

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

Bob G.: This is the oral history of William Jackson Vaughn by the Brevard County Historical Commission. Bob Gross is doing the interviewing and Jeff Thompson is the camera man. Jackson, where were you born?

Jackson: Vienna, Georgia. Dooly County.

Bob G.: Dooly County?

Jackson: Between Vienna and Cordele [00:00:24].

Bob G.: What did your father do there?

Jackson: Everybody [00:00:30] originally in there were farmers, cotton growers. By the time we left there, he was an attorney.

Bob G.: He had gone to law school?

Jackson: No. He went to Emory College, which is now Emory University, but they didn't have the law school there.

Bob G.: Do you have any fond memories of living in Georgia?

Jackson: Yeah, I do. The family's been in the [00:01:00] Carolinas and Georgia 200, 300 years. In fact, the place I was born on is still in the family and it's been in the family for more than 200 years. They were raising cotton 200 years ago, so I was born in the cotton field there and anybody asks me where I was born or from, I tell them immediately, you've been there, [00:01:30] which surprises them a little bit. I'm assuming with that everybody's been up 75 through there. The right of way of 75 runs right through the spots where I was born on the old home place there. I say, so you've been there.

Bob G.: How did your family end up in Florida?

Jackson: I don't know. I guess Florida boom started back in what, 1923 [00:02:00] or some place, and I presume economics had something to do with it and maybe everything wasn't too good in Georgia. Any how it happened.

Bob G.: Where did they come into Florida?

Jackson: They came first Orlando. First, one year in Orlando. The rest of them here.

Bob G.: How old were you then?

Jackson: I would've been '14 to '23; about [00:02:30] nine years old, I guess.

Bob G.: I forgot to ask you that, what year were you born?

Jackson: 1914.

Bob G.: 1914. When did they come from Orlando over to Melbourne?

Jackson: '24.

Bob G.: '24? What did your father do over here?

Jackson: Practice law.

Bob G.: By himself or with somebody?

Jackson: No, he came over here and worked with David Peel who was an early respected Melbourne [00:03:00] attorney and he was here, I don't know when the Peels came. Mr. Peel was Englishman. He was born in England, but they were here sometime before 1920.

Bob G.: What about your mother's family?

Jackson: My mother's family is the place where I was born. The family as a whole came into this country in the 1600s and have been here from then on in [00:03:30] the Carolinas and Georgia.

Bob G.: What was their last name?

Jackson: The original?

Bob G.: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Jackson: The original Emery's were French Huguenot [ 00:03:45]. Shoot.

Bob G.: What was her maiden name when you married her?

Jackson: Jackson.

Bob G.: Jackson?

Jackson: That's where I got my name.<sup>1</sup>

Bob G.: Oh, okay. What about your early schooling? Did you go to school in Georgia [00:04:00] and then Orlando?

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<sup>1</sup> Jackson is talking about his mother here, whose maiden name was Jackson, not his wife as Bob alludes to. As an aside Jackson married Elaine Lillian Waring on January 1, 1944.

Jackson: I've been three years in Vienna, one in Orlando and the rest in Melbourne in Florida.

Bob G.: What school building was there when you came to Melbourne?

Jackson: Ruth Henegar Center building there.

Bob G.: The center building was already built? Okay.

Jackson: As I recall. It must have been close.

Bob G.: You were just a boy in Melbourne. What was it like being a boy in Melbourne in those years?

Jackson: Well you know, I guess in those days [00:04:30] you adapt and all. First, greeting with mosquitoes takes you by surprise a little bit and sand spurs. We all went barefooted and sand spurs were something of a problem.

Bob G.: Did you camp or hunt and fish?

Jackson: We did. As a boy I remember the Boy Scouts; the first troop, troop number one. I [00:05:00] don't know whether it was the first troop, but it was called troop number one. It was an excellent scout troop and we went and camped at various different [00:05:13] places on the beaches, out in Kempfer lands and all around. It was pretty good. Down on the river, yeah.

Bob G.: Your scout master, you remember his name?

Jackson: Yeah, Captain [00:05:30] Finley.

Bob G.: Finley?

Jackson: He was a world war I man. The assistant scout master was Master Conklin who was part of an old family, here in Brevard.

Bob G.: You spent time right about the old Orange Spot Hotel and you saw that catch fire one time?

Jackson: I saw it burning.

Bob G.: What happened?

Jackson: Of course it burned, but maybe one of the unusual things there was [00:06:00] an explosion and it was a burning timber. It was blowing across the road and landed on top of the house on the south side of Melbourne Ave which was owned by Dick Miegl at that time.

Bob G.: Dick Mieg!

Jackson: M-I-E-G-L and I can just remember seeing Mr. Mieg up on the roof trying to push that burning off of there.

Bob G.: In the 1920s was the period of time [00:06:30] they dug up that mammoth and mastodon over on the golf course by FIT. Did you ever see any of that?

Jackson: No, I really didn't. We heard talks about it a lot, but I didn't really get into it.

Bob G.: Okay, but in the 20s you must have seen a lot of the buildings being built, like the Melbourne Hotel.

Jackson: The Melbourne Hotel was under construction when we came. It was finished later on. Another old building, the Flat [00:07:00] Iron building, the Agart Building and they finished that Stoll building there before ... There's a lot of them built here.

Bob G.: The building that you owned, the Dennis Medvine, where your office is. The Dennis Medvine building.

Jackson: It was there until that hurricane a few [00:07:30] years ago.

Bob G.: You didn't build that building. It was there.

Jackson: No, that building was built by Mr. Walter T. Church who was I guess, here like everybody else, investing in real estate. His home was in Indialantic.

Bob G.: Did you spend much time at the beach when you were young?

Jackson: We spent quite a bit of time. Transportation wasn't too good. Everybody didn't have [00:08:00] cars and automotives at the time, but a lot of the time you'd either catch a ride over or get there the best way you could, a bicycle, walk or something.

Bob G.: All we had was the wooden bridge at that time?

Jackson: Yes, sir.

Bob G.: Did it catch fire periodically?

Jackson: I think it had been on fire for cigarettes or something thrown out.

Bob G.: When did you go to college? Was that before the war?

Jackson: Yeah, I went in 1932.

Bob G.: [00:08:30] '32? When did you get your law degree?

Jackson: '39.

Bob G.: Did you practice before the war?

Jackson: Yeah, a short time. Mm-hmm (affirmative)- I started, I got my degree in '39 and I departed for service in '42.

Bob G.: Where did you go to law school?

Jackson: Gainesville, Florida gators.

Bob G.: Gators, good. I see you wearing the shirt.

Jackson: In those days, [00:09:00] Florida was smaller than FIT is, today. Excuse me.

Bob G.: Did any of your other friends from this area go to school the same time?

Jackson: We had three of them went to Florida.

Bob G.: Do you remember who they were?

Jackson: Lane, Curt, and Cindy. I'm sorry, Lane, Curt, and Elise.<sup>2</sup>

Bob G.: [00:09:30] How did you come about going into the military service? Were you drafted or you joined?

Jackson: No, I joined a group. You would've been drafted if you waited long enough, but they different programs you could enter. I think my program at the time was the V7 program and they required college graduates to enroll in that particular [00:10:00] service.

Bob G.: What did they do with you? Where did they send you?

Jackson: My first stop was Chicago for training.

Bob G.: In the winter time?

Jackson: January.

Bob G.: Oh, I bet that was a shock. Where did you go after that?

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<sup>2</sup> The names given are not Jackson's friends, but his children's names who all went to U of F.

Jackson: Well, we were in Florida bases [00:10:30] for a while, for a short time, Port Everglades and Miami, including there and a school in Miami. I guess my first stop down there was Key West.

Bob G.: Were you using your law degree in your military service?

Jackson: No, I didn't see where law had anything to do with it.

Bob G.: No? Did you go overseas at all anywhere?

Jackson: Yes, sir.

Bob G.: Where'd you go then?

Jackson: We went some up and down the [00:11:00] Atlantic side and every which Hawaii, Johnson Island, Kwajalein, [00:11:04] Guam, Enewetok, Philippines, Okinawa.

Bob G.: Wow.

Jackson: We were on the Pacific heaviest.

Bob G.: When did you come back?

Jackson: '46.

Bob G.: '46?

Jackson: Left in '42 and came back in '46, same month. Four years.

Bob G.: You jumped right back into the law when you came back?

Jackson: Right, uh huh.

Bob G.: [00:11:30] Were you in practice with your father?

Jackson: Yes.

Bob G.: At the time, was he the city attorney?

Jackson: Yes.

Bob G.: You later became city attorney yourself?

Jackson: Yeah, upon his death.

Bob G.: Oh, when he died? What year was that?

Jackson: Pardon?

Bob G.: What year was that?

Jackson: '51.

Bob G.: '51?

Jackson: [00:12:00] '61.

Bob G.: '51.

Jackson: No, '51. We were city attorneys together from I guess 1933 until 1969. I guess 36 years, yeah.

Bob G.: '69, were you involved in the merger of Melbourne and Eau Gallie?

Jackson: I was an attorney for Melbourne at the time.

Bob G.: At the time. Was that an easy transition or was that a problem?

Jackson: No, it just happened.

Bob G.: Just happened. [00:12:30] That was a result of a vote. The people voted on that?

Jackson: On the merger? Yeah, that was voted on. Most everything in the transition, a lot of control by Eau Gallie. Some way they had a three, two vote on everything.

Bob G.: During your time as an attorney, [00:13:00] they set up Banana River Naval Air Station. When did the Melbourne Naval Air Station get started?

Jackson: At the end of the war, they were getting rid of a lot of surplus properties. The Melbourne Station is what used to be the Melbourne Air Force. It became ... I'm [00:13:30] not sure what year that was, in '47. I'm not sure about it.

Bob G.: It was originally the Melbourne Airport and the military took it over?

Jackson: Melbourne had an air field there. I don't know how much standing it had. Back during some of those government programs they had where different areas would be they had distributed grants to create jobs and all. Melbourne chose to take the airport. It was [00:14:00] originally called Melbourne Eau Gallie Airport and Eau Gallie had the same opportunity as Melbourne to take it jointly. When you took the airport, it wasn't just a straight gift. You had obligations that you assumed when you took the airport. Eau

Gallie apparently did not want to assume the obligations, so they passed up [00:14:30] the chance to be part owner of the airport, but Melbourne took it and assumed all the obligations. The only obligations I remember was it had to be called Melbourne Eau Gallie Airport.

Bob G.: You had a hand in acquiring more land for the airport one time?

Jackson: Yes. I've always liked land and [00:15:00] actually you might say we were attorneys for the airport as well as the city because there's no other attorney. We created that Melbourne Airport authority that was mostly our doings and our idea. I was very interested in the land and the runways and the competition and the length of runways and things like that. It was debates about Melbourne [00:15:30] would never need more than a jumper service connect with Atlanta or some place. We didn't need a long runway, but there was a lot of land there to the west of the airport. Most of that as you drive along it as you go west NASA is that land. Then they came along a request they would buy part [00:16:00] of the original airport which is the part up on Babcock St. there [00:16:07]. A Mr. Kousac was the purchaser [inaudible ---- ] there. The land to the west of it was owned by people from the Miami area and represented by a broker up here Yale Levy.

Bob G.: Yale Levy?

Jackson: Y-A-L-E Levy. [00:16:30] I had talked to him about that land and was it for sale. Yeah, they wanted to sell it at that time and thought it would be good right behind the airport. Maybe someday they would want a longer runway, which came to pass. So what happened, we went to Miami representing the city to get [00:17:00] a release of 25 acres up on Babcock. That's where the shopping center is over there, now. We went to Miami, met with the officials down there. I guess actually use his name. The fellow I mostly dealt with at that time was Dave Kelly.

Bob G.: Dave Kelly?

Jackson: Yah, another one was Jim Peach. I think they were the two CAA [00:17:30] men that we saw.

Bob G.: What was that other name?

Jackson: Peach.

Bob G.: Peach?

Jackson: I don't know that I recall to mention the people's names. That's the way you remember. I kinda put a bug in Mr. Peach's ear that it might better to sell 25 acres and buy 300 acres [00:18:00] out to the west and all. And he caught on. That's the way the approval came out. The city didn't know about this. There was really no authority. They were

happy when they got it later. We went back and we could sell the 25 acres if we bought the 300 acres. I'm not sure. It took it down almost to the main street down there.

Bob G.: [00:18:30] That was a smart move because later on when they went from turbo prop planes to jets, they needed that extra runway.

Jackson: They couldn't have got it without it.

Bob G.: I did the archeological survey for that land that you acquired.

Jackson: Uh huh.

Jackson: Speaking still on the airport, another thing. There was quite a jealousy between Eau Gallie and Melbourne in those days [00:19:00] and I don't think Eau Gallie particularly ... They were jealous about getting this or that. The questions came along, asking could we get jet service in Melbourne. Some of those objecting to [00:19:17] jet service in Melbourne was the mayor of Eau Gallie suggested they send it up to Patrick [00:19:25] or something. Not in Melbourne. Another one, Mrs. Kerr who [00:19:30] was on the Melbourne commission. Another resource that was there, I forget the number, the runway runs north, south on the east water tank up at the end of it. Eau Gallie asked about don't build that water tank there because it would interfere with aviation, but they built it anyhow. The FAA ruled out that runway, [00:20:00] I guess for commercial service. Still use it for local. When they had the grand little ceremony there when we got the transcontinental thing approved to fly, they had a little meeting. There on stage was Mrs. Kerr taking honor for Melbourne getting-

Bob G.: When she was fighting it.

Jackson: Jet service.

Bob G.: [00:20:30] Now, when they decommissioned the airport, the Navy and the city took it all over with the airport authority. They were using it for commercial businesses like the old radiation. Did you happen-

Jackson: The city got to use it any way they could. In fact, city hall moved out there for quite a while and then we met in one of those buildings there, one of the better buildings.

Bob G.: Did you have anything to do with Harris or Radiation coming to the [00:21:00] airport?

Jackson: No, but it was close among the better tenants [00:21:06] that were out there but there were others. There was others [00:21:08]. There was an auditorium. A lot of people used it out there.

Bob G.: I seem to remember a tomato canning factory out there somewhere.

Jackson: Pardon?

Bob G.: Tomato canning.

Jackson: Oh, that was a canning factory out there. I don't know whether the airport had any part in it, but [00:21:30] there was a cannery out there.

Bob G.: The human society shelter out there?

Jackson: I can't remember all the centers, but there were ... s I say. I know the city met out there for a long time.

Bob G.: There was a movie out there one time. You remember that? They filmed the movie The Big Leaguer. Were you there at all when they did that?

Jackson: Oh, yes, uh huh.

Bob G.: Did you meet-

Jackson: I got a picture of my wife [00:22:00] with Edward G. Robinson to show.

Bob G.: Oh, do you? Did you go to any of the parties that they had?

Jackson: Yes, some of them. Heard Mr. Robinson make a speech to the officials and all. I thought he made a nice speech at the time.

Bob G.: Good, good. You also had something to do with A1A extending the road down toward the inlet. Did you acquire some land down [00:22:30] there?

Jackson: Yes. After the war there, people were interested in land and going there and it was no way to go below Melbourne Beach officially. The road went down two, three miles a little ways down below Melbourne Beach. I don't remember where it was. The owners went to the county and wanted to build a road to the inlet. The [00:23:00] county came back with, "Where would we build it? We ain't got no right of way." And so that was an impasse there and to bring condemnation proceedings to get the right of way could take years. It could take a long time. Another way was thought of and that was one that hadn't been done before, that I know. He said get [00:23:30] a voluntary donation of right of way. How would you do that? Well, among those that were leading this was Boyd Richards and his brother Albert<sup>3</sup> and some other folks down there.

What he did, I think, was he took up a collection. He got \$500 and they hired, I think his name was Ralph Carter who had been a state road engineer, if he would just go down and describe [00:24:00] a right of way to the end that he thought would be acceptable to the state. So Ralph did that. How do you do all the work and get all the deeds signed and all? We prepared the deeds this way that conveyed all the following described property lying within 50 feet of the center line, so you got the center line. So anything

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<sup>3</sup> Possibly Al Lawrence?

within [00:24:30] 50 feet and you didn't have to run those numerous things. They got the right of way all the way to the end. Lands were generally bigger tracks then. Today, they didn't have 100 foot tracts, a lot of them had maybe [00:24:47] 10, 20 acres, you know. So I remember taking those bunch of deeds we collected. When Max Rodes was there, City/County Commission and presume to bulldoze [00:25:00].

Bob G.: You did that on your own.

Jackson: I give more credit to the Richards brothers than anybody. There were a lot of others that helped to. They did all the footwork and I did getting the names of owners.

Bob G.: Were there any resistance down there.

Jackson: There probably was a little bit, but [00:25:30] I think they settled with them. I don't think any major ones.

Bob G.: Make their land more valuable if they had road to go down.

Jackson: To go to the inlet was of course an old dirt trail that had no official standing.

Bob G.: What was your first job as a boy in Melbourne? Did you caddy at the golf course or do newspapers?

Jackson: First job. I'm not sure what was first. [00:26:00] I did do some caddying at the golf course. Every now and then sometimes we delivered papers and worked in yards or anything.

Bob G.: Who did you caddy for? Do you remember?

Jackson: Well the golf courses is where it is now, there were a number of those times when outstanding gentlemen of the depression days and [00:26:30] I can't remember all of them. Mr. Bills was one. Frank Bills and Mr. MacDowell from the Florida [inaudible 00:26:41].

Bob G.: Elton Hall?

Jackson: Elton. I bet he played golf.

Bob G.: How much money did a caddy make doing that?

Jackson: As I recall, you got \$.35 for nine holes and \$.75 for 18.

Bob G.: Pretty good for those times.

Jackson: It was. [00:27:00] Everybody scrambled for those jobs.

Bob G.: Yeah.

Jackson: Interesting thing at the time at the golf course, there used to be a lot of crows around the golf course and the crows, if the ball went down, they would go pick it up and fly off with it. And so part of the time you send one caddy on down the golf course 100 or 200 [00:27:30] yards to keep the crows away.

Bob G.: There's one thing I wanted to ask you in particular and that is surfing. I saw in one of the old newspapers, 1930, there was a cartoon of somebody surfing in this area. It was in the Melbourne Times. Do you remember any surfing in the early days?

Jackson: They used to ride surfboards; [00:28:00] lay down on the boards, but not the way they do it today.

Bob G.: Not standing up.

Jackson: Or anything. They didn't have all the good equipment. They used inner tubes you know to ride. They'd go down to the store and pay \$.50 for an inner tube. If you could get a big truck tube, you knew you had a big thing.

Bob G.: What about behind [00:28:30] a boat? Did they ever pull anybody behind a boat on those boards?

Jackson: Believe it or not, they pulled it behind cars.

Bob G.: On the beach?

Jackson: On the beach. The car would run the beach and the surfer would be parallel to the beach. People used to talk about that was pretty dangerous. You hit that sand, that's the thing, but there used to be some of that.

Bob G.: Was that in the 20s or the 30s do you think?

Jackson: [00:29:00] Oh, I don't know the difference between the 20s and 30s much. But the 30s would be a good bet. Another thing that was interesting was the main bathing beach there in front of the Indialantic Casino that they had posts they put in the ocean and they would connect them with chains as a safety provision [00:29:30] if people wanted to go swim in the ocean and get washed away, they'd run into a chain or something outside of the chained in area.

Bob G.: They should have something like that, today. Did you know Mr. Kouwen-Hoven?

Jackson: Yes, uh huh.

Bob G.: What did you think of him? What kind of man was he?

Jackson: I think he was well liked and was considered quite a businessman. Locally he was a big shot. He started in Indialantic. He [00:30:00] started in Magnolia Park. And those were at the time maybe the two bigger developments.

Bob G.: Did he build the golf course, too?

Jackson: I wouldn't say he built the golf course. Whether he had some hand in it, I don't know.

Bob G.: What about Elton Hall?

Jackson: He was a realtor here. I guess at one time he worked for the railroad. Old timer here he [00:30:30] was a very nice guy.

Bob G.: Madame Campbell. Do you remember her?

Jackson: Yeah, Mrs. Campbell was part of the original Campbell family. They had the bizarre going down the hill between US 1 and the river there. Campbell's Bizarre was in there.

Bob G.: What did they sell in there?

Jackson: They had imports among other things. They made some trips and bought [00:31:00] and would come back with stuff including furniture and things like that. I guess an assortment of most anything you could sell there.

Bob G.: What about that house that was at the top of the trysting steps?

Jackson: House where, now?

Bob G.: On top of the trysting steps, that first house. Do you know who had [00:31:30] that?

Jackson: No, not for sure. The Strawbridge's use to own some of the property along the bluff line and further over. I forget the other names of other people in there.

Bob G.: The hunting club, the Melbourne Hunting Club, you were a member of that?

Jackson: Uh huh.

Bob G.: Your father, too?

Jackson: Yes.

Bob G.: Do you remember some of the people else [00:32:00] who were in that club?

Jackson: Yeah, a lot of the old settlers in there. We've already mentioned some of them. Elton Hall, John Rodes and Max Rodes, Seth Rodes, Carlton, Dr. Bean, Stanford Wells, C.R. Johnson, Hollis Bottomley.

Bob G.: [00:32:30] What time of year? Did you have camps out there or did you-

Jackson: Well, the opening of hunting season, which would normally be November or somewhere in there, and go through the golfing season in the spring.

Bob G.: But did you go out for the weekends or a whole week?

Jackson: The opening season, everybody planned on setting up for maybe a week. [00:33:00] Thanksgiving might be right near the opening in there and anything from then on, several days a week, a weekend, overnight. Just drive out.

Bob G.: I'm trying to remember when they built the bridge across the St. John's river, 192.

Jackson: I don't know when they built it. When we first came here, there was no bridge there and to [00:33:30] cross the river, you had to go down south of what's now 192. I think we usually used a place called Avant road and you get on the old tram that brought the lumber. I think it was about seven miles or so. It lets you off over at the Bird Platt [00:33:49] place. That's the general facility. Those old pilings and things were there for many years. [00:34:00] We used to use the cross ties [00:34:01] for firewood.

Bob G.: The Bird Platt Mound, that would be North Indian field. That would be a big Indian mound, too.

Jackson: Yeah, after you get across the river a little ways, there.

Bob G.: Did you have anything to do with bringing the New York Giants to Melbourne? This was their spring training.

Jackson: Only as routine duties as [00:34:23] the city attorney.

Bob G.: Do you know who was responsible [00:34:30] for that?

Jackson: Without knowing, I would give Charlie Herring, secretary Chamber of Commerce a lot of credit for it. One of those things the community-

Bob G.: He was mayor, too for a while wasn't he, Herring?

Jackson: I don't think so.

Bob G.: No?

Jackson: He was a chamber of commerce man.

Bob G.: Okay, I also had heard that many Hollywood folks used to come here to go hunting and stuff. I guess [00:35:00] Janet Gaynor has some connection to Melbourne, too.

Jackson: Janet Gaynor used to live in Melbourne with her aunt. She had an aunt that had a little house next to Melbourne Bank on the south side of New Haven.

Bob G.: By the florist shop there?

Jackson: Uh huh.

Bob G.: Yeah. What about Betty Grable? Did she have a connection here, somehow?

Jackson: Betty Grable had an aunt that lived up in Hyde Park Eau Gallie.

Bob G.: [00:35:30] What about the Goode family? You must've known them for many years.

Jackson: They came pretty early; the Chicago area. Not in Chicago I understand, but some surrounding area there.

Bob G.: What about Midway Colony. That was a retreat for circus people in the winter time?

Jackson: That was on the south side of Melbourne, there. Most of the time, [00:36:00] it was just a tourist place. A lot of little cottages. They'd come and spend the winter in the cottages and they'd provide them entertainment for them. They had a band shell, the orchestra would play, [00:36:11] the chorus would play. It was a winter time attraction. A lot of people used to come and they'd come back every year.

Bob G.: Did they ever put on shows for the Melbourne people?

Jackson: [00:36:30] They used to let them come to some of the dances and things. I don't know what they did specifically for the Melbourne people. That might be mostly for themselves.

Bob G.: I can't think of his name now.

Jackson: Seth Rideout ran the camp for many years near there.

Bob G.: Seth Rideout?

Jackson: Uh huh. I forget who the other was. There was always [00:37:00] a connection there in ownership with that and the Oleander hotel. Forget all the names, now, but-

Bob G.: The Oleander was by the Eau Gallie Causeway. Who built the big house there near Babcock and New Haven? I think I had heard he was a bootlegger.

Jackson: You're talking about Doctor Sloan's place.

Bob G.: Doc Sloan.

Jackson: Yeah, he's on the south side of New Haven.

Bob G.: Right, what [00:37:30] can you tell us about him?

Jackson: I guess Sloan was fairly an old timer around here. Whether he was deserving or not, at one time he had a reputation of being the leading bootlegger in town and seems to have a little more finances than most of them did. That was a pretty fancy house for those days.

Bob G.: Was he really a doctor, do you think?

Jackson: No.

Bob G.: No. They just called [00:38:00] him Doc Sloan.

Jackson: He probably had orange groves around and been in places there, but I don't know.

Bob G.: What about, even when I was a boy, I think they still had Bolita. They had some Cuban gambling games that some people ran in town. Do you remember that?

Jackson: Yeah, the Bolita was played above me.

Bob G.: You don't know how it worked?

Jackson: I never got [00:38:30] involved with it. Many guys, I guess would be from further south paused down here. I guess they had a local ladies that know them. You wouldn't want to miss your name because you could be wrong. Maybe they don't deserve to be mentioned.

Bob G.: Right I did hear-

Jackson: Cause [unintelligible] people quite respectable.

Bob G.: Can you think of any stories that [00:39:00] you want to tell us that your grandchildren or great grandchildren or great, great grandchildren would want to know?

Jackson: You might say people think they've seen hard times, but if you weren't here back during the depression days, as far as this Florida real estate, you didn't know anything. Land

became worthless. People would give away the land. They abandoned the land. You could go buy tax deeds, [00:39:30] sell your taxes. People thought, "I don't want it, ain't gonna pay the taxes on it."

Bob G.: There were some federal programs here during the war. I think some of the shuffle board courts, some roads were built.

Jackson: There were quite a number of those programs, but I don't really know about all of them or anything. If it'll create jobs. [00:40:00] I think the clerk's office, for example, is one of those programs to index<sup>4</sup> [00:40:05] everything or do something inside the operations and other people does other things. Actually, I think Melbourne getting the airport was connected to one of those programs. Melbourne chose the airports when other towns chose something else. Speaking of the airport there were two or three [00:40:30] guys around town that particularly wanted the airport there. In those days they used to wonder why. Now, you realize the airport was somehow purchases, so that's the way they ended up with some of the airports. Back then, I don't know [00:41:00] when, I guess for guidance along the coast, they'd have lights every so many miles to go from mile to mile to mile. My first airplane ride was on a pasture out here west of Melbourne up some fellows from Jacksonville, I think. He'd go down and take us hicks for an airplane [00:41:30] ride.

Bob G.: That must've been pretty exciting back then.

Jackson: Melbourne had an airport before they took it for the Navy. The navy, I think, came to Melbourne because they wanted an airport there. They had a place to go and a place to build.

Bob G.: There was a grass field out off 192 somewhere.

Jackson: Yeah, it went down south. It was down there. [00:42:00] I guess a a practice landing field. [inaudible 00:42:04]

Bob G.: What about the Platt family? Did you know many of the Platts?

Jackson: I knew quite a few of the Platts.

Bob G.: They weren't all cattle people. Did Sydney have something to do with the hotel?

Jackson: Yeah. A lot of them were semi-cattle people. They'd work on the ranch when they weren't [00:42:30] working downtown or vice versa or have a piece of land. The Platts here are basically two families; the Calvin "Cab" Platts family and-

Bob G.: Hiram?

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<sup>4</sup> Created Grantor/Grantee Index for deed books

Jackson: Hiram Platts family. Hiram's kids were Sydney and Giles and Calvin's were Minor, Judge-

Bob G.: Roy.

Jackson: [00:43:00] All that bunch, yeah.

Bob G.: They had a lot of land.

Jackson: I think they really came from Georgia.

Bob G.: Did you know the Clohesy?

Jackson: Clohesy? Yeah, Bell Clohesy was a survivor of them down there. Lived down there south of Max Rodes.

Bob G.: What can you tell me about them?

Jackson: They were old timers and I don't [00:43:30] know. There was always a little talk about the first white child born in Melbourne and Mrs. Goode claims. Others point out well [00:43:40] the Clohesys were here ahead of the Goodes, but they were on a trip to Merritt Island when the baby was born, so he was out of the city limits.

Bob G.: The Indian River Lagoon, how pristine it was when you were young.

Jackson: Very pretty [00:44:00] and clear. I like the phosphorus in the river. Usually make a beautiful sight. Looked like the river was on fire out there and gave us plenty of crab and shrimp and fish and people would go on the old wooden bridge with a dip and the had the lantern hanging down, or even without the lantern, they'd just dip up the crabs and fish. It was very pretty. [00:44:30] You could almost count on getting a mess anytime you wanted to. You'd see a rowboat going down the river the water dripping off the oar and little ringlets of fire all over that water. A big fish would, stir the water, the big ones. River was, real pretty.

Bob G.: Mary Lou Knecht. You remember her?

Jackson: Yeah, sure.

Bob G.: She told me [00:45:00] once that there was a freeze here where ice formed on Crane Creek, that it was so cold. Do you remember anything like that?

Jackson: I don't know about that. All of Florida was frozen back yonder in 1890, well not all Florida, this end. I forget the exact date. Whether it was Crane Creek, froze like the places up in Merritt Island, they [00:45:30] froze. Mary Lou ain't old enough to remember that far back.

Bob G.: She was city clerk for a while.

Jackson: For a long time. Her grandfather was a clerk ahead of her. C.E. Schull.

Bob G.: Schull.

Jackson: She was with the city most of the time when I was there.

Bob G.: Did you know the Stewarts?

Jackson: Stewart? Arthur Stewart?

Bob G.: Yeah.

Jackson: [00:46:00] His wife was ... Her name was ... Lived on the river down there. I knew them back for several generations.

Bob G.: What line of work were they in?

Jackson: Mr. Arthur Stewart, he was connected with the hardware and some of the sales businesses and all. [00:46:30] Mrs. Stewart, I don't know why I can't say the name. They were more like retired when we knew them, rich tourists and all that. They had that house right down the river north of the Causeway [00:46:46].

Bob G.: What about the Huggins? Huggins had a hardware store.<sup>5</sup>

Jackson: It's the same hardware store. Huggins bought it later on.

Bob G.: Oh, that was originally the Stewart's?

Jackson: Mm-hmm [00:47:00] (affirmative)- Speaking of those houses on the river, I don't know why I can't say names. The lady who lived there in one of those houses, she had a maid and then she had you call them a busboy or house boy or something or other, but her house boy was a Filipino. And the war came along [00:47:30] and he went back to the Philippines to get in the service. In the mean time she died and he was the beneficiary under her will, the Filipino boy. Nobody didn't know whether he was living or what happened to him out there. I hit the Philippines. Went up to the Philippines headquarters in Manila with the record and they confirmed that he was still living. In [00:48:00] fact, had been there a day or two before. Little incident all stuff. Then we found out the beneficiary was still living there.

Bob G.: Did he end up inheriting the place?

Jackson: Yeah.

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<sup>5</sup> Now Hell N Blazes Brewery

Bob G.: Yeah, good. I've seen pictures of old Melbourne downtown. In Campbell park, there was a bandstand.

Jackson: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Bob G.: Do you remember that?

Jackson: That hadn't been gone very long. I think it's [00:48:30] down there on the river front now.

Bob G.: Yeah, what kind of activities did they have in that park?

Jackson: Anybody want to make a speech, they'd go there. The band would play on Saturday night or anything else. Many a politician in Florida spoke from that whatever you want to call it there.

Bob G.: Anybody could go and make a speech?

Jackson: Well, it was like any other city property. I guess you could get permission to do it and all.

Bob G.: [00:49:00] Where did you live with your father when you first came?

Jackson: We lived in some rental place. That little house still there next to the apartments across from the school. Bailey.

Bob G.: Bailey?

Jackson: I don't know who owned the house. They build their own home on the corner of McQuaid and Palmetto. It's still there.

Bob G.: What was your first house?

Jackson: [00:49:30] For me to own?

Bob G.: Yeah.

Jackson: The one I'm in, now.

Bob G.: Oh, you bought that one? What year did you buy that?

Jackson: '48 and that's 60 something years [00:49:41], yeah.

Bob G.: That's on Melbourne avenue?

Jackson: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Bob G.: What's the worst hurricane you can remember here?

Jackson: For Melbourne?

Bob G.: Yeah.

Jackson: That last one they had here.<sup>6</sup> That was the only one really did that much damage you know. Those early ones in [00:50:00] '26, they called it Miami hurricane, '28 Palm Beach or Okeechobee. They didn't do any real damage up here. You had those others to do some damage. It moves the roofs and all, but we were fortunate. We never had one that really tore things down like that.

Bob G.: Were there any other big fires? We talked about the Orange Spot Hotel burning down. Were there any [00:50:30] other spectacular fires?

Jackson: What happened to some other big houses? I can't-

Bob G.: Well, the Carlton Hotel burned, but I think that was before your time.

Jackson: The Carlton burned ... No, we were here when it burned. The Carlton and the Orange Spot. One of the Carlton families, Carl Burr MacDowell, he was my classmate, scoutman, [00:50:54] and all that stuff. He was killed in the war parachuting.

Bob G.: [00:51:00] What was his name?

Jackson: Carl Burr MacDowell.

Bob G.: We thought we heard that somebody died when the Carlton Hotel burned? Do you remember that?

Jackson: I don't know, but speaking of that, somebody ought to make a little story about Louis MacDowell. He's the brother of Carl that I was talking about and his father was the one ran the hotel and all. He's the inventor of concentration; [00:51:30] concentrate orange juice and fruit.

Bob G.: MacDowell?

Jackson: Uh huh. Louis MacDowell. At that time he was working for the state of Florida, so the state got all the credit for doing it, but the article written Louis was the man that did it. He was always good in chemistry and stuff like that in school. He also went to Florida.

Bob G.: [00:52:00] Who was he working for when he-

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew in October of 2016

Jackson: Florida, I guess, state citrus commission or whatever the appropriate name is. They wrote some nice articles about him. I used to have some, but I don't anymore.

Bob G.: The purpose wasn't for the war, though, the concentrate?

Jackson: No, that was just [00:52:21] an advantage of what to do with it.

Bob G.: You were telling me before about somebody that worked for Minute Maid. Was [00:52:30] that Johnny Evans?

Jackson: Johnny was connected to those groves we talked about below Melbourne Beach [00:52:37]

Bob G.: He worked for one of the big-

Jackson: He was part of a company over there in the middle of the state that was in the citrus business. Haines City or one of those close by there. I don't think it was Haines, but one of those close by.

Bob G.: Johnny left his property [00:53:00] to FIT?

Jackson: I haven't seen his will. I'm sure they benefited by him because he had a wife. I'm thinking she survived, Flossy. Johnny used to own that one in New Haven. It was an orange grove back at the time across over there.

Bob G.: Where the Melbourne Shopping Center is?

Jackson: Uh [00:53:30] huh. He lived in a sub division south of Babcock, they had boom time [00:53:35] subdivision. His house is still there.<sup>7</sup>

Bob G.: On Melbourne Avenue. Did you have anything to do with bringing FIT here, the college?

Jackson: No, not really. We used to do favors for Jerry Cooper and [00:54:00] some of the people there that were some [inaudible (saving?) 00:54:04] to them, but not actually spirit behind the college.

Bob G.: He was the founder of FIT?

Jackson: Well, you know there used to be Melbourne College or something like that that was ahead of Cooper. I don't remember how far that had gone [00:54:30] before the others took over.

Bob G.: I think the people at Melbourne Village had a hand in starting that.

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<sup>7</sup> No, gone. Was on SW corner of Babcock & Melbourne Ave.

Jackson: They had a hand in it.

Bob G.: Yeah, and then Cooper made it what it is today. Did you have any dealings with Joe Wickham?

Jackson: Yes, Joe was county commissioner for a long time.

Bob G.: Did the city get along with the county?

Jackson: Joe was very popular. He was also a contractor and you could use him for construction work.

Bob G.: The [00:55:00] city got along with the county pretty good?

Jackson: I think so.

Bob G.: What about the black population? Was there any trouble with the black population?

Jackson: Probably no more than anywhere else.

Bob G.: I think Lenny Spain was-

Jackson: Lenny Spain was one of the-

Bob G.: He was kinda like the mayor.

Jackson: Spain had a bar business place over there. Probably among [00:55:30] the more well to do folks over there. I knew Benny quite well. I always got along good with Benny. I don't know of any problems. He was not a trouble maker or anything. I don't know of any problems he was in.

Bob G.: What about the Episcopal church? It used to be on the south side of the creek.

Jackson: New Haven?

Bob G.: Well, they moved.

Jackson: Oh, okay. Over to south side.

Bob G.: Yeah. You weren't [00:56:00] here when they moved it the first time?

Jackson: No, uh uh.

Bob G.: The second time, they moved it out to Babcock. Do you remember that?

Jackson: Yeah, when I was here it was out on US 1 down in that area.

Bob G.: What about the fishing industry? In the old days it was Brevard County was citrus, fishing and cattle.

Jackson: The existence of Malabar and Micco was fishing [00:56:30] and Eau Gallie. All of them down here depended on fishing a lot shipping mullet and all. Even Mr. Rossetter used to be in the fish business, owner of Standard Oil. I guess everybody was pretty much affected by it.

Bob G.: Did you ever have a boat?

Jackson: Later in life.

Bob G.: What about Palm Bay? What do you remember of Palm Bay?

Jackson: [00:57:00] Well, Palm Bay is actually one of the older community of settlers [00:57:06], at least the area was. There's an affidavit on record made by the keeper of the Canaveral light in a lawsuit. When he said he came down here where he said there was an orange grove still bearing. I think that was 1856 and [00:57:30] Melbourne's first was [00:57:33] only 1878 or something.

Bob G.: The Turkey Creek Grove was famous all over Florida. Carlos Canova. Did you know Carlos?

Jackson: Yeah, Carlos was an engineer, surveyor/engineer, at the property at Eau Gallie Causeway and the ocean there. He built the ocean pier out there. [00:58:00] He owned the property across the street over there. I think his daughter used to have a shop of some kind over there.

Bob G.: Patsy's Shell Shop.

Jackson: Yeah, the shell shop.

Bob G.: When I was about nine years old, I would ride my bike over there and talk to Carlos.

Jackson: That's her name. Yeah. He had a boy I forget.[00:58:30] The subdivision there, too. Made along the Eau Gallie Causeway. Canova Pier out there.

Bob G.: The space boom increased the population here. When did that really start where it affected the Melbourne area?

Jackson: I'd say shortly after war II. I don't know how much ahead of that time. I wasn't here [00:59:00] before '46.

Bob G.: A lot of those men that were stationed here-

Jackson: I remember Patrick ... Banana River Naval Air Station is what I'm trying to say there. I was at a meeting, I think it was a Jaycee meeting and the speaker [00:59:21] was one of the commanders of the base and he was only a lieutenant in rank, [00:59:30] so he didn't have an admiral or somebody.

Bob G.: I'll be darned.

Jackson: He came down to speak.

Bob G.: Did you ever do any fishing down at the inlet in the early days?

Jackson: A little bit. I never did much early fishing.

Bob G.: I think your brother-in-law had a cabin down there.

Jackson: That's Charlie.

Bob G.: Charlie, yeah.

Jackson: I've been down there a number of times while other people were fishing. Pretty exciting in those days.

Bob G.: [01:00:00] I think in the 30s, didn't a boat tip over in the inlet and a bunch of people drown?

Jackson: Yes.

Bob G.: Do you remember that?

Jackson: Yes.

Bob G.: I think the owner of the boat, I think his son drowned.

Jackson: Yeah, I used to know the name of the boat. I think among the victims was Mrs. Locke Davidson. Melbourne's mayor.

Bob G.: Oh, really.

Jackson: I believe that's right.

Bob G.: I didn't know that.

Jackson: I think that's right without checking. It's been years since I [inaudible 01:00:28].

Bob G.: [01:00:30] What about Roy Couch? He was important around here.

Jackson: He was an engineer from West Virginia originally, I think.

Bob G.: I think he built the first concrete block plant, here down there in Grant.

Jackson: He made the pumps. Couch pumps. It was his big name.

Bob G.: Yeah, he sold pumps all over the world.

Jackson: He built that house down on River drive [01:01:00] and other places around. He employed a lot of people around the Grant area. He was a big employer, was also in my hunting camp.

Bob G.: Oh, he was in the hunting camp, too?

Jackson: Hunting camp, we had four or five and we'd break over into a camp and he used to be in one of my camps. I used to be in his camp.

Bob G.: Do you remember how many people were in the whole club?

Jackson: I [01:01:30] don't think at one time they had the high twenties or some place.

Bob G.: What we're doing here someday is going to be in the Library of Congress, so you're gonna be famous a 1,000 years from now. I want to get one of the nurses to take a picture of all of us together and then we'll be done and you can .. Let me get my camera. You did a good job. Thank you. [01:02:00] We got a good picture.

Jackson: How about that.