00:11:23] he was always had a bow-tie on, a white shirt, and he was running the store at that time. [00:11:30] And he was postmaster at that time. And that was after my mother left.

Nancy Yasecko: How would you get to school?

Roy Roberts: I had a school bus. It was a Model T school bus. Many times it was broke down or drowned out or stuck, and when it was you walked. It was only two miles.

Nancy Yasecko: Tell me a little bit more about going to school. What kind of things would you guys do for fun?

Roy Roberts: We had swing sets. I [00:12:00] think the best fun I had one time, a friend of mine and I set fire to the outhouse, or set fire to the grass around the outhouse and there was a girl inside. And that's one time I found out how mean my daddy was. But there wasn't any harm done. See, then there wasn't such thing as lawnmowers. There wasn't such a thing as tractor mowers. And the man that drove the bus [00:12:30] two or three times a year he'd come in with a swing saw and cut the grass. And there was a flowing well back there, which was our water

supply. Of course that made the grass grow that much better. And he'd cut the grass and it'd lay there and dry out. So we got the bright idea that a little girl was in the bathroom too long, and we needed to be in there, so we put some around the outhouse and set it on fire.

The school was, [00:13:00] it was one room. I never knew what head lice was till I came to school in Titusville because the janitor or the bus driver, as you call him, he would mop the floor with kerosene, two to three times a year. And we had a potbellied stove for heat. And of course when I grew up I thought if that kerosene soaked floor ever caught fire, that'd been the end of it.

Maybe it didn't. Maybe we weren't smart enough [00:13:30] to think of those kind of things. I know we didn't have head lice. We didn't have bugs, we didn't have roaches. It wasn't anything in the school to bother you.

Nancy Yasecko: No, that'd take care of it.

Roy Roberts: That took care of it. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

And we had our own little band.

Nancy Yasecko: What kind of instruments did you play?

Roy Roberts: Well in the ... I don't remember what I played, to tell you [00:14:00] the truth, but it was ... We had a man that would come when they had dances there at the school. And he played drums with one foot, and the mandolin and a harmonica with his mouth. He played the whole thing at one time. And he's pretty good, I enjoyed that even as a young age. And they'd have square dances and such.

And of course the church was a big focal point [00:14:30] in a place like that cause there was nothing else. And the Orsino Baptist Church now is down in Courtenay. The same church and I often wonder if they have any records of when the church was in Orsino. And we had school plays there at Christmas and so forth. And people religious enough then that they'd walk three, four, five miles to go to church on Sunday.

I [00:15:00] usually, because we had stock. We had cows. My dad and I always had a horse, so I had a horse to ride. And I guess that was my main fun. And I could ride him to church or if I wanted to go through the woods, I had a trap line at one time. And there was two of us had trap lines. This fellow named Norman, up on the north island. He ran a trap line. [00:15:30] And he was probably 30 year, 40 years older than I was. And he taught me how to skin coons and possums, and set traps. And so, that was a way to earn money and something to occupy you time.

Of course, I don't know in those days, you didn't have any free time. There was always something to [00:16:00] do. I was fortunate, I had a cousin, my same age

and he spent a lot of time out on the island with me. So I had somebody to play with me and get in trouble with.

Nancy Yasecko: What was his name?

Roy Roberts: Dave. Dave Roberts. He lives in Cocoa now.

Nancy Yasecko: Did you have any brothers and sisters out there?

Roy Roberts: No. He was my brother. He lived in Titusville [00:16:30] and later years I would spend time with him in Titusville. Again, that was before television and before all the community activities you have nowadays. We had a sailboat and we ran crab traps. And we'd go troll for fish, for trout with a sailboat. And he had—they had two goats that furnished [00:17:00] milk for them. Cause times weren't real ... I guess we were poor and didn't know it. We didn't have a television to tell us how poor we were or how neglected we were.

Nancy Yasecko: How old were you and when was this? You were out with the boat and ...

Roy Roberts: In the 40's. During second, well, yeah I guess mostly in the 40's. During the Second World War, we didn't stay on the island too much because they were expecting Germans to land on the beach [00:17:30] anytime. And I guess once in a while my dad get scared and we'd go to town and rent a house and stay in Titusville for a while. Then maybe the [grow 00:17:42] operation required us to go back home and cultivate the grove or fertilize or whatever had to be done. Cause we couldn't hardly get much help in those days.

Nancy Yasecko: There was a real sense during the Second World War that this was the front lines.

Roy Roberts: Oh yeah. There was. Ships sunk [00:18:00] off of Canaveral. And the Coast Guard built a series of outlet posts up and down the beach, I think every six miles or five miles. It was a little house on piers of about 20 feet high in the air. And it's green and had windows all the way around it. And it was manned 24 hours a day. And they [00:18:30] thought for sure Germans would be coming in.

Nancy Yasecko: Who would man the watch towers?

Roy Roberts: Coast Guard. And the Coast Guard auxiliary was formed in Titusville. And my dad was in it. And so they were active in patrolling the beach with horses, and patrolling the river in boats and knowing that any minute the Germans would come.

When I was in high school, [00:19:00] they had a watch on top of the courthouse. Normally the girls did that most of the time, but they were taught to recognize different planes. American as well as Germans in case German planes came over. And we had air raid drills in school. We'd all hide under the desk, and go in the restrooms. Supposedly the safe places in school.

[00:19:30] So it was something you remembered and thought about. And of course going to movies you got first hand news of the fighting. And you remembered the Battle of the Bulge and you remembered about Dunkirk and a lot of the important things that we saw in movies in town. Of course again, there was no TVs.

Nancy Yasecko: And there was rationing.

Roy Roberts: [00:20:00] Oh yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: What kind of things were rationed around here?

Roy Roberts: Most everything. We didn't suffer that much at home. We had bees, so my mother learned to sweeten everything with honey. We had beef. And the woods was full of hogs. And of course the fish would jump in your boat anytime you wanted to [00:20:30] catch fish. And basically, food-wise, she always had a garden. And I wonder how I'm still alive. We had two milk cows-- Jersey milk cows. And they had the highest content of butter fat of any breed of animal there is. We'd drink raw milk. I milked the cows and she'd make cottage cheese. She made butter. She made ice cream. [00:21:00] And of course, we had all kinds of beef and none of it was lean. We'd get lard in tin cans, which is full of fat. And I don't know why I lived so long, because I was raised on that kind of food.

Nancy Yasecko: You probably worked pretty hard.

Roy Roberts: Well, I thought so. My dad probably didn't, but I thought so.

Nancy Yasecko: So your dad had a ranch [00:21:30] then or a grove?

Roy Roberts: No, he had mainly sisters. We kept eight or ten head of cattle. Most all the time.

Nancy Yasecko: Just for your families?

Roy Roberts: Yeah, family use and I don't know, just keep the weeds and the grass down I guess.

Nancy Yasecko: Now, there was a time I understand that in Merritt Island, things weren't fenced.

Roy Roberts: That's true.

Nancy Yasecko: And there [00:22:00] was a bit of a problem there.

Roy Roberts: That's true. In the 20's, that was before I was born and these reports and stories that people have told me, they let cattle run loose on the island. And there was no fence law. And so people that had groves or had gardens, would try to fence these cattle away from their vegetables or their orange trees.

[00:22:30] And didn't work too well, cause cows were pretty wild. And they got pretty bad and they kept complaining and they finally found out, supposedly that the Sheriff of Brevard County had an interest in this cattle. And so I remember the ... Or seeing a clan so to speak, they took a train. Went to Daytona and bought a bunch of 22 shells. [00:23:00] And then they came back and they gut shot these cows. All of a sudden these cowboys would come out and they'd find 50, 75 head of cattle dead and with no apparent reason of why they were. Of course when you gut shoot and animal they bled and was poison the inside of the animal and then die. And as the animal decomposed you wouldn't see that shell or the hole or anything else.

So, they got rid of the [00:23:30] cattle. And they drove them across the bridge at Cocoa. The bridge wasn't too old but they drove them cross the bridge and right through Cocoa and the story is that they just flat tore up, downtown Cocoa. That was the stories that I'd heard. And my dad was elected Sheriff in '28--1928. I often wondered if that was reason he got elected. That the previous [00:24:00] Sheriff may be, did have an interest in these cattle. And as I told you, there's only about 900 voters--registered voters in the whole county. And there were 200 in Orsino.

So if they block voted--If they voted in the block, they could elect just about anybody they wanted.

Nancy Yasecko: So how long was your dad Sheriff?

Roy Roberts: 'til 1936.

Nancy Yasecko: Those are kind of rough times to be a Sheriff. [00:24:30] People pretty wild?

Roy Roberts: Yeah. We got pictures in the book of stills that he got ahold of. Of course so many people were making shine, grapefruit brandy and so forth. Just to have something to live off of and, you know, to sell. It was then where you knew everybody. Not only knew them and you knew their mother and [00:25:00] where they came from and everything else.

So he probably had some hard choices at times at who he would bring in. If a man made five gallons of shine to feed his family, that would be a pretty rough road to go. Then there were some commercial boys that he didn't bring those in. That was making in it large quantities.

Nancy Yasecko: This is during the Prohibition time.

Roy Roberts: Yeah, mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy Yasecko: Now, I've also [00:25:30] heard, I think it was Ms. Scobie, who told us that there were people who were also importing.

Roy Roberts: Yeah. The stories go that right off Playalinda Beach, this really deep water, and they would bring their boats in there and transport it over the Mosquito Lagoon by hand, or carry it. Put it on small boats and then distribute it. My father told me he went up there several times, spent the night with mosquitoes [00:26:00] and the sand flies, but he never was able to catch any of them anybody. But I guess it did happen, yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah. Like you, she said everybody sort of knew everybody's business. They kind of knew who was doing what.

Roy Roberts: Yeah, that also made kids behave.

Nancy Yasecko: I guess it would. Let's see here. What about doctors? What'd y'all-

Roy Roberts: There wasn't any. Not really.

[00:26:30] There was a doctor in Cocoa, but I can't remember his name. Dr. Noah ... Something like that. And because of the transportation problem, we went to Cocoa more than we did to Titusville. And there was a Dr. Christie in Titusville. Of course, it wasn't any hospitals. [00:27:00] You didn't ... I don't know we weren't sick as much, or we used more home remedies.

I don't know if you're familiar with a plant called aloe. That was in everybody's garden. And it's very good for scratches and burns. You can take that stuff and boil it, and cut it up real fine, the leaves and boil [00:27:30] it. And it'll knock a cold out as quick as most of the medicines you buy over the counter.

And I had my nose broke one time. It was about three days before we got to town. Time we got to town, my nose had already was resetting itself. It guess that's why it's so big and crooked. But I don't even remember the doctor we went to. We didn't go to the doctor. I mean, we didn't go to town and go to doctor just because of some minor [00:28:00] thing like a broke nose.

Nancy Yasecko: It's a little harder to avoid a dentist though. When you need a dentist, you go find one.

Roy Roberts: We had a dentist. Dr. Lichtenberger. That was when I was growing up. Before then, they tell me that the dentist traveled on boats up and down the river. No novocaine. And he was bad news.

Nancy Yasecko: Did you ever to go visit him?

Roy Roberts: Oh yeah, pretty [00:28:30] regular. I had soft teeth I guess, I don't know. All that milk I drank didn't help my teeth.

Nancy Yasecko: I think we've heard some other stories about him. He had an office in town in Titusville?

Roy Roberts: Yeah. Upstairs. His chair faced big window that looked right down the street. And he was rough. He was good, I guess. I mean, I never had an infection. I never had any problems from him. [00:29:00] It's just that he was ... You wouldn't say he's sadistic, I guess you could say he didn't really care. He was just gonna do whatever's necessary, and you held on.

Nancy Yasecko: You were gonna tell us some more about the roads.

Roy Roberts: Road system over on the island wasn't much. It would take an hour to go from home to [00:29:30] town, 10 miles of it is pure sand ruts when it was dry, and muddy when it was wet. And you never knew whether you's was gonna get stuck or not. Our bus driver, Selby Bailey, he talks about old times a lot. And he could tell you a lot about road conditions in those times. And this is why we went to Cocoa quite a lot, [00:30:00] or more so than we did Titusville. I'm talking about in the 40's.

Government decided that they couldn't have this kind of road during the war. And so they made a contract with the Department of Transportation ... Well, it was State Road Department then to grade this road. The road was originally built by convicts with mules and slip pans. And they would set up a camp every mile and they'd [00:30:30] work on that section of the road. This was in the 30's, early 30's. From that time on, nothing was done to it.

Nancy Yasecko: Excuse me, are we talking about State Road 3?

Roy Roberts: State Road 3. From what is now Titusville Beach Road or Titusville Beach Road South towards Courtenay.

And so the government decided that that road ought to be shelled. So they let a contract and trucks were [00:31:00] found. And a friend of mine, during high school summer, we were out there driving dump trucks all summer. I was only 14. He was only 15. And we were pretty proud to be getting a paycheck, cause that was my first official paycheck, so to speak. And I think we made about \$30 a week, something like that, 25 or 30. But to somebody our age and when gas costs 20 cents a gallon, that was pretty good money.

[00:31:30] So we drove truck one summer and then went back to school. Then the next summer we drove truck at TiCo Airport. They were getting TiCo Airport in better shape for the war problems. Anyway, we got the road shelled, so we had a decent road going to town then, to Titusville. Before that it was pretty bad.

Nancy Yasecko: Well where would they get the shell?

Roy Roberts: Dig it. There [00:32:00] was shell underneath the ground. Digging what we called marl pits or shell pits.

Nancy Yasecko: I get it, like coquina.

Roy Roberts: Yeah, mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy Yasecko: Well that's a pretty good job for a teenager to have. Were there just not that many men around to-

Roy Roberts: No, everybody's at the war. Anybody that, you know, was of age. They off and I often envied the kids in my class in high school, cause they had a job. And they'd go to packing [00:32:30] houses and pack fruit. And I often envied them being able to do that, but after school I either help my dad in the garage or went home and did things in the grove. Like I say, I envied them having a regular job at the packing house. But we all have our turn. They probably envied me driving truck too. So I had a full summer job for [00:33:00] two summers.

Nancy Yasecko: And that road is still there.

Roy Roberts: Yeah, number three.

Nancy Yasecko: It's just covered with other things now.

Roy Roberts: Then sometime in '48, or 9 I guess ... I was away. But it finally got paved. Took a long time, but it finally did.

Nancy Yasecko: What did teenagers do for fun? I mean, you talked a little bit about sailing around and there [00:33:30] were dances sometimes.

Roy Roberts: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: Did you ever go to the beach?

Roy Roberts: [crosstalk 00:33:36] everybody went to the beach regular. Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, you could swim in the river then with no fear of pollution. And we didn't go to beach too much during the war, cause you never ... You just didn't know. You had gas ration and so you didn't have the money, or you didn't have the gas to go too far.

Nancy Yasecko: Let's [00:34:00] see ... You mentioned that you'd had a trap line, and you did some fishing too.

Roy Roberts: Yeah, we all fished. I had trap line. And that's where Sears came in again, you could buy supplies from them. You can mail your skins back to Sears Roebuck. They'd buy your skins.

Nancy Yasecko: You're kidding?

Roy Roberts: Nope.

Nancy Yasecko: [00:34:30] My goodness, I never thought of them buying anything back.

Roy Roberts: They were very rural in those days. They took care of the rural people in those days. You could buy most anything through Sears. At one time, they even sold automobiles.

Nancy Yasecko: Somebody mentioned they sold houses in kits.

Roy Roberts: They sold houses in kits, right.

Nancy Yasecko: Did anybody around here ever order a house?

Roy Roberts: I don't know of anybody.

Nancy Yasecko: Kind of beyond the means of most folks, I guess.

[00:35:00] What were the houses like? What was the house like that you grew up in?

Roy Roberts: Well I grew up in this house. And my dad started it about '25 or 6. I don't know how long it took him to finish it. When we went to town and rented in town, houses weren't much. I remember one winter we stayed in town for a while. [00:35:30] We rented a house down on the river, just a wooden frame house. And I slept on the porch, all winter. It was just a canvas curtains. I said once before, and I say it again, we didn't have anybody tell us we were poor, or we were being mistreated. And we rented houses occasionally around town. Some of them had rats in them. [00:36:00] We stayed at a big apartment house one time there where Howard Johnson's is. And we didn't stay there very long. In fact, we got up the next morning and left because the rats in it, and went back to this house.

But the house is in-- it had a good roof and they had screens on the windows. The ice blocks the water melting from the ice drip down through the floor, and down on the ground, and [00:36:30] we had running water. We had inside toilets, which out on the island, at least in school we didn't even have inside toilet.

Nancy Yasecko: So it was primitive but comfortable.

Roy Roberts: Well, I think so. I feel very fortunate and I feel blessed in the childhood I had cause it certainly taught me to be independent and look after myself. I didn't miss anything.

[00:37:00] I think my mother did. I remember when dad finally bought her a washing machine and it had a little gasoline motor on it to wash clothes with. Cause previous to that it was a big iron pot going sitting out there on the carport. And so duck season came around and he and the preacher took the motor off the washing machine and put a paddle wheel on a boat [00:37:30] and rigged it up to a paddle wheel because that would cross shallow water and it'd cross where it was really grassy. And I can remember quite a family argument about that.

Nancy Yasecko: I can imagine. You didn't have electric out there. You had to have your own-

Roy Roberts: We had a generator. For a while we had a turbine running on a flowing well. Used [00:38:00] to be able to drill flowing wells, artesian water. And back in the early 30's you had quite a bit of pressure. Fact, Eau Gallie's first electric plant was run that way, with artesian well.

My dad ... Well, didn't have to but he wanted wells for the grove. So on one of them he drilled and he fixed called a couch pump in Eau Gallie. [00:38:30] I think there's ... Or Malabar or somewhere down there. Grant. I think they're still in business. They came up and put a turbine on the well, which made enough electricity to light a few lights. Nothing like we have now. And we had a kerosene refrigerator. We had a gas stove and a wood stove, cause we didn't have any heat in the house.

And my mother cooked on the wood stove during the winter and ... When I say winter, it's nothing like you have [00:39:00] further north. But it was cold to us.

Nancy Yasecko: Wind came through I'm sure.

Roy Roberts: Yeah, it'd be windy. But we were pretty well protected with pine trees and orange trees around the house.

Nancy Yasecko: Do you ever remember trying to deal with the freezes that would come through and all the citrus that you had?

Roy Roberts: We didn't have any freezes when I was growing up. I don't know what happened. Of course, they had one in '95 that froze everything except [00:39:30] the Dummit grove over on Haulover. And those trees came through. But these freezes in the 80's, they're unheard of as far as record known. As far as the island goes.

I think it was in '85 freeze, I checked the temperature here and it was like 21 degrees. [00:40:00] And at that time we had groves leased on the island, and I had jumped in the truck, run out there and it was 22 out there. And when I was growing up and living out there, I didn't hardly know what a frost was. We just never had cold weather. And I don't know, whether its cause the government's over drained the land, lowered the water table out there or what. But the water table is definitely lower than it used to be. Who knows?

Nancy Yasecko: [00:40:30] How many acres did you have in citrus out there?

Roy Roberts: Well we were continually planting. It wasn't many of the homesteaders that actually stayed and had a grove. The Garafalo's, he had four, five acres and seven daughters and a son still in the pack. The [Finary's 00:40:56] they lived down the road from him. They had [00:41:00] probably about 15 acres. I went to school with his kids. Sam Finary still lives in Cocoa. Joe Finary, who I was closest to, he's

dead. And Richard Finary, I think he lives in Cocoa Beach, I'm not sure. Of course, all the old folks are gone.

The Jacobson's, which was a Swedish immigrant and they lived north of us. They [00:41:30] were very, very, very hard workers. And they ended up with quite a bit of grove. Then north of them was the Briggs, they homesteaded right where the VAB Building is. He commercial fished more than he tried to do anything else. I went to school with his family. Then over on Happy Creek was the Benecke's, and they fished and they [00:42:00] had two or three acres of grove. Then after that you got on up towards Shiloh and Hawover canal. That was a long ways to go in those days. I don't know many people up there. Alan Taylor, his family.

Nancy Yasecko: So, a lot of the homesteaders just had five, ten acres.

Roy Roberts: Three, four, five acres. Ten acres would make a man a heck of a good living in those days. [00:42:30] Now it takes ... I don't know if you could make a living on 200 acres today.

Nancy Yasecko: Where would you get the young trees?

Roy Roberts: You buy them or raise them.

Nancy Yasecko: Local though.

Roy Roberts: Yeah, mm-hmm (affirmative). I can remember buying trees over in Cocoa Beach. There's a fellow at a place over there north of the surf about six blocks, eight blocks on the west side towards the river. [00:43:00] He had a nursery in there. I don't remember his name but I can remember going over there and getting trees. And most all the homesteaders raised their own.

Nancy Yasecko: They'd do their own budding and everything else. It was ... We'll skip ahead a little bit. It was later I guess in the 50's that the first rocket started being launched out there at the cape. How did that affect you guys when it first [00:43:30] happened?

Roy Roberts: Well, funny story about that is, Judge Joe Cowart who I was friends with in my teenage years. And he and I decided one day we was gonna go ride the beach and go back through the woods and see what we could see. And we were probably about 19, 18, 19. Naturally we had to have every gun in the house. [00:44:00] So the vehicle was probably two or three rifles, two or three shotguns.

So we start up Titusville Beach riding back through the woods, and having a good time. And we come to this big clearing. And Joe, "What's this?"

"Well, I don't know. What's all this land being cleared for?"

"I don't know." And about then here come a military jeep with red lights flashing and all. "What are you doing here? How'd you get here?"

"We came [00:44:30] back through the savannas in the woods."

"You're not supposed to be here. We're fixing to fire a shot. You're breaking every law in the books."

"Well, we didn't know, nobody told us that." So we left but it was kind of funny that this big thing was getting ready to happen and we didn't even know about it.

Nancy Yasecko: That was before they launched that very first one?

Roy Roberts: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah. See it used to be you could ride the beach from New [00:45:00] Smyrna inlet all the way to Patrick. And that was something that everybody enjoyed. Wives and kids and all of us. Anybody that had a beach buggy, maybe on a Sunday and catch the tide right, make this trip down to Cocoa Beach and stop at the old Cocoa Hotel. Have a hotdog or hamburger and ride on down to Patrick. That's where the rocks started and we'd have to turn around and come back. And right at the point of the cape, [00:45:30] in those days at least there was about three or four acres of seashells that washed in there. There wouldn't be anything at Sanibel Island. I mean, they were beauties. Very few people even ever went down there, so you had your pick of all kinds of shells. It was just in that one area. And so it was a nice outing.

Nancy Yasecko: Quite a surprise when they caught you coming through there.

Roy Roberts: Oh yeah that was a surprise. Yeah, [00:46:00] mm-hmm (affirmative). We were young enough that we didn't really care. We knew we wasn't doing anything that wrong. I think we surprised them more than they surprised us.

Nancy Yasecko: I bet you did cause for them it seemed like alien territory. They can't imagine somebody coming out of the woods.

Roy Roberts: No. North of where the pad was, the launch site, there was absolutely nothing, just scrubs.

Nancy Yasecko: Once they started launching, [00:46:30] then did they sort of patrol off an area?

Roy Roberts: Oh yeah. They eventually fenced it and all that.

Nancy Yasecko: What was the reaction in the community when you first started seeing these things go up?

Roy Roberts: Well, I think majority of the people thought the cape was gonna bring jobs and make everybody rich. And I guess it did to a certain extent, but it brought a lot of [00:47:00] other things too. Brought a lot of boom and bust. It brought us a dependency on outside money, which I personally don't like. Before it came in we had a fishing industry and we had citrus groves. And we were doing all right. We had a lot of tourists that came in. And we had a pretty stable economy. Of course,

when that started [00:47:30] and ever since there's been a boom and bust type thing that you can see in every day paper right now.

Nancy Yasecko: That's a fact. After they decided that they were gonna try and launch men to the moon, they needed more room than they had right out there on the cape. That's when they wanted to take more property from what would have been your home community [00:48:00] area.

Roy Roberts: Yeah, that's when they took all that.

Nancy Yasecko: How did they announce that? How'd y'all find out this was gonna happen?

Roy Roberts: There was scuttlebutt for weeks. And I'd say for months of what was gonna happen. And I guess we didn't really know it till it came out in the newspapers, with maps and so forth, what areas they were gonna take. They had three takings and the largest, [00:48:30] which included Orsino and all that area, but I think was taken three, number three.

Nancy Yasecko: You didn't have any choice

Roy Roberts: Didn't have any choice, no.

Nancy Yasecko: Did they offer you some compensation or ...

Roy Roberts: Well, they paid us market value of citrus land comparable to say here, in the Mims hammock. But at that time we never had a freeze. [00:49:00] And we felt our groves were worth a lot more. And of course, there's no price you can put on sentimental value. Most of us had a lot of memories and yet there were a lot of people that were glad to getting off.

Nancy Yasecko: I guess it was an opportunity for some folks.

Roy Roberts: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: Nobody wanted that property before.

Roy Roberts: [00:49:30] Well it's surprising, and the value of land was ... It was all right. My mother and my parents had bought quite a bit of tax land, just for tax deeds in the 40's. And it had increased in value. I don't know if it was the real value or not, but people were willing to pay it. And there were people coming from Miami all the time, wanting to buy land over there.

Nancy Yasecko: [00:50:00] When they told you we're gonna take the land and I guess they offered you the opportunity to move some of the buildings, the church moved.

Roy Roberts: I think church was ... Yeah I guess they did move the church, and the school building was gone. And the store that my mother ran and [00:50:30] the post

master—postmistress and all that, that pretty well been rotted down and been replaced. George Jacobson, he built a nice, new store across the street there on the corner. And it wasn't such that you could move it. He had quite a bit of grove by then. His sister Caroline had a lot of grove. But I guess they did move the church, [00:51:00] but I think the termites had pretty well ate it up by time that a few more years went by.

Nancy Yasecko: Well y'all elected to move your house.

Roy Roberts: No.

Nancy Yasecko: No?

Roy Roberts: No. It sat there, they were going to have ... My mother loved plants and flowers. And she had a, it was a really beautiful place. They were going to use it for VIP home [00:51:30] . When certain people that would qualify would come down they could stay here in the house and all that. And the budget cuts in the '68 or 9 when, you know I mentioned boom or bust. We had another bust in about those years. There was something like 200 empty houses in Titusville. People walking off with mortgages and all that.

Anyway, they decided they weren't [00:52:00] going to do that. So they had an auction on this house for disposal only. People could tear down, so I bid it, but I put a bid in that I'd be allowed to move the house. And unfortunately, I had a low bid, but fortunately the rest of them, they found out that I was born and raised in this house. They withdrew their bids. Says, "Give the house to Roy Roberts. Let him have it. Let him [00:52:30] have it."

And so they conferred on whether I could have the house to move it or not and they finally decided I could. So I paid them and took me about a year to move it, I guess, time I got it up here. But it was a good solid house. It's made out of cypress, oak floors and very well built. It was, if you look at it strictly for nothing but an investment, it was a good investment.

Nancy Yasecko: [00:53:00] What route did you have to take to move it up here?

Roy Roberts: We came right up number three, all the way to US-1, just south of Oak Hill. Then came down US-1 to here. That was the easiest route.

Nancy Yasecko: Must've been quite a scene.

Roy Roberts: I got pictures of it somewhere. We took up the whole road.

Nancy Yasecko: Let's see what else we got here. [00:53:30] Guess I should ask you about celebrating the holidays for Christmas and things like that. I guess it was a little different than we have now.

Roy Roberts: Yeah, I'd say it's quite a bit different. I think there were more home type things than commercial type things. In my family, at least, we had probably about 15 or 20. We'd come out to [00:54:00] the island and of course, we had a Christmas tree and all that. And that was celebration for Christmas and Thanksgiving. And other than that, and Fourth of July would be the only other, any kind of celebration. And that was always parade in downtown Titusville, which everybody went to.

And you know, you knew most everybody on the street [00:54:30] then. I think that made it more close knitted. I think you had less problems from teenagers and kids because you don't know who was looking at you and would go tell your dad, "Your son was doing so and so." They kinda—everybody kind of policed each other.

Nancy Yasecko: Did you ever get caught out that way?

Roy Roberts: Not for the record. Yeah, [00:55:00] I didn't have very good ... I skipped school. I did a lot of things that probably I shouldn't have.

Nancy Yasecko: You did all right.

Roy Roberts: Well I managed to make it this far. Like somebody said, "If I'd know I was gonna live this long, I'd taken better care of myself."

Nancy Yasecko: So there were only a few big holidays, what about Saturdays and Sundays, would you [00:55:30] work-

Roy Roberts: Saturday's a work day.

Nancy Yasecko: Saturday was a work day.

Roy Roberts: Yeah. We usually, well not usually, the first help that I can remember that we had on the island was a man that my dad got out of jail on parole. And he lived over there for eight or nine years. And then he left and during the war years my dad and I did basically [00:56:00] everything there was to do. And then finally we got some more parolees. And we had a couple ... The first man was white man and his wife. The next two were black. And they lived on the place and they did grove work and cow work and whatever's necessary.

And they'd work to noon Saturday, and then we'd come to town and they'd get their groceries. [00:56:30] And I don't know how old I was. But they'd get their groceries and I'd get feed and supplies, whatever I needed to do. Then I'd try to gather them up around 4-5:00 and [pour 00:56:43] them in the back of the truck and take them home.

Nancy Yasecko: Pour them in the back of the truck?

Roy Roberts: Most of the time.

Nancy Yasecko: Titusville had quite a reputation, you must've been going to Titusville.

Roy Roberts: Yeah, I was going to Titusville, yeah. Back in those days, black people weren't allowed east of [00:57:00] the railroad tracks after dark. So it behooved them as well as myself to get loaded up and leave town. We didn't have but one policeman in Titusville in those years. No police station. Had a phone down on main street here. US-1 there, if you wanted to call the police department, you'd dial that number and the red light would come on and next [00:57:30] time a cop drove along there, he'd see the red light so he knew he had a call.

Nancy Yasecko: Was that system in place when your dad was Sheriff?

Roy Roberts: No, it wasn't even that good. When he was Sheriff, he had a Deputy in Cocoa. There was one in Melbourne and one in Titusville. No patrolmen on the road except for one man named [Griggs 00:57:57] and he had a motorcycle. [00:58:00] I guess basically he'd cover whatever part of the county he wanted to cover. I don't know. There wasn't any so-called road patrol that was in the Sheriff's department.

Nancy Yasecko: Do you remember him telling you stories about his day or his night when he-

Roy Roberts: My dad?

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah, when he'd be out.

Roy Roberts: Yeah, he'd tell me some but he didn't want me to get interested in law enforcement. He didn't ... There was [00:58:30] no thrill to him. It was just a job.

Nancy Yasecko: Tell me what you can about the Klan.

Roy Roberts: Ku Klux Klan? Well I told you that black folks had to be west of the railroad track by dark. They had a school out there. And I didn't think that they were treated fair and square on a lot of things. [00:59:00] One thing about it, they had a little - several stores right there where the courthouse is. The dry cleaners and the restaurant and then ... Let's see, I don't know. A restaurant, dry cleaners and I think there was a bar there.

But in those days a kid white or black could ride basically where they wanted on their bikes. And you [00:59:30] never even conceived that there was gonna be any kind of problems. And I don't know the difference in what happened to our culture but whether the Klan kept things down like we would want them. Or my dad was Sheriff and I'm sure there were a lot of conflicts within himself because most of the problems that people, some of the lawyers and different [01:00:00] people around town belonged to the Klan. I certainly don't believe in the Klan but I do wish it was back that when my grandson walked down the street, he didn't

have to worry about getting a gang after him, or getting beaten up. Fortunately, we don't have that Klan anymore. We don't have that problem.

Nancy Yasecko: What kind of things would they do? Do you recall?

Roy Roberts: The Klan?

Nancy Yasecko: Mm-hmm [01:00:30] (affirmative).

Roy Roberts: No. I think I was too young. No.

Nancy Yasecko: They kind of died out in the 40's, there weren't so many or ...

Roy Roberts: Not to my knowledge. Maybe Second World War knocked it out. I don't know.

Nancy Yasecko: That would make some sense. So many things changed as a result of that war.

Roy Roberts: Oh yeah, certainly did. Telephone. We didn't have a telephone till after the war. We didn't have electricity, commercial [01:01:00] electricity until '40, '41. 'Til the powerline brought it in. And of course roads have been improved. A lot of changes due to that war.

Nancy Yasecko: A lot of men got out and saw things beyond their homestead sites and had different ideas.

Roy Roberts: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah and that what the rest of the world was like.

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah. That would be true of black men, too.

Roy Roberts: Oh yeah. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy Yasecko: [01:01:30] What was it like around here in the 60's when the integration was starting?

Roy Roberts: In the 60's, that's about time I came up here and people at that time said that blacks couldn't come to Scottsmoor because if they did the Klan would get 'em. I never saw any evidence of [01:02:00] it. There's a black family worked for me that lives here on the place--used to live here on the place. He had some problems but I managed to stop it. And I don't know whether it was Klan or not, as far as I was concerned it's a bunch of crazy white boys that weren't raised properly. They just had to pick on somebody weaker than they were. The one that I caught had a [01:02:30] garbage bag shirt with holes cut in it. And he was going to do this and he was going to do that. After I talked to him I never had anymore problems.

Nancy Yasecko: The schools, there was a black school and a white school-

Roy Roberts: In Titusville, yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: In Titusville.

Roy Roberts: Yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: Then I guess that was integrated in the early 60's.

Roy Roberts: Well the black school I think they turned into a community [01:03:00] center. I'm sure the building is so old and probably termite eaten, they finally got rid of it. And I guess the kids started going to white schools.

Nancy Yasecko: There was, I've never heard much about violence in this area as a result of that. But there must've been some uncomfortable moments.

Roy Roberts: I'm sure there were. I had a son and daughter that went to school. At Astronaut, at [01:03:30] Titusville High, and they never brought any of their problems home to me if they had problems. So, I don't know.

Nancy Yasecko: What about an item here, I've got having to do with politics.

Roy Roberts: Politics.

Nancy Yasecko: You told us a little bit about the Orsino voting block, but since then are there any [01:04:00] particular state senators or representatives that are standouts for you?

Roy Roberts: Well, my dad got elected to House of Representatives, State House of Representatives. I think in '44 or '45. And that was just before they were gonna widen US-1. [01:04:30] And I think he got beat because of his thoughts on the thing. The Department of Transportation wanted to carry the widening project down along the Florida East Coast railroad track. And the merchants in downtown Titusville got so upset. And they were afraid they were gonna lose all their business and they were afraid [01:05:00] they'd just be outgrown, so to speak. And all the business would go to the new US-1.

As it turned out, I think they made a bad choice. I think that's what happened to downtown Titusville. Just about every community I can think of whether Daytona or Cocoa, Melbourne, US-1 went through a semi-blighted area or went through a new area and left the downtown [01:05:30] areas alone. And those downtown areas have prospered. Everyone but Titusville.

Nancy Yasecko: So your father was on what side of that issue?

Roy Roberts: He wanted ... He's very progressive. He didn't believe in causeways across the river. And he fought this particular problem because he knew that what they were gonna do, the only flow in the river is from wind. And when you block it off with causeways you have individual lakes. [01:06:00] That probably helps with the

pollution, makes it worse because the river flow by the wind can go up and down the river and maybe get rid of some of it.

But anyway, he wanted very strong to put the highway down Florida East Coast tracks. Either on the east side or the west side, and leave the downtown area alone. That's probably one of the reasons he got beat in the election. In the other place over on Courtenay, [01:06:30] at that time, the road from Courtenay to Merritt was down the Tropical Trail. And they wanted to straighten that out, so he convinced DOT that they should have a new road straight down where it is right now. And everybody on Tropical Trail got mad cause they moved the highway away from them. Now I think in retrospect, they're very happy that, that's what happened.

[01:07:00] He had people in Cocoa mad at him. He had people in Titusville mad at him. So I think that's probably why he got beat.

Nancy Yasecko: So he was one term?

Roy Roberts: No, he had two.

Nancy Yasecko: He had two terms.

Roy Roberts: Yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: You hear about the wheelings and the dealings that went on, I guess they still go on up there.

Roy Roberts: I'm sure they do.

Nancy Yasecko: In Tallahassee.

Roy Roberts: I'm sure they do. He always said that ... [01:07:30] He said, "If I can get to the secretaries," and he was always carrying boxes of fruit up to Tallahassee. He said, "If I can get to the secretaries and get on their side, I'll get what I want." He says, "There's no use talking to the representative or to the senator because they're gonna do what their secretary tells them to do." And I think this is true in a lot of businesses. The secretary sometimes they're more valuable that what we realize. We think we're the boss but they're really the boss.

Nancy Yasecko: [01:08:00] I expect you're right about that. Do you remember any local officials, judges or mayors that stand out in your mind?

Roy Roberts: Around Titusville?

Nancy Yasecko: Yeah around this area.

Roy Roberts: The one thing that has disappointed me is that it used to be the business people were involved in politics. Whether it's city council or whatever. [01:08:30] And because of the Sunshine Laws I guess, Sunshine Laws or because of the ... I don't know, but they won't get involved in their own community anymore. And I think that's to the detriment of the community. If you don't have a healthy business climate, you're not gonna have a healthy home climate. People forget that the value of their home is based on [01:09:00] the whole picture, not just one. If business falls apart, who's gonna support their homes, tax-wise and everything else.

Nancy Yasecko: So now we have professional politicians.

Roy Roberts: I believe we do.

Nancy Yasecko: Some of them anyway.

Roy Roberts: This is the original homestead house. And this is aftermath of the '26 hurricane. At that time, there was no drainage on the island [01:09:30] in this area. So the only thing the water could do would be flow over natural ground to Sykes Creek, and then flow south.

This is a very typical homestead house, consisted of two rooms. No porch, little stoop there. But this is basically what most people over there had.

Nancy Yasecko: [01:10:00] It did weather the storm well, it looks fine.

Roy Roberts: Oh yeah. It was built well enough and reinforced and so forth. It took this pine tree down which was the reason they put the house there. It was the shade of this big Caribbean Yellow Pine. It took it down. Of course, on the island you have a real shallow root system to begin with. And that doesn't take much to topple a tree over there. [01:10:30] It didn't use to.

Robert Gilbert: What's that house behind the tree?

Nancy Yasecko: You mean back over here? Is that the chicken coop?

Roy Roberts: That's the chicken coop, which I got a better picture of.

Nancy Yasecko: All right. Tell us what we're looking at here in this--

Roy Roberts: This is original homestead house before it was painted. That's my mother sitting there on the front stoop. There's the outhouse back there. [01:11:00] That's the house that went through the hurricane and didn't have any problem.

Nancy Yasecko: It's pretty cleared around that area.

Roy Roberts: Yeah. You had to prove up on 10 acres. You had to clear 10 acres to file and get a homesteading deed.

Nancy Yasecko: Who are we looking at here? What are we looking at on this?

Roy Roberts: This picture of my parents [01:11:30] in the middle of the field. You can see the old [clothes 01:11:33] back there. I think that's an old truck sitting back there. But it's just pretty indicative of how they had to dress and what people look like in those days.

Nancy Yasecko: What year do you think that might have been?

Roy Roberts: Probably '24, '25, somewhere along there. You can see the boots that my dad has on. My mother, during mosquito season had to put [01:12:00] newspapers around their legs under her stockings from mosquitoes.

And of course there were no-see-ums and mosquitoes out here and there were ticks and there were redbugs. Used sulfur in your clothes for redbugs cause that keep the redbugs off.

Nancy Yasecko: All [01:12:30] right, what's this?

Roy Roberts: That's the aftermath of the '26 hurricane. In the background is a chicken coop that my mother and my second cousin stayed in during the hurricane, which they'd been a lot better off in the house, cause the house came through perfect. But just showed ... That's what it shows, piece of land that managed to get cleared. They cleared land by hand in those days. [01:13:00] The palmetto roots that is prevalent in that area are six to eight foot long and they grow parallel to ground. And they're dug out by hand.

This is my mother and my dad and my dad's brother, and one-eyed horse that they brought from Tampa, and wagon that came from Sears and Roebuck. You see the chicken coop back here. And this is land that they're clearing on. [01:13:30] And she rode this horse when she was postmistress. Rode this horse back and forth at times to the post office. The land was cleared by hand and was measured by [task 01:13:45] which was 40 feet by 40 feet. And the clearing consisted of digging these palmetto roots out, which were six to eight foot long. They laid on the top of the ground but they had a million little roots going in the [01:14:00] ground.

But a man was paid \$7 a task and it would take him a week approximately to clear and stack these palmetto roots to where they could be burned. And it was a slow way to go, but in those days there wasn't any real equipment to do anything with other than by hand. Fortunately in this property there wasn't a lot of big oak trees [01:14:30] and other trees that would cause a real problem.

Nancy Yasecko: You were saying before, they had to prove a certain part?—Of land?

Roy Roberts: Yeah, to get a homesteading deed, you had to prove up on 10 acres out of the 160. You had to live on it for five years. So my mother lived out there by herself basically and my dad he was a mechanic in Cocoa in the Buick garage. Course he couldn't go home [01:15:00] every night. There was no way.

Nancy Yasecko: Must've been pretty lonely for her out there.

Roy Roberts: She's a pretty tough gal. I imagine it was, yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: What do we got here?

Roy Roberts: We got a picture of the original homestead house and my mother. And she rode this particular animal when she was postmistress. She had quite often [01:15:30] rode that horse back and forth to the post office. And you can probably see newspaper around her legs right there. Looks like it, at least to my eyes.

Nancy Yasecko: Oh my. When was this picture taken? What do we see?

Roy Roberts: This was after the hurricane. You saw the pictures of the amount of water that was covering the land. And of course, there was no drainage on the island. When this [01:16:00] machine came in to start providing drainage, I would imagine that picture and that machine was most important thing that happened in their life in a long time, cause they knew that when those ditches were dug they were probably gonna be safe from hurricanes. And it's typical of a drag line in those days.

Nancy Yasecko: Would that be something the state decided to do?

Roy Roberts: I don't know. But I think it was the county. [01:16:30] Mr. Fortenberry was County Commissioner down in that district for a number of years. And probably he had something to do with it too. But I believe it was the county. The man that ran that machine just died a few years ago. He was a pretty close friend of mine. He'd tell me stories about the Island and runnin' that machine, and the gators and [01:17:00] the snakes. When they'd put up a road then, with that machine there was men there in Orsino that did all the grading by hand. They didn't have any way to grade the dirt out. And he stayed right there and graded every bit of the roads by hand with a shovel and a hoe.

Nancy Yasecko: Okay ...

Roy Roberts: This was a picture of my dad and I. I [01:17:30] was probably about 10 or 12. That horse, I named her Dixie and I raised her from a colt. And as I had mentioned, horses were, in spite of the flies and the heat, and the mosquitoes, they were pretty necessary over there for us because of the stock, and the fact for getting around whenever we wanted to go out in territories [01:18:00] where there were no roads. And there wasn't that many roads.

Nancy Yasecko: What is this here?

Roy Roberts: This is a picture of my mother on a tractor preparing land for either a garden or planting orange trees. It was a typical tractor in those days. Also, women worked like that in those days.

Nancy Yasecko: Guess your dad being a mechanic kept your machinery in pretty [01:18:30] good order.

Roy Roberts: Yeah. He was pretty good at it. I still have that tractor, restored.

Nancy Yasecko: Wow.

Okay, who we looking at here? What's going on?

Roy Roberts: You're looking at my dad closing down a still out at South Lake. That kind of had an interesting story on that. I don't know how old I was but I can remember my mother taking me in an old car. [01:19:00] And I guess for entertainment, riding the sand trails out towards South Lake cause that's all that was out there, was South Lake. And I can remember rifle shots, 22 rifle shots. And of course, she'd turned around and went back home. That's during the period that my dad was Sheriff and so of course, I guess he dressed her down pretty hard for being out there. But evidently we had gotten too close to somebody's still. [01:19:30] So my dad went out there and I guess he finally found the still and got these people help him destroy it.

Nancy Yasecko: What were they making?

Roy Roberts: Shine.

Nancy Yasecko: Out of, what do they ...

Roy Roberts: Corn.

Nancy Yasecko: Corn.

Roy Roberts: Mm-hmm (affirmative), corn liquor.

Nancy Yasecko: Corn liquor.

Roy Roberts: Mm-hmm (affirmative), but that's one of those commercial type stills. And he didn't allow that. If somebody had something for home brew that was one thing but [01:20:00] as you can see that's a 50 gallon still right there.

Nancy Yasecko: I was gonna say those look like parts that were made somewhere else and trucked in.

Roy Roberts: Yeah, right. All copper. You can see the picture of the main generator right here.

Nancy Yasecko: And the coil.

Roy Roberts: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, that would put out a lot of shine in a period of time.

Nancy Yasecko: Can you point out these folks in the other pictures? Is that your dad there on the left?

Roy Roberts: This one? [01:20:30] Yeah that's my dad. He loved horses. That was him and that was a Tennessee Walker he'd gotten. And I don't know what that picture is there. I think that's just a picture of the grove-

Nancy Yasecko: It says East Grove.

Roy Roberts: Yeah. Picture of the grove that trees were probably pretty small.

Nancy Yasecko: Okay, what we got here on this picture on [01:21:00] the left?

Roy Roberts: A picture of my dad holding me, probably about 1930 or so. In Orsino in front of an orange tree.

Nancy Yasecko: Looks like there's some oranges on that tree.

Roy Roberts: Yeah.

Nancy Yasecko: A lot of oranges for a little tree.

Roy Roberts: Well, that's good land over there. It produced real well. And he had a green thumb too.

Nancy Yasecko: We got two pictures here. [01:21:30] Why don't you tell us about each of those.

Roy Roberts: Well the one on the left is the new bridge across Banana Creek. The original bridge was built quite high, so sailboats could go under. And it had deteriorated to the point that they tore it down and built this new bridge and that's what that is, across Banana Creek, right northwest from the [VAB 01:21:55] Building.

The other picture is myself on [01:22:00] some horse I had. I don't even remember back that far. But it's taken after Orsino.

Nancy Yasecko: All right, when do you think this picture was taken?

Roy Roberts: I would guess in the early 40's. It was a parade in downtown [01:22:30] Titusville and myself and my two cousins are riding in that car. Picture's so faded, it's a shame because it would've been an interesting background but, I'm sure there's some Bob Hudson's on those fellas got some real good pictures.

Nancy Yasecko: Well, i'm guessing from the flags, that must've been the Fourth of July.

Roy Roberts: The Fourth of July, right.

Nancy Yasecko: It looks like you had a pretty good time.

Roy Roberts: [01:23:00] Yeah. I think I always had a good time.

Robert Gilbert: Okay what's this picture?

Roy Roberts: This is my mother and I don't know how old I was. Looks like three or four months old. The interesting part of the picture though to me is the dog. That's a German police dog my [01:23:30] dad had and when he was Sheriff he kept that dog in his car with him many, many nights. Especially at night. And he said when that dog would sit in that car, he didn't have to worry about anybody bothering him. I know I was in a crib and that dog was chained to a cot. Some type of old steel army cot. And somebody came up to the door that he didn't like and took that cot right through the door, chasing [01:24:00] this fellow down the street. So he must've been some dog.

Nancy Yasecko: That's a really neat picture.