

BREVARD COUNTY ORAL HISTORY VIDEOS

WILLIAM AKRIDGE

Interviewer: Nancy Yasecko
Transcribed By: Kathy Burch
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(Field Tape #67, #68)

NANCY YASECKO:And where and when you were born.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: In Ohio...(laugh).

NANCY YASECKO: So tell us your name and when and where you were born.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Right now?

NANCY YASECKO: Yes.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: William Greenberry Akridge, born (?), Georgia. What else?

NANCY YASECKO: What year were you born?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: November 11, 1906.

NANCY YASECKO: Now what brought you to Brevard County?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Uh...a committee--a committee down here didn't like the way things were being run so they uh brought me down here my uh step-father and mother

NANCY YASECKO: Your step-father was a pretty famous individual.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, yeah...he was a smart man.

NANCY YASECKO: What was his name?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Noah Butt.

NANCY YASECKO: What can you tell us about him, what did he do?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: He was a lawyer he lived in (?) Georgia.

NANCY YASECKO: I heard he was a pretty good lawyer.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, very good uh, very good he specialized in criminal law.

NANCY YASECKO: Were there so many criminals down here they needed a lawyer?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: (Laugh) A lot of mosquitoes. Uh...I tell you, I don't see how people lived with the mosquitoes, I tell you we had to have a mosquito brush when we were coming--coming in the door. Terrible.

NANCY YASECKO: What else did you do to get rid of the mosquitoes, anything?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: We sprayed them and had a man that had a airplane come in and spray the---he had to spray in the air (inaudible) you can't imagine the mosquitoes you just can't imagine you couldn't get in the door without a brush.

NANCY YASECKO: It must have been pretty--pretty hard living.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: It was (laugh).

NANCY YASECKO: Do you remember what it was like when you first came here?
What did you think of this place when you came here?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: I was too young to think, I think. It was very nice I enjoyed it really.

NANCY YASECKO: You were just a boy when you came.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah...right, fourteen. I didn't have anything to do with it they brought me down uh...lucky for me--lucky break.

NANCY YASECKO: Did you make some friends down here when you got here?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah...couse all of them are dead by now, I out lived them. I'm just 88, so you know that's getting up in the world.

NANCY YASECKO: Can you remember what you would do for fun when you were a boy down here?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Just fishing. I---go out in a boat and row--row around the boat.

NANCY YASECKO: Was fishing pretty good?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Pretty--pretty fair back in those days, yeah. Of course (inaudible) my step-father we had a (inaudible) used to be the (inaudible) I don't know what it is now (inaudible). We had a law office over there--over there we didn't have any running water or anything it was kind of rough living.

NANCY YASECKO: Was your house near the law office.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: No it was out---further west about a mile.

NANCY YASECKO: How would you get to town?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: We had a car and uh I couldn't drive my mother could she was a very good driver. It was very primitive--primitive town here then and the mosquitoes I don't see how, how people lived with those, you just can't imagine the mosquitoes we had to have a mosquito brush to come in the door.

NANCY YASECKO: When you would ride in the car what were the roads like?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Sand, sand roads uh there were very, very few paved roads.

NANCY YASECKO: Must have gotten stuck sometimes.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, we did I can remember up in Georgia (inaudible) a creek up in Georgia in the middle of it and give out, right in the middle of the creek.

NANCY YASECKO: I guess you had to take care of your own car, change your own--

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right uh and we had an old car they don't make them anymore I don't think, a grant g-r-a-n-t, grant, I don't think they make them anymore. It was always breaking down.

NANCY YASECKO: Did Col. Butts drive a car too?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: He couldn't drive, my mom--, momma had to do all the driving. He had a car (inaudible) drive a car.

NANCY YASECKO: What kind of trials did he have?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Any kind that came around as long as they had money (laugh).

NANCY YASECKO: Did you ever watch him when he was working at the courthouse?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right, un-huh, I enjoyed it.. He was mostly a criminal, mostly.

NANCY YASECKO: How would they dress up for court in that--that day, would he wear a suit and---

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, he had to dress up very sophisticated, like.

NANCY YASECKO: Maybe watching all those trials you wanted to be a lawyer too?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right...un-huh, yeah.

NANCY YASECKO: Do you remember when you went to school to learn the law?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, I went to the University of Florida, over there for five years I think it was then.

NANCY YASECKO: And--and after that it would have been close to W.W.II time I guess.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right I had to go to Providence, Rhode Island, during the war (inaudible) in Providence.

NANCY YASECKO: It must have been different than here, going back--

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right...I didn't like it up there snow--snow you know cold weather. I like to froze to death. I got off the train up there and slid right on down to the bottom. Snow.

NANCY YASECKO: And you'd never seen snow before?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: No, right. Yeah it was rough, it was really cold, Florida boy.

NANCY YASECKO: You came back as soon as you could?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right.

NANCY YASECKO: Let's see, when you came back here you had your law degree.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, and the only one that was practicing was my father-in-law, Noah Butt, we had an office right over the river. So when we went to the bathroom--right in the river (laugh).

NANCY YASECKO: Well things were primitive then.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right (laugh). Catfish were glad to see us gone.

NANCY YASECKO: Um...what kind of lawyer were you did you do any kind of---

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Any kind that had money, uh---Mr. Butt was a criminal lawyer, I was a--you might say civil lawyer. He was a very good lawyer, very good too uh.

NANCY YASECKO: Do you remember any of his cases?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: No...to long ago.

NANCY YASECKO: Somebody told me he never lost a case.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: He was very good, a very good lawyer he (inaudible) could really tell them about it very good (inaudible) and never did have a law degree either he was a really good lawyer.

NANCY YASECKO: You say he didn't have a law degree?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Un-huh. He just practiced on his own learning all that himself, but he was a good lawyer.

NANCY YASECKO: Well you had a half-brother.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah. Noah Butt, yeah, I don't know, all I know is now, you know Ed?

NANCY YASECKO: I think he's in the mountains.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: In the mountains. Okay he has a cottage up there.

NANCY YASECKO: Um...let's see, so you practiced law for awhile after you got back and uh then you got involved with politics.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, I ran for mayor and representative. Yeah, I was lucky I got elected, yeah. I guess some people say unlucky (laugh).

NANCY YASECKO: Not too many people lived here then.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Un-uh, very few, too many mosquitoes. It was terrible. You, you just can't imagine the mosquitoes you can't get in--couldn't come in the door without a brush (inaudible) mosquito...you just can't imagine it.

NANCY YASECKO: The politics there---there---you must have known everybody in town.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right...yeah. Knew everybody.

NANCY YASECKO: Not so many people were voting I guess they were mostly democrats.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah right, no republican, wasn't allowed.

NANCY YASECKO: Not even one republican in town?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: No, no...it was a very smart little town.

NANCY YASECKO: Can you remember anything about your days of at the State House in Tallahassee.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: No....I didn't take much active part I just let the....

NANCY YASECKO: That's what they tell the new guys coming in, just listen.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Listen, (laugh).

NANCY YASECKO: A lot of things were changing here...

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Oh, yeah...right...yeah, that road right there was just a little sand road, very uh.. very few paved roads, yeah.

NANCY YASECKO: Then they moved U.S.1.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right...yeah, yeah.

NANCY YASECKO: Was there some controversy where to put the road?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, had to be....yeah...(inaudible) finally settled where it is now. Like you say it was a controversy.

NANCY YASECKO: Do you remember of where else they were thinking of doing it? Were they just gonna leave it down by the river?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah...(inaudible) River Road, yeah.

NANCY YASECKO: Well you spent a lot of time at the courthouse.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, yeah my father-in-law was a good lawyer and we stayed down there a lot of the time. I didn't take part in assisting him, he was really good. He didn't have a law degree but he was really good.

NANCY YASECKO: Somebody said if you want to commit a crime do in--in Brevard and they get Col. Butt.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right he was really good.

NANCY YASECKO: Um...I hear he was a very unselfish man.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, very good, very good. Yeah he had a very good heart. Very good man. And..and his (inaudible) come and talk to him for this hour and they would ask what do I owe you. And he said nothing I just enjoyed talking to you he was a very good man, big heart.

NANCY YASECKO: Do you remember the house that you lived in when you were here.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, that was a town it's been town---down it's been torn down. They gave us uh...three months house rent to move down. They didn't like way--

the committee didn't like the way the town was being run so they got Mr. Butt to come down they gave us three months house rent--very nice.

NANCY YASECKO: What was the house like? What was it made out of?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: It was made out of wood it was just a little bungalow it was very nice. It's been torn down.

NANCY YASECKO: You and your mom and your brother and the Col., is that all your family there?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: That's all we had.

NANCY YASECKO: Do you remember, uh...people using the river for transportation. Would they---

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, they used to have a barge, take people around about (inaudible) really (inaudible) method of transportation...river barge.

NANCY YASECKO: Did you ever ride on that barge?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah..right. I forget how much it cost but I was able to ride on it fortunately.

NANCY YASECKO: Would you go with your mom or by yourself?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: With my mom. My mom was my partner she was really nice.

NANCY YASECKO: She kept the house and did she have a garden too?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah...she had a little garden right back of the house, yeah.

NANCY YASECKO: Did you have any uh...cows or chickens or...

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: I had a chicken (laugh). Yeah I had a kitten and a chicken.

NANCY YASECKO: Do you remember the old--the businesses that were here? Like the--was there uh a grocery store?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah and Travis Hardware store, Travis has been here forever. The grocery store, a fellow by the name of Rimlet run it. Yeah, had a grocery store and a hardware store. And seemed like there was luxury store too. Very small town, everybody knew everybody and everybody's business too.

NANCY YASECKO: Was there still a (inaudible) they had a guy with horses and wagons?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah had wagons, yeah. And cattle too had a lot of cattle up here too.

NANCY YASECKO: Oh they were ranchers out--

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, out west.

NANCY YASECKO: West of town. Did you ever have anything to do with them?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: No...I'd go over there once in awhile to see the cattle (inaudible). Kind of interesting.

NANCY YASECKO: There were uh...orange groves.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, orange groves...yeah, and uh...(inaudible)...packing houses used to have some packing houses--packed the fruit...grew a lot of fruit in those days, had a packing house packed the fruit, shipped it all. I know (inaudible) grove. (Inaudible.....).

NANCY YASECKO: Where did your family buy most of their milk and eggs and food like that?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: (Inaudible) Dairy...(audible)...Papa Gus----Gusafon-----

NANCY YASECKO: Oh, I bet Gustafon's. Was there a--there must have been a Doctor in town.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, I can't think of his name now but he was a very good Doctor. He had to be because nobody could pay him, nobody had any money.

NANCY YASECKO: There was---was there a Dentist?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, can't think of his name though.

NANCY YASECKO: Did you have to visit him?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah...yeah...I can't think of his name.

NANCY YASECKO: Well, was he any good?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah. It was a good thing, year...I still got all my teeth.

NANCY YASECKO: That's great.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right. That's good, he was a very good Dentist. And of course there probably was a Dentist later on.

NANCY YASECKO: You told me you used to go fishing, did you ever go hunting?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Uh...once in awhile but I never could kill anything, no. Very poor, but I went, I had a rifle but I never did get anything, I was a poor shot (laugh).

NANCY YASECKO: Let's see what else we got here. Um...Did you go to High School here?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah..I graduated from Cocoa High. Yeah...I looked for my diploma the other day but I couldn't find it. When I graduated...

NANCY YASECKO: What was that school like?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Very big it was a three story building--terrible and I had a picture of it somewhere.

NANCY YASECKO: Did you play any sports, or...

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, basketball, yeah.

NANCY YASECKO: Um...do you remember any special events at school...did you all have---

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, just the prom.

NANCY YASECKO: What was the prom like?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Very good we were very, very behaved very sophisticated, very good. It was a really good get together.

NANCY YASECKO: Did you have live music? Was there a band?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: No, just a piano...a self player piano.

NANCY YASECKO: And dancing?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Dancing, yeah...yeah.

NANCY YASECKO: Were you a good dancer?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: No...terrible, I couldn't uh...couldn't uh follow the music too much--a very poor dancer.

NANCY YASECKO: Well there weren't too many opportunities to practice dancing.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: I took piano lessons, you can't believe it but I took piano lessons never did learn how though, I just took the lessons.

NANCY YASECKO: Well, land values have changed a lot.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: What?

NANCY YASECKO: The value of land has changed.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Oh yeah, right, it sure has. You take this riverfront property it is really very valu--valuable now.

NANCY YASECKO: There weren't too many people even living---

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Un-uh, no...yeah we knew everybody--knew everybody's business.

NANCY YASECKO: Well not long after you came to Brevard there was sort of a land boom.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right..yeah...I believe it was in '35--I believe it was...yeah it was a land boom.

NANCY YASECKO: The people come in from out of town, or?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Snowbirds...yeah from out of town. Yeah...the snowbirds kind of like this place, really love it.

NANCY YASECKO: I guess some of them bought some swamp lands, even then.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah...yeah, right. If I'd of been smart, I'd be a millionaire you know it. Bought up a lot of land but I wasn't smart and didn't have the money either.

NANCY YASECKO: Well, it--it boomed and then it busted.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah...year.

NANCY YASECKO: Did the depression hit this area pretty hard?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah...yeah, you couldn't even buy a loaf of bread...it was really terrible. And bread was but ten cents a loaf either but it--we had a hard time--a hard time eating. It's hard to imagine how tough times were then.

NANCY YASECKO: You could still go fishing.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right, right. A good thing.

NANCY YASECKO: Some people have said they just ate fish for about four years.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah...(inaudible) was really good--good fishing.

NANCY YASECKO: There wasn't so much--the banks closed here?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah...we didn't have a bank for three days all of them closed we didn't have one for about three days and uh Don Barnett I was married at the time he owned (inaudible) of course I told him, I sold him a bill of goods, of course, and he came down and it's the Barnett Bank now. Yeah, we didn't have a bank for three days. We had two--two at the time--three at the time all of them closed.

NANCY YASECKO: So you knew Mr. Barnett.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah...yeah....and Don was the name, Don Barnett came down and wanted to know if he could make a go of it. Of course I told him he could, very good a lot of orange groves people need paying their hands---need some money, need checks cashed and what not. Yeah we didn't have a bank here for three days.

NANCY YASECKO: That must have been kind of frightening.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right...it was. But it was a good thing...(inaudible) bread was cheap, meals were cheap it's a good thing people started out (inaudible). A loaf of bread is about a dollar now we'd get by for ten cents, yeah.

NANCY YASECKO: Well after the--the recovery from the depression things started to pick up again.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right, yeah.

NANCY YASECKO: After the war everything was different.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right. I'd a been smart I'd have been a millionaire (laugh) bought all the land up and sold it to the snowbirds.

NANCY YASECKO: The uh--space program started launching rockets out here.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right...yeah, yeah. They brought a lot of people in, a good thing, yeah.

NANCY YASECKO: That must have been kind of a surprise that first rocket.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right, un-huh. That thing shook the whole house, everything when they fired the first one.

NANCY YASECKO: I think we're about the end of one of our tapes, why don't we cut.

NEW VIDEO INSERTED

NANCY YASECKO:I got a whole list of questions here maybe some of them you'll have something to say about. Do you remember the--the Post Office here? Did they deliver the mail or did you have to go get it?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: They deli---delivered it but I forget where the Post Office was, I just don't remember where it was. Seemed like it was over the river down--down in part of Cocoa it seems like it was over the river then, yeah...I'm sure it was.

NANCY YASECKO: There were a few churches here. Was there one church that your family went to?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, the Methodist Church, yeah..yeah, I was baptized there in the Methodist Church. I forget where it was now.

NANCY YASECKO: Not the same place as now, I guess.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: I don't think so...I forget where it was...poor memory.

NANCY YASECKO: Well most churches had celebrations sometimes they'd get everybody together.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right, un-huh.

NANCY YASECKO: Have picnics, or...

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, had picnics...you had picnics, yeah everybody brought a little for the picnic. Yeah...(inaudible) I got uh (inaudible) and it was out this morning. Yeah it was one big family you might say.

NANCY YASECKO: Would they go places or just have the socials there at the church area?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, we went out and washed it down sometimes.

NANCY YASECKO: Did you ever head over to the beach?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah...you'd be surprised there wasn't anything over there then. I had a cottage over there, me and my cousin, Campbell, were the only two people over there, just two people over there. Yeah...I had a nice little cottage over there.

NANCY YASECKO: How would you get there?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: We had a car. It was an old Grant...an old Grant automobile, they (laugh) they don't make them anymore had a hard time getting it over there it would

break down, hard time. There wasn't anything over at the beach just my cottage and my cousin Campbell. It's hard to realize, you know, nobody over there.

NANCY YASECKO: What would you do when you got there?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Go swimming. Yeah.

NANCY YASECKO: Did you ever find things washed up on the beach?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: We looked for them, never did find anything. Shells, lots of shells.

NANCY YASECKO: Would you go over just for a day or would you spend a week?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: We would spend a week, yeah, overnight. We'd stay about a week.

NANCY YASECKO: Take all your food with you?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, suppose you could buy can stuff then.

NANCY YASECKO: It must have been fun.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, it was.

NANCY YASECKO: Did you ever drive around on Merritt Island?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Very seldom. It was uh not much of a road, just sand roads, then.

NANCY YASECKO: Did you go down to Melbourne sometimes?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, my wife was in Melbourne I had to go down and court her. We finally got married we got married in Melbourne.

NANCY YASECKO: I guess that was kind of a bigger city than Cocoa.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah...yeah, it was a bigger city.

NANCY YASECKO: And, uh...suppose you had business up in Titusville, that was the County Seat.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: County Seat...yeah, had to go to--when my step-father we had to go to Titusville he had a lot of cases up there.

NANCY YASECKO: Was the courthouse up there in the same place?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right, un-huh. He didn't drive so I had to ride him.

NANCY YASECKO: Was there a newspaper here?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah...Cocoa Tribune, yeah it's been here a long time, yeah. Mrs. Holman and John Fallenwright (?).

NANCY YASECKO: Did they ever write up some of the cases that uh you were working on?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Every once in awhile I had a picture of uh--taken of me and my--one of my cousins is Sadie. I got it back in the room now, uh...

NANCY YASECKO: Um...so some tourist starting coming down here.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah...Yankees, snowbirds. The merchants kind of like them, we didn't like them. The merchants really liked them they spent money.

NANCY YASECKO: Which hotels did they stay at?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: What?

NANCY YASECKO: Where did they stay when they came down?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: There was uh...oh what do you...(inaudible) a couple of houses down in the heart of town there was a hotel it's not there anymore, it was called the Cocoa House. It was a nice place they served meals and everything.

NANCY YASECKO: There weren't too many restaurants.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: No..un-uh, very few as a matter of fact there's only one downtown. Yeah I forget who run it now but it was uh--a pretty fair restaurant if you didn't eat everything they'd serve it to the next one (laugh). That was something else, you know it.

NANCY YASECKO: Um...what was the attraction to this area, why would people come here?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Snowbirds wanted to get out of the snow up north.

NANCY YASECKO: That was enough they didn't need a Disney World.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right. Yeah we didn't have anything to attract them but the water and the good climate. They didn't like the snow and I don't blame them.

NANCY YASECKO: Um...how'd you spend your Saturdays and Sundays, what did you do for fun?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Slept (laugh). A day of rest, yeah...a day of rest like the bible said, the seventh day is a day of rest.

NANCY YASECKO: So you are working pretty hard.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right.

NANCY YASECKO: Um...before the sixties the black community was just west of the tracks...

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right.

NANCY YASECKO: Was there some kind of rule about that or?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: It was a hand made rule. We wouldn't sell them anything over here (inaudible) so uh that's the way we kind of kept them separated at that time. Yeah.

NANCY YASECKO: Things changed in the sixties.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right, un-huh.

NANCY YASECKO: Well let me see what else we got here. Indian River Regattas. Do you remember when they used to sail--have sailboat races?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah...yeah, out on the river here very nice, un-huh.

NANCY YASECKO: Did you ever race in one of those?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: No...no I never did sail one. I wasn't smart enough, I guess.

NANCY YASECKO: There were parades in town sometimes.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Sometimes, yeah. And they had this parade now once in awhile. I forget now what the occasion was but we---we did--we had some parades. Twice or three times a year, I don't remember now.

NANCY YASECKO: Did everybody come watch it?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right, un-huh.

NANCY YASECKO: You weren't in it, you were watching it.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right. I watching it, yeah.

NANCY YASECKO: Um...other things to do...there was a movie theater.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, there was a movie. I have a picture somewhere (inaudible) Aladdin Theater. Yeah...yeah, that was the entertainment we had. And, uh...it had self piano (inaudible.....).

NANCY YASECKO: Oh the organ was a pump organ?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, I don't think we had an organ it was a piano. It was a self player though.

NANCY YASECKO: Did you like going to the movies?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, place to go, yeah. And it was a (inaudible) reason (inaudible) I forget what it was I was able to go. Matter of fact I got a job running one of the machines, that's where I ruined my eyes they had those (inaudible) machines.

NANCY YASECKO: That was dangerous too, that film would burn, wouldn't it?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right, yeah. We had a fire extinguisher right up there it was in case something went wrong of course it never did when I was there.

NANCY YASECKO: It was kind of hot up there.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right.

NANCY YASECKO: Bright lights.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Bright lights, yeah. That's where I ruined my eyes looking at the bright carbon.

NANCY YASECKO: The carbon rods.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right.

NANCY YASECKO: Yeah. Well I've heard from a lot of people that going to the movies was one of the big things to do.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah.

NANCY YASECKO: One of the, oh-----.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: What?

NANCY YASECKO: I hear the train.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right.

NANCY YASECKO: Speaking of trains...you ever go on train rides?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, I went up to Providence, Rhode Island, one time. I was mayor and I got invited thank goodness, and I went out to Providence, Rhode Island...stepped off the train and I slid all the way to the bottom because of snow.

NANCY YASECKO: It must have been a big surprise.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, right (laugh).

NANCY YASECKO: Okay, why don't we cut. Can you tell me what we're looking at here can you see what this is?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, that's the high school, yeah. I graduated from there.

NANCY YASECKO: You got a lot of hair.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah (laugh).

NANCY YASECKO: Okay, this-this high school building looks like it's new.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: It was, un-huh. We were the first class that graduated from it, new building.

NANCY YASECKO: Do you remember where it was located?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Not anymore, no.

NANCY YASECKO: It's gone now. Cut. So you played basketball, what position did you have, do you recall?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Uh...I was a forward I think they call it a forward I don't know what they call it now.

NANCY YASECKO: The same, I think. So you'd shoot?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Huh?

NANCY YASECKO: You'd shoot baskets?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah.

NANCY YASECKO: Did your team do pretty well?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, I thought so. I don't guess...I don't know what the team thought.

NANCY YASECKO: Well I-I got a picture here looks like your away at college. Now what fraternity were you in there?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Delta Sigma Thi. (Inaudible). That's (laugh) what everybody else called it.

NANCY YASECKO: Oh...it was a good fraternity, wasn't it?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah, it was nice, yeah. I don't think it's there anymore. But it was a nice fraternity, I thought.

NANCY YASECKO: We got a picture of you here in 1930. That was about the time you were elected Mayor wasn't it?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah...un-huh...yeah.

NANCY YASECKO: Is that something you wanted to do or did somebody talk you into that?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: They had to talk me into it----'course uh after they talked me into it I wanted it of course. It was a committee that was really dissatisfied with the way the City was being run, so they asked me if I would run and of course I was glad to, of course.

NANCY YASECKO: Turned out to be kind of a tough time to be Mayor though, 1930. Yeah...depression time. Not an easy job. Okay can you get this one here. And there's a picture of your half-brother, Noah.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Yeah...Noah Butt, un-huh.

NANCY YASECKO: They called him Sonny too, didn't they?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Oh yeah, Sonny Butt.

NANCY YASECKO: Was that because he was a happy fellow, er....just because?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: He was a very nice fellow, yes...he certainly was.

NANCY YASECKO: That's good...cut. Okay well here's a drawing from the State House, that must have been when you first got up there they were showing the new, new guys in the State house. You got your classes on. No mustache?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: No mustache (laugh) I shaved it off, I guess.

NANCY YASECKO: Were you a pretty strict judge?

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Uh...uh, I thought I was, I never really thought about it but I thought I was.

NANCY YASECKO: Why don't you identify yourself and tell us what your gonna do.

ANN AKRIDGE BONNER: I'm Anne Akridge Bonner, Judge Akridge's oldest daughter and I'm going to read an article that was printed in the Sanford Herald, Friday, July 14th, 1972. The title is "Convicted Rapist Endorses Jurist".

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Are you going to read all that?

ANN AKRIDGE BONNER: Yes because you're so wonderful. There's an old adage which says that politics makes and this is succinctly pointed out in a recent letter to this reporter endorsing the candidacy of Circuit Court Judge, William Akridge. Judge Akridge has announced his intentions to seek re-election as Judge for the 18th Judicial Circuit. Court attaches are frank to admit the popularity of Judge Akridge in his folksy repartee with spectators at various trials and makes him as popular with the public. However, the endorsement comes from Dennis Burnavitch, convicted rapist who was sentenced by Judge Akridge on September 24, 1971, to death in the electric chair when the jury failed to recommend mercy. Burnavitch states I'm writing to inform you while reading your informative paper I see where Judge William Akridge is running for re-election and I would say to the people of Sanford they should vote for this man. In a sense I know Judge Akridge very slightly. I do know he has a sense of justice for all people. While he is on the bench and the process of seeing the law is carried out to the best of his knowledge, in plain words the man is fair as fair as the system will let him. I knew Judge Akridge for 5 days, as he was the presiding Judge in my trial in which I was convicted of the crime of rape. Judge Akridge sentenced me to die in the electric chair as required by law with the verdict of guilty and no recommendation of mercy by the jury. Judge Akridge maintained justice by the law and was in control which in my view some Judges let the prosecuting attorneys run the trials as they wish just so they can get a conviction. I feel if others judgments and concerns was as Judge Akridge's is I would not be here now, the man sentenced me to die but only by word. Mis-justice of others in my trial put me here. But I feel someone else may be dealt justice as Judge Akridge is as fair or more so than any Judge I've ever known and I've known a few in my day. Think, some day you may be in court and want a just man on the bench William Akridge is just such a man.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: That was a nice letter, wasn't it?

ANN AKRIDGE BONNER: It was.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: I saved it.

ANN AKRIDGE BONNER: I know. It was very nice, Dad. All the lawyers and everyone say how fair you were on the bench. You're a pretty fair person.

WILLIAM AKRIDGE: Well, thank you, Ann.

ANN AKRIDGE BONNER: And sincere.