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Carolyn Arnold oral history interview by Connie J. Brown, October 9, 2003

Carolyn Jones Arnold (Interviewee)

Connie J. Brown (Interviewer)

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Connie J. Brown: —Arnold, resident of Sulphur Springs, Florida, conducted in her home on October 9, 2003, by C.J. Brown, graduate student of anthropology from the University of South Florida. Okay, first thing I want you to tell you is thank you very much for participating in this research study. We are trying to collect the oral histories of Sulphur Springs and keep it original. So what I’d like to ask is what year did you first move to Sulphur Springs?

Carolyn Arnold: It was 1936.

CB: Oh, my goodness. And how old were you when you moved there?

CA: Twelve.

CB: Twelve. So you moved here with your family: you didn’t just move here as an adult, you actually grew up here as a child.

CA: Grew up, yes.

CB: Okay, why did you move to Sulphur Springs?
CA: Well, my mother and dad had a business in Sulphur Springs, and we lived in Tampa, just over the bridge. And we decided we was going to sell and move in a home, because we had always lived in the place of business in Tampa. So that’s the reason we moved to the Springs, because our business was in the Springs, so we moved out there.

CB: So were you actually born in Tampa? Is that where you were—

CA: No, I was born in Birmingham, Alabama. But because my folks, being in law enforcement and back during the [Great] Depression, there was so much killing and whiskey trading and all—there’s another name for it, but I’m not coming up with it right this minute. They sent my grandfather to Florida to keep him from being killed in Alabama. He was a detective—

CB: Oh, like a revenuer?

CA: Right.

CB: Oh, my goodness.

CA: And so they said that he would be safer if he left, and so they sent him here to Tarpon [Springs], Clearwater, and then Tampa. And he went on the force here in Tampa and was a detective for the City of Tampa, and then he was killed in thirty-one [1931].

CB: But now, is this your mom’s father or dad’s father?

CA: That’s my dad’s father.

CB: Oh, my goodness. Now does that mean your dad was born in Tampa or was he came with him?

CA: No, we were all born in Alabama.

CB: Oh.
CA: All born around Birmingham.

CB: Oh, my goodness.

CA: And so then we were sent here because of that, and then so we’ve always stayed here.

CB: And so your mom and dad—what kind of business was your mom and dad in?

CA: My dad was in law enforcement in Alabama, and then we moved here and we went into the grocery store, fruit market—let’s see, I even had a used bookstore business as a child. My dad set me up at one end in the grocery store, and then we sold fruit out in front. And so that’s what we did for many years, and then we moved to the Springs. Had a grocery store—I mean, had a fruit market in the Springs, and then a restaurant in the Springs for many years. And so then I lost my mother, and then we moved from the Springs to Brandon.

CB: Oh, my goodness. How many family—how many children in your family?

CA: I have seven of my own.

CB: How many—do you have brothers and sisters?

CA: I’m an only child.

CB: Oh, and when did you lose your mother?

CA: I lost my mother in forty-four [1944].

CB: To?

CA: Cancer.
CB: Okay.

CA: I lost my dad in thirty-nine [1939].

CB: Oh, my goodness. So you were relatively young when they died.

CA: Right.

CB: Did you stay in the Springs at that point?

CA: Yes, I was still there in the Springs. In other words, I lost my mother and father in the Springs, and then we moved to Brandon.

CB: Oh, my goodness. Have you lived anywhere else besides Sulphur Springs and Brandon and Alabama?

CA: In Tampa, on Nebraska Avenue before we moved to the Springs. And then we lived in Ybor City. Now, I still remember Ybor City when we first moved to Tampa. I can go right back to the same home that I lived in and got my head stuck in the stair. But the homes that I lived in Tarpon and Clearwater, that I can’t remember.

CB: Oh, my goodness. So tell me about your first home in Sulphur Springs that you can remember?

CA: Oh, that was on Marks Street, and we ran into—

CB: This is a child, right?

CA: As a child, right, and enjoyed it very much. It was a big house. Lived in a neighborhood where there was a lot of children and everything, and dreaded having to go to school there because we had been told that if you lived in the Springs you were no good. And I was never allowed to come to the Springs until we moved to the Springs because the people were no good, we were told, in Tampa, and it was riffraff, we were told. And then moved to the Springs and enjoyed it thoroughly, and found out it was the Tampa people coming over doing the riffraffing.
CB: Was it the idea that it was a tourist town? Is that why it had a bad reputation?

CA: No, I think that’s where the people came, from Tampa, that tore things up. In other words, they left Tampa where no one would know them and come to the Springs and did their dirty work.

CB: And that’s why the Springs—

CA: And that’s why the Springs had a bad name. But after I moved there, I loved it.

CB: Is that right? Tell me about the school?

CA: Enjoyed it thoroughly, had a wonderful time, had a lot of friends. We went from class to class to class. I was always—I’ve always had a loud voice, and you can always find me in any crowd because I’m always the loud one. I can’t do anything wrong because you can find out about it too easy. It’s the ones with the quiet voices that you have to look out for, because you don’t see what they’re doing and you don’t hear them. So, of course I got in my share of trouble with the boys, and only was in one fight in my life, and that was over a football and a boy. And it was a good friend of mine, that’s the odd part, and I don’t even remember who won, but we made up and that was the end of that. But I was the president of the student council my last year of school.

CB: And what year would that have been?

CA: And let’s see, I have to figure back forty-one [1941], forty [1940], thirty-nine [1939] —probably thirty-nine [1939] or thirty-eight [1938]. Thirty-nine [1939] or thirty-eight [1939], somewhere around in there, probably thirty-nine [1939]. And so I got along well with all—at that time there were the three high grades: in other words, seventh, eighth and ninth at that time. Now, after I left there, it cut down to where it was only two high grades and then none: in other words, just till sixth. But at the time I was there, it was sixth, seventh, and eighth. From one to eighth—I mean, to ninth. And so, the three grades seventh, eighth and ninth was all in the big school, and so we were thrown in with all of them at North.

So I was friends with all of them, enjoyed school very, very much, and we had a good school grounds, you know, to play on, and a nice lunchroom to eat in. We all got along
just great together. I mean, we had our little tits and tats like all children do, but everything was just wonderful. So I only went to school there for two years, because that’s what I come out there in; it was the end of the seventh, eighth and the ninth. And so then I went on over to Hillsborough [High School] after that and then quit in the eleventh and got married.

And so then when I had my children, all of them, I made my children finish school. At least high school, they had to finish high school. So one of mine told me, “Mother, why is it we have to finish high school, but you never finished high school?” I was still living in the Springs at the time this was told to me, and I says, “Well, we’ll fix that. If it makes that much difference to you, we’ll fix that.” So I started in—what do you call it? The schooling that they give to grownups after—

CB: Oh, continuing education?

CA: Yes, I went to a course in that. Passed, and after I moved out here in seventy-three [1973], in come my diploma. So I says, “Now, then, you can’t say a word about Mama not finishing high school.”

CB: Good for you.

CA: So, I got my diploma. At that time it just read GED. Now it’s changed: it reads diploma now, but at that time it read GED. So, I got that after I moved out here, which was in seventy-three [1973]. And, so I really, really haven’t had to have a high school diploma in anything. My husband never allowed me to work when I was having the children. He said my place was at home with them, but then a time or two when he would be sick and his time would run out, because he was a veteran and his time would run out at his jobs, and I would have to go to work just for the time being. And so I just would write down that I had gone to high school and I hadn’t finished it and it would be all right. But then when I got my last job, they wanted to know if I had a diploma and I was able to say yes. So then I kept that job for twenty-five years, so I didn’t have to—that was after I lost Tim, though. Well, I started before I lost him, because his time was up and he had no more sick leave, so I had to go to work. And so then, of course, I went on and worked up until 2000.

CB: What kind of work did you do?

CA: I did work mainly for the government. Now, I didn’t get paid for the—by the government; it was research for twenty-five years.
CB: Oh, how fascinating! Really?

CA: I worked for (inaudible). I worked for a national pub—wait a minute, Response Analysis National Opinion. Isn’t that funny? All of a sudden my mind’s gone blank. Anyway the University of Michigan, the main one that I worked the longest—I can’t come up with a name; they would think that was terrible. Anyway, I worked for five different companies and whatever work come around where I was at, they would call me in to do it. And so that’s what I did for twenty-five years.

CB: That must have made you more than willing to do this research with me then?

CA: Right, right because it is helpful. I can see places now in Riverview and Gibsonton, and Plant City. At first I did market research. Okay, I can see places now that I did research, market research that has helped, because of what I and the people that give me the information did. I look back and see, because I can remember different projects that we worked on, that we got this information for. And then people like McDonald’s and Wendy’s and some of your banks and different places, they bought this material—National Opinion Research [Center], there you are.

CB: Okay.

CA: Okay, NORC—N-O-R-C. Anyway, they got this information and then went from there and to do what—to put in and supply what the people needed. And so it does help, and so that’s one reason why I wanted to do it. I thought, well, if just one little thing would help, you know. So that’s why.

CB: So tell me how you met your husband?

CA: Well, I was working at my mother’s restaurant; I would always help her out there when I could. And it was November 11, Armistice Day, at that time and it was in the afternoon, after lunch and things wasn’t so rushed and these soldiers come in; of course, it was during wartime. These soldiers come in, and at this particular time it was two of them. And they ordered and I happened to wait on them, and so we got to talking like we always did; it was a small restaurant, so it was kind of informal. And this one—one was out of it, he was too intoxicated to do much talking to. But the one I was talking to wasn’t, so he asked me to go to the show with him that night.
Well, I had been married before, and so I was young, but I had still been married. My mother told me no, I couldn’t go. Now, I was still married, just not living with him; he was gone, he was in the service. And so my mother told me I couldn’t go; well, that didn’t sit well. And I always mind Mama, but Mama told me I couldn’t go. So I went home, I bathed, I dressed and I come back, never expecting him to be there at all. Of course I did this every day, it wasn’t anything new; I’d come home, clean up, and come back down. And so when I come back, he came, without his drunk friend. And so Mama told me I couldn’t go, and I said I was gonna go. So, I went.

Well, I disliked him so terribly bad that we left this show early and come on back home, and that was the end of that. And he would come to the restaurant looking for me, and if I was there I’d slip out the back door, head to Hensel’s or somewhere, anywhere than to be there. My mother would not lie for me, so I had to get out because she would tell him, you know, “She’s not here,” which if I went out I wasn’t there. So that went on and went on and went on.

And then, finally, his drunk friend come in one time and told me that he was in the hospital, that he had a bad case with his stomach and that he was in the hospital. Well, that did it. I found out where he was and started going to visit him, and visit, visit, visit. I’d get on the streetcar and ride it downtown, get on the downtown bus, ride it back to the base, and this is what went on. So, just through him being sick, I got where I thought a lot of him. So when he got out of being sick, he would come visit and then we’d go places together. And so then he asked to marry me, and so we both had to get divorces before we could get married because we both were married.

And so the truth of it was I had been divorced quite a little while, but didn’t know it. He had gotten it by someone signing my name in Nevada. Well, I had never been to Nevada. My lawyer said, “Do you want us to contest it?” I says, “Absolutely not! I mean, this is a dream come true. Forget it, I’m divorced, so that is okay.” So then he got his divorce, and one week later we married, on Easter Sunday.

CB: What year?

CA: Nineteen forty-three [1943]. And so anyway, everything was fine, then, until he passed away. And when he passed—we used to tease through the years, we don’t even know if we’re married because we don’t know if I’m divorced. And so anyway when he passed away I thought, “You know, we may have been doin’ a lot of joking through the years. I just wonder if I’m divorced.”
Well, turn it all in and it all come back beautiful. So then we breathed a sigh of relief. Now, I knew that the judge, or the lawyer, had told me we were divorced, but I’d never gotten anything to prove it or anything, and the fact that I did not sign those papers—we wondered would there something come about it. But during all through those years we just joked about it, you know. And he’d say to me, “I don’t even know if I’m married to you.” I says, “Well, after this many children it doesn’t matter; we’re common law anyway.” And I would push it off that way, you know. But I did sweat a little bit until after the Social Security business come through, you know, to make for sure that it was all legal. So it was.

CB: So tell me about the first home, your first married home in Sulphur Springs with your husband?

CA: With this—with the husband of my children?

CB: Right.

CA: That was in Sulphur Springs.

CB: Right.

CA: Right, because we married—he’d come out of the service and I wouldn’t marry him till he was out of the service. So we married on a Sunday, Easter Sunday. We went to Brooksville so it would stay out of the papers, because I had a government job that I couldn’t be married in, the post office. At that time the post office would not hire a woman to work, because they was afraid she’d get pregnant and then have to quit. So I got the job at the post office right across the street from my mother’s restaurant. The postmaster ate at my mother’s restaurant all the time, and so he asked me did I want the job, so I accepted the job. And of course, at that time I wasn’t married. Well, then I go ahead and get married and keep working, and guess what, got pregnant.

So then I waited till I was seven months pregnant—nobody knew anything about it—and so then I told them that I was pregnant and that I was going to quit. So then just exactly what they figured would happen happened. So that was the end of my post office experience. But I loved working for the post office right there in the Springs. It was in the Arcade, which of course the Arcade isn’t there anymore, but it was under McDonald—McConnell, Mr. McConnell, and then there was two other sons of the McConnells’ that worked for the post office, and I know they are retired now. But he was a wonderful man and I worked for him there, I guess, two years.
CB: If you worked for him for two years and you were married, were you guys living in the Springs during that time together?

CA: Yes, I was with him in the—

CB: Your husband?

CA: I was living with the husband—now, let’s see, we married in April, like I say, on Easter Sunday. He left that afternoon because he had to be back at the [MacDill] Field. Now, his discharge was through—I mean, he knew he was getting discharged, but he hadn’t gotten it in his hand, so he had to leave. My mother and grandmother had fixed lunch—I mean, dinner—for us and the ones that stood up for us come home, and we had our dinner and then he had to leave. Well, I didn’t see him no more for two weeks. I thought, “My goodness, I’ve heard of being stood up at the altar, but never after you get married.” So one day I walked in the restaurant and I walked to the back and Mother says, “Someone’s waiting for you.” And so I walked in and there it was, him sitting there, and I says, “Well, you’ve decided to show back up.” And he says, “I’m sorry, honey, I couldn’t let you know where I was.”

And see, the Army never knew we were married. See, in order to get married, you had to ask to get married. Well, we didn’t, because we knew he was going to be discharged. But when he got back into the base, they shipped him out and shipped him to Bradenton, to go out of Bradenton overseas. Well, he was fussing all this time for two weeks before they would listen to him and see that it was true about the fact that he was being discharged. So then finally, when it did come through and they found out that he was been discharged, then they sent him home from Bradenton. But they made him stay down there in Bradenton, between Tampa and Bradenton, for two weeks before they could get it all straightened out. And so then of course he come home and was out of service.

So then, yes, we lived the Springs until I quit, which was at seven months pregnant. But I must have gotten pregnant the very day that he come back from the whatcha call it, because I took—the baby wasn’t ready to be born, but I took oil. I’m a funny bird, I like dates. In other words, you marry me on Easter Sunday; I want a child on a holiday. I want this on a holiday, that on a holiday, this on a holiday. So I had told him if we don’t marry on Easter Sunday, it’s quite a little while before another holiday and it’s going to wait until that holiday, so we married on Easter Sunday. Well, then I wanted my first child on Washington’s Birthday, so I took oil in order for her to be born on the twenty-second of—
CB: Is that castor oil?

CA: Castor oil. I tool castor oil for her to be born on the twenty-second [of February].

CB: And did it work?

CA: It worked! I had her born on the twenty-second, and so that’s the way things have gone. I’ve tried to stay with holidays. And I’ve got about five in the family that got twenty-two. See, my birthday is the twenty-second, my husband’s birthday is the twenty-second, my daughter’s is the twenty-second, I’ve got a grandson that’s the twenty-second, I’ve got a great-grandson that’s the twenty-second. Now, they are different months, but they’re all on the twenty-second.

CB: So your birthday in what month?

CA: July.

CB: And your husband?

CA: June.

CB: Oh, my goodness.

CA: We’re in the same sign, both of us. He’s June 22, mine’s July 22, my daughter’s is February 22, grandson is October 22, and great-grandson is June 22, born on my husband’s birthday deliberately. I have one granddaughter that does not remember my husband, but he thought it was the first one that was born here where he could really be with. So it’s her picture and everything that he had when he passed away, with him. And so she’s been told this, so she thinks she knows her granddaddy. She was born in March—I got to get the months right. Born in March, and he passed away in July. So that’s how old she was. So she says she knows him, but of course we know better. But anyway, when she was expecting her last baby she told the doctor he was due in June sometime. She says, “If he hasn’t been born by the twenty-second, I want him on my granddaddy’s birthday.” So the twenty-second she went in and had her baby on the twenty-second deliberately to be on her granddaddy’s birthday.
CB: And was it a little boy or little girl?

CA: Little boy.

CB: Did they name after him after—?

CA: No, no, there is one named after my husband. So therefore, no one else—has done it. Now, the oldest girl is Glenda after him, for Glen; that’s the oldest one, and then there is a grandson named Glen Elmo, identical, the third. So therefore—the second, excuse me, the second. So that’s why nobody else has been named that.

CB: Well, tell me about that first house you and Glen lived in?

CA: All right. My mother and dad bought the property and had the house built, and of course we moved in it. It was on Bird Street. We moved in it with just the outside shell and then the rooms—that was bedrooms and bathroom—covered in or enclosed. And so then we would go from there so that there wouldn’t be no bill over our head. In other words, we covered our room or did a room as we had the money to do it, until we got it all completed. And so of course my—then Dad died while we lived there, then my mother died while we lived there, of course.

And then all our children were born, not in the house but while we lived in the house. And I brought them all home and we lived there then until we moved out here. And the reason we moved from there was we lived on the direct track to the dog track, for the back people to come in from all out in here and everywhere, and during the dog track season it would be just like this. And of course our home was right on the street, you might say, and if you step out our gate you was on the street. And there were—I followed—should have been hired by the fire department or the ambulance, because anytime the whatcha call it rang, I was out trying to find out if it was at Suzie’s house, John’s house, or the Smiths’ house or somebody else’s house, and if it was, I was off. And so, I was scared to death that one of the kids was going to step out that door and going to get killed there. And I told my husband, “I can’t take any more of it. I’ve to get off this street because of that.” And so he says, “Okay, we’ll go lookin’.”

So we picked a year that all of them were changing schools but one, so we started looking. I started boxing up things, things that I didn’t have to use; I’d put it in a box and put the name on the top, set it in another room. And so every day or two I’d box up a box
and sit it in the room. And then so finally—we went everywhere, all around, you know, Hillsborough County looking for homes. And this one we found by accident, just by passin’. And it was the only one that we could get in at the time that we needed in of the ones that I liked. In other words, there was some that we could have, but there was reasons of not likin’. I was trying to find one near a school because we need a school there; there’s a school here.

So I had the schools straightened out; in other words, walking distance for two schools that they would go to. And then I brought four out here and so one went back to Tampa to continue at Hillsborough [High School] for her last year. She had her own car, and so she worked here and went back to Hillsborough. And so that’s the reason why that we moved in this particular one is because we could get in without having to move somewhere else; and then because I’ve never moved much in my life and I don’t relish it; and so they wouldn’t have to change again, to try and keep them in, the same school all the time. So, that’s how we happened to get here.

CB: So what—I know in Sulphur Springs at that time, we did have the Arcade, right?

CA: Yes, right.

CB: So what—give me some idea of what your social life was like in Sulphur Springs as a young mother or a young person.

CA: Well, we had a skating rink there; as a much younger child, I went to the skating rink a lot. The pool was there, there was a lot going on at the pool. You could go to the pool for, I believe, something like ten cents. I never learned to swim, but I went to the pool anyway. And then they had carnivals that came and build up there at the same place that the pool was at, and the skating rink that would set up there, and put on a nice good sized carnival at different times of the year. And we’d go to that, and of course the school had lots of things, ball games and different things on that order. The show was in the same block, and that was cheap; you didn’t have to spend a whole lot on the show. The tourist club, you did not have to belong to; you could go there, and they played bunco and bingo and different things like that, shuffleboard, the older ones did. And then they would always have Halloween carnivals and things at the school, and they always had the May dance at the school and things on this order.

And then, of course, my yard was always the gathering spot for the kids, as a younger child. My mother didn’t let me go much, but she let everybody come there and so I would have friends there. Then, of course, at the restaurant, people would come there to see me. I couldn’t go off much, but they could come there. And I was never allowed to
stay off at night much, once in a while with a friend but not often; but they could come and spend the night with me.

And so that’s just about what we did. And of course we had a place in my backyard that my husband had helped build and paid to be build, that we had a stove and sink and everything, that we had picnics underneath. And we’d eat out there, you know, it was the kids wanting it or whether it was the grownups or whoever wanted it. So we’d get a lot of staying at home—TV came in about that time, you know, and we got a TV and then we did that. And then we had a monkey and we had a fox and we had ferrets, and a lot of the times we’d turn the TV off and play with these animals because we enjoyed them so much, you know. And then we raised rabbits, we raised dogs and so we enjoyed that, and we usually had chickens and eggs and things like this because we had a big yard.

And then we had cottages built on the side that my mother and dad had built. Well then, of course, when they passed away they left it to me. And then, since my grandmother had been there all that time and helped put it there, helped work and everything—I married my husband, but I didn’t really know him that long and I didn’t know what he would do. So I told him, “We’re going to go down and we’re going to put this in my grandmother’s name until she’s gone. And then when she’s gone it comes back to me anyway, so there’s no harm in it.” Because I didn’t want him having to say, or him saying, “Your grandmother’s got to go,” because—she was with me and that was the way it was going to be.

And so he didn’t do it, and he did at a time or two throw it up to me. “Well, you told me that it was either that or either you were leaving or quitting.” And I says, “Well, I may have. I don’t remember but I may have done it,” because I was going to ensure that she had a place to stay until she was gone, because I loved her very dearly and it was nothing but right. She had been—I had lived with her all my life, she had been with me all my life, and so therefore that was the way it was to be. So we did. We signed it over to her so it was hers until she passed away, and then of course it come back to me anyway, so that’s the way that it worked.

CB: Okay. So, to go back earlier, is the area you described outside—is that what they call a summer kitchen? Where they built a place to go?

CA: No, we called it—just a shed, that’s what we called it. It wasn’t enclosed, it was open. But we had a sink and running water, and we had a stove and we had a refrigerator and everything out there to where that anything overflowing from the kitchen could go out there. Or it was there if we needed it to eat. And a lot of nights we’d go out there—we also had a barbeque thing out there that we would barbeque and just eat out there
because we had a table out there. And so if we had company and there wasn’t room for all of us to sit at the table, the children would sit out there and eat if they wanted to.

My kitchen just happened to be—the way that I would up—we did a lot of building; every time a new child came, we built another room. And my kitchen was at the very back end, and I had two doors that went from the kitchen. One went to the back yard and one went to the front yard, so you could go to either one, you know, from my kitchen. And this was a big kitchen. I had my laundry room in the kitchen at the same time—the washer, no dryer, but the washer was in the kitchen and then all my kitchen things. So, in other words, we kind of lived there. You could look out the back and talk to the ones that’s at the barbeque or sitting out there eating, or you can look out the front and see the ones that’s sitting out there enjoying themselves, you know. And so therefore, it was just kind of a wide-open space, and so that’s what happened.

CB: So is that house still there today?

CA: No, the house is torn down.

CB: And the cottages and everything?

CA: The cottage—everything’s down. After we moved out here, we sold and everything’s torn down. Now, there is a house there. Two old maids bought it and they built—I guess you call it two apartments side by side. To me, it was nothing. In other words, I had a big home sitting up there, but it was just square or rectangle and it was—one had one apartment and one had the other, and that’s what was there the last time I was out there.

CB: Uh-huh, so what—now, because I’m trying to identify some of these on a map, an old map, what was the address?

CA: 1204.

CB: 1204 Bird?

CA: Bird, right. Now, it shouldn’t have been, but that’s what we wanted. It should have been Twelfth Street, our address should have been. But our house was facing Bird; it should have faced Twelfth. We should have been 1201—let me see if I’m right about that.
1201 or 1202, it should have been—no, 8202 it should have been. But we didn’t want it that; we wanted it Bird, so we were able to have it Bird. Because back then, you could kind of do things they wanted to. Not anymore; you do it the way they want it done.

CB: The other thing that you brought up I’d like for you to clarify for me is bunco. Most people will know what bingo is, but tell us about bunco.

CA: All right, bunco is with dice, with three dice, okay; and there’s tables and there’s four at a table, there’s partners; and the magic number is twenty-one. You play bunco with the three dice. And they still play it in some places now, but that was a big game then. And you could either, at that time, win money or you could win—but usually it was merchandise, you know, a handkerchief, a vase, stationery, something like this. But different places did have you winning money, but the majority—or a bag of coffee, or five pounds of sugar, something like this, you know.

And young folks enjoyed playing it, elderly folks enjoyed playing it, and you know, it was a game every week they were playing it. And so that’s what went on mainly at the Tourist Club, but then we had them in our homes. In fact, that’s what we played at my wedding shower was bunco; we had these tables set up and we played bunco. And then of course you change partners at different times, you know, and you get punched for when you win, and then ever how many punches you have, that’s the ones that win on your card. And so it’s a fun game, and I still have some of the dice around here, you know, that you played with. It was three that you played with, and they had a bell: when you buncoed then that was—you punch the bell and then the game was over.

CB: Oh, fantastic!

CA: And you buncoed by playing, say the number—you played from one to six. In other words, that was the number that you had to play for. If you rolled a one—if you were playing for one, you rolled a one, that was a point. When you got to twenty-one, that was that game; whoever won for that got a punch. But now, if you threw a three once, that was bunco; you got the points then and that game was over. And so it was a fun game.

CB: Well, I’ve heard of, you know, a period of time in America where they played canasta—

CA: We played canasta, right. Yeah, after my parents passed away and we got older we played with a family; they’d come over to our house and bring their kids one night and
we’d go to there and play canasta one night and so that’s the way we would do. And so that was a lot of fun, too.

CB: What about dancing, square dancing, anything of those natures?

CA: My husband said that I danced a little bit before I married. My mother was very religious; she did not care for any of that. I wasn’t allowed to use the scissors on a Sunday. When the newspaper come in and there was a paper doll in the newspaper, that had to lay there till Monday. If I cut that out Sunday, woo-hoo, I was in bad trouble.

No show going on Sunday, no—picnicking was okay, but no partying of any description on Sunday. Now, if it had anything to do with a funeral, that’s okay. If somebody passed away in the neighborhood that we knew, from the time they passed away until the time they were buried, I wasn’t able to do any entertaining of any kind. No show-going, no party-going, no birthday party, no nothing like that. I had to observe that mourning even if it was down the road. If we knew them, I had to observe that. Saturdays you could go do those things—that is, you know, cutting things, like that—but not on Sundays.

So therefore, my mother was not much for card playing; in fact, I know very few card games today because of that. As a child, Old Maid something like that—poker, I don’t know how to play poker.

CB: Oh, I don’t, either.

CA: Slapjack, I don’t know how play slapjack. So many of those games that they play now, my child knows how, but I don’t know how. I never learned to swim; you can go swimming, just don’t go near the water. Okay? Let’s see, some of the other things—

CB: What about sports?

CA: Sports, yes, but not as a family; my dad was crippled, so therefore, that stopped him. I never remember my dad any way except crippled.

*Pause in recording*

CA: —worked all of her life.
CB: What kind of work? The restaurant?

CA: Restaurant, right, restaurant. And restaurant, grocery store, fruit market, things on this order. So, she never was one for sports. She had raised a sister because her mother died when she was young, and so she had never been a child and so she just never was, you know—

CB: Didn’t do those things.

CA: Didn’t do anything that was childlike, because she had raised a sister who was six years younger than her. Her dad never remarried and so therefore she had raised this kid. So she was always an adult.

And I liked sports, but they never was able to go anywhere with me. I would go by myself, or my dad when he lived would take me, and he would sit in the car and then I would come out and get in the car and go. I learned to drive at twelve because of that. Back then there was no license; you didn’t have to have a license. So I learned to drive, my mother caught me driving. My dad knew I was driving because he would take the car away from home and then I’d get underneath the wheel and then I would drive him everywhere, you know, not that many cars around.

Well, this one morning, I don’t remember now where she was, but I must have thought I could get out of the yard with the car. And she come out and screamed, “Carolyn, what are you doing with that car running?” And at that time, you dug a hole in your yard somewhere to throw your trash. Now, your garbage usually was fed to the animals, but you’d put your trash in there, and then when it got a little full you’d put a little more dirt in over it. Well, it scared me so bad when she screamed out at me that I stepped on the gas instead of anything else, and I went, slammed back, and the whole back end of my car went down in this garbage hole. So then we had to get somebody to come and pull the car out.

Well, after that, she knew I was driving. Bob told her then, and so she knew I was driving. So he told her, said, “She would have been all right if you hadn’t scared her to death.” So anyhow, that’s how that went.

CB: When did you have to have your first driver’s license?
CA: Must have been when I first married the first time, because he had a car. So I’m going to guess that thirty-seven [1937], thirty-eight [1938], maybe thirty-eight [1938], I guess, something like that. I was sixteen when I married the first time, and so he had a car, so I’m going to guess, then. Now, I could be wrong and it may have been after I married my second husband; we didn’t have a car, and it may have been after that. But anyway, it was when they started doing the license. That’s the first license I got, and then I’ve had one ever since. But I can’t remember now if it was before that, you know, before the second husband or not.

CB: Right, so you said brought all the children—(clears throat) excuse me—home to that house. Did you have any at home?

CA: No, no, all my children were born in the hospital. All were born at St. Joseph’s Hospital except one, and that was because the doctor that was to deliver her was at, at that time, Tampa General [Hospital], or that time it was called Memorial Hospital. And that was because the doctor was there and she was supposed to deliver before me, but I delivered before her. But anyway I had to go there because of that purpose. The one that lives with me was born there and the rest was born at St. Joe’s.

CB: Okay, we’re going to stop for a minute, because I think we’re expecting a young man home right about now.

Part 1 ends; part 2 begins

CB: So what are your major memories of the Arcade? What do you remember about the Arcade?

CA: Well, it was a beautiful structure, and one nice thing about it: you could go there and you could stay out of the weather, out of the rain or whatever the weather was, and do your shopping, like at the mall. Almost everything was underneath that roof, including a hotel. And of course the hotel was beautiful in those times. I had a good girlfriend who lived there in the Springs, Patricia (inaudible) and her two sisters, twins, again—with my twins again, Barbara and Beverly. They used to live there after their dad passed away; they moved to the Springs to be near us and they lived upstairs in the hotel. And so, I had a chance to be up in the hotel and also down in the Arcade itself.

And the post office was there, there was two drugstores there, there was Mave’s Five and Ten Cent Store there that you can get anything from, there was a couple of bakeries, there was a barber shop, a beauty parlor, McCormick’s Mercantile store, there was a lawyer’s office, there was liquor store, which I didn’t need. And let’s see, some of the others: a
grocery store, hardware store, a little bit of everything right underneath that. In other words, that was kind of like your first mall, and yet we called it the Arcade because it was open on both ends and down the center. And then it had an opening at the front and then an opening down the center, so therefore that’s the way it was built. And it was very pretty; I have pictures of it.

But anyway—and then of course at the far end, the south end, that’s where the park was. They had a lovely fishpond there and then it was (inaudible) like an arbor there you know. And then, of course, the pool was there, and then years ago the skating rink, and then there was another pool there from when we first went; that was there, but later covered it up. And then that’s where they built the skating rink, and that’s where they would hold the carnivals and things at. But anyway, the Arcade was just like a big shopping mall, and there was many stores would come in and go and then some been there all the time. And then, later, the elections was held there, in different rooms there.

CB: Must have been really large?

CA: It was large, honey. I’m very poor with feet. I know what feet and yardage is, but I don’t—I can’t do it in my head.

CB: Was it, like, as long as the dog track is? I’m like you.

CA: Let’s see, not quite, not quite. In other words, it went from the traffic light to Bird Street. It was a block long, just short of maybe twenty feet that was that fishpond place. And so then it went back—oh, again, I’m bad about yardage and things, but anyway it was deep, too. There was buildings and then a nice big hall and then more buildings, so it went back deep off the street.

CB: Like almost maybe the size of two houses, two small houses?

CA: Yes, I would say at least that, right. And so there was just plenty of room there for it. And you could, like I said you could go either in either end or down through the center, or that is come in through the center. And there was the complete hall down through the center, and the places opened off from that.

CB: Now, did you go there by yourself, or is that someplace you had to be accompanied?
CA: No at that time you were—I slept in the yard half of my life when I lived in the Springs, especially before the children came. I would get warm, I’d get restless, I’d go out and sleep in a chair in the front yard. My children slept out there many nights in the front yard. Now, we had a lot of different scrapes; what I mean by that is drunks would pass. One night I heard fighting in my front yard and was always wanting to go see what things was about; I never stayed in. And I go out and here they were two—they were some people—a man trying to rape a woman. Now, she was drunk, she was wrong, but he was too! And he wasn’t about to do it in my yard, or that is right close to my yard, so I sent him in one direction and I sent her in the other direction and stayed there to make sure that they didn’t come back together.

And then one time I heard some trouble at my front door and I went out and I didn’t see nobody, and I’m looking everywhere and I see something’s touching my feet. I look down and a drunk was climbing up my door step saying this was home. No, no, not your home, buddy; out that gate and on down the road. So I helped him out and showed him down the road. And we were six blocks up off of the main thoroughfare, but how they got lost six blocks I don’t know.

But anyway, one night right by my bed I kept hearing a door, and woke my husband up and says, “There’s somebody trying to get in our automobile,” which was right there by where we slept. And so I looked out, and sure enough there was a man getting into my side of the car. And I—telling Glen, “Glen, get up, he’s headed around on the other side; if he ever gets in there I may have left my keys, in there!” It was a carport, you know. I may have left my keys, because that’s what we did back then, we didn’t lock the doors. And so anyway, finally my husband got up and went out and got the man and pulled him out of the car, and the man says, “I’m just trying to get my car started so I can get home.” He says, “Young man”—he was a young man. He says, “Young man, you’re not getting my car started. Just get on down the road.” Well, he went on—he was bloody all over, somebody had done worked him, you know, and he got in a fight somewhere and probably got thrown out of the car someplace, and so down the road he went.

We never got in any trouble except trouble come to us. We’d [be] sitting there and trouble would come to us. But anyway if—the keys didn’t happen to be in the car, thank God, but I wasn’t sure of that and I didn’t want him getting in there and turning the keys and hit it all. But anyway, these things did happen, but we stayed in the yard. The kids could go around and didn’t have to worry about anybody taking them or anybody doing anything to them; it just didn’t happen then. People didn’t—they drank, but no drugs. I didn’t know of anything, except over the counter drugs that you took for pain. I didn’t know nothing like that until after I married, and we didn’t have to worry with it at all. And after I married, then it started coming to light, but I’ve never been thrown with people that did drugs so I don’t know anything about them.
Now, the drinking, yes. I’ve known people, even in my family, that sometime drink too much, but it was something that happened that they didn’t mean for it to happen. I mean, it wasn’t an everyday thing. But you were allowed to go into your yard and be safe and not have to worry about it. And many a night I went to bed at twelve or one o’clock in the front yard, and the next morning when my husband would head for work I’d be in the front yard where it would be—you know, I was too tired—

CB: Cool.

CA: It was cool and we didn’t have air conditioning then. I still don’t have it. But my family thinks I’m crazy, but I don’t need air conditioning. I turn on the fans and that’s it. Leave my doors open and I’m satisfied.

CB: More comfortable.

CA: Yeah.

CB: Do you remember the train depot?

CA: The what?

CB: The train depot.

CA: The train depot?

CB: There’s been some conversation about a train depot that used to be in Sulphur Springs.

CA: Okay, now let me see, a train depot. Now, I know when the Hillsborough airfield [Henderson Airport] was there, there was a train out there then that would come in. But they put that down, and I understand that the tracks have been pretty well been moved now because the college [University of South Florida] is on there, you know, now. But I don’t remember a train coming through there, except—oh, now wait a minute! Wait a minute, yes. But now depot, they used to have a bridge over the Hillsborough River that a train come in on but stopped right there. Now, I can’t say that I’ve ever seen a train on it, but it was there. (phone rings) And when they had the—
CB: So, back to the train depot. You remember—?

CA: Okay, I don’t remember trains coming over, but I do know it was there, and it was washed away during the flood.

CB: Which flood is that?

CA: Let’s see I guess about 1936[1], thirty-five [1935], thirty-four [1934]: somewhere in between there, because we come out in thirty-seven [1937] or thirty-six [1936] somewhere, so the flood was somewhere right in through there. And we were on Nebraska back in Tampa, and you couldn’t get across to go into the Springs without a boat, because the Hillsborough River flooded and flooded all of the Springs, and it was all up, you know, five and six feet in all the businesses along there and everything. So the only way you were allowed to come would be way around, and God knows how far that was. You couldn’t come in like we always come, across the bridge and come in.

And so that bridge was washed out and so they never did put one back in; they only put the one back in that there on Nebraska Avenue now. But there used to be one that come down—oh, what was the name of that side street there? I don’t even remember now. I know, but I don’t remember right now, anyway. And it come across and it would go up a river cove there, and you wouldn’t have to come down Nebraska to get to it. But that one washed away and they just never did put one back. So now that may be, but there was no depot there.

And I can’t recall any depot in the Springs. I can’t—now, wait a minute, wait a minute; maybe they’re talking about—maybe they’re talking about where the tracks crossed up by Waters, west—east Waters. There’s a track that comes down there, now maybe that’s what they’re talking about. And that goes over the Hillsborough River there at the park. But I don’t remember a depot being there at that time, at the time I came out.

CB: So certainly not after 1936?

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[1] The Sulphur Springs flood began on September 4, 1933 and was caused by rains associated with a hurricane.
CA: No, no, not after that.

CB: What do you remember about the trolley, if anything?

CA: Oh, plenty about the trolley. That come up right to the Nebraska to Sitka [Street]; it cut off right there. There was a covered place that you could sit to stay out of the rain, and the trolley come about every—I’m going to guess ten minutes. And it went all the way into town and come back, and I rode the trolley to school back and forth, to Hillsborough when I went to Hillsborough. And it was a nickel and you could get a transfer and get off and get on another trolley, you know, elsewhere. But it had no air conditioning, but it was yellow just like the one that they put up, you know. And so that’s the way that we had transportation was that. And we used to go to the fairgrounds on it, you know, during the fair, and ride it to wherever we wanted to go in Tampa, downtown or wherever we wanted to go.

CB: Right, because you did mention that when you first got married you didn’t have a car. So, when did you finally end up with a car?

CA: Let’s see, probably after—I was in a car accident with a friend before—my husband and I were walking down the street, and I was pregnant with the oldest child. This friend of ours picked us up, and he had been my father’s caretaker—my father was crippled—and he helped my father. He was about three years older than I, and he had had a crush on me ever since he had come into doing this. I really didn’t know it, because at that time I really wasn’t into boys much, and particularly not him. He was from a different set of people, good-hearted and very good to my dad and I loved that, and I loved him for what he did for my father. But the other kind of love I didn’t have. I married two times; he went through both of them.

And he deliberately picked us up and deliberately wrecked us, and then wouldn’t let us out of the car. The car was jammed and we couldn’t get out. So my husband told him, “You either let me get my wife out of this car or else.” So anyway, the car stopped on Nebraska and Waters and he couldn’t get it started again, so he got out to try to start the car, and that’s when my husband pushed me out the driver’s side and said, “Get out of this car.” Well, of course the law got him, and I couldn’t do nothing, I just couldn’t. So anyway, they dropped the case, and I’m still with the finger that the hand went through the windshield; but anyway my daughter got a bad place on her leg that we think may have come from me getting hurt in the car. But I just couldn’t do anything to him because he had been too good to my dad. So that was the end of it, so he’s dead and gone now and but that was that.
So that was in—I was expecting her in forty-three [1943], the end of forty-three [1943], because she was born in February of forty-four [1944]. So we must have got the car in forty-four [1944].

CB: All right, okay. Well, 'cause what I was wondering is did you ever ride the boats from downtown to Sulphur Springs? I understand there was boats all along the river.

CA: No, not at that time, that I recall. Now, it’s been since then that they started the boats there at Lowry Park [Zoo]. And they have them there, but it wasn’t at that time. Now, people had boats but they weren’t in business nor they weren’t in transportation or anything.

CB: Right, they were just for transportation for themselves?

CA: Right, right.

(to child) Come here, I’ll help you get your ice; get your ice and I’ll help you.

CB: Well, this is a perfect place to ask this one. What was your favorite food growing up?

CA: I don’t know that I had a favorite food, because my mother always taught me to eat whatever was cooked. And I was always introduced to all kind of food. And having a restaurant, that even made it that much more, you know. And even today there’s only a few foods that I don’t eat. In the fruit line, maybe apricots, and I will eat them if they’re served and that’s all there is. Parsnips. I can’t think of a meat that I don’t eat.

Unidentified child: Meme, no ice is coming out. (continues to talk inaudibly)

CA: I love all kinds of greens, all kind of Southern food. But I guess now, my favorite food now, that maybe has always been either hamburgers, chicken or wiener. Back during the Depression we didn’t get too much other food because of being, you might say, in a poor family. I didn’t know that, though. I thought that we got that because we liked it.

CB: Picnic food.
CA: Right, so this I guess now—and seafood, I love seafood. But I guess that is the—the top, the top—I guess that would be what I would say is my favorite food, just hamburger, wieners, and chicken.

Child: I like hamburgers and chicken and wieners.

CA: Now, you go ahead here, here. Okay and so anyhow, but as far as having a favorite food, I don’t know that I—(to child) watch that you don’t drop it. I don’t know that I have a favorite even today, because I eat anything. I like Italian food, I like Spanish food, I like Chinese food. I like most anything.

CB: So there weren’t any particular food traditions in your family growing up?

CA: Yes. Yeah, the traditions, like Christmas was pound cakes and fruit cakes and it was a turkey or a chicken hen, you know. And then for Easter it was a ham and different, you know, other things to go along with it. Then for Thanksgiving, too, is your turkey, and ham or this order for Christmas, too. So we still do that, we have a ham and a turkey for both Thanksgiving and Christmas, and then at Easter we have the ham. And then always black-eyed-peas and hog jaws for New Year’s Day. We cook them at night and have them just as soon after twelve o’clock is when we can eat them.

CB: Oh, really?

CA: There’s always a crowd here right after twelve to get my black-eyed peas and hog jaws.

CB: And is it because it’s supposed to bring good luck for the rest of the year?

CA: Peas supposed to bring good luck, and I’m still waiting. (both laugh) I’m still waiting. I may not get dried black-eyed peas the rest of the year, but we’re going to have a big sized pot that sits up there for everybody to come in and get ’em, because some of the others do not cook ’em but they come here to get that black-eyed peas and hog jaw.

CB: Not going to take any chances, huh?
CA: No, sir. And I make corn bread, of course, and in the past few years I’ve fixed a little rice because some of them like to mix rice. We didn’t have rice, but I have done that for the ones that come in that decides they want—my son-in-law that’s dead, he always wanted rice with it; I think it’s to make it go further. And so I started fixin’ rice for him, and then I’ve got one Yankee daughter-in-law, and she likes the rice so I fix the rice for her. But the rest of us, we don’t usually eat the rice. I’ll fix a little bit for those that wants it and then they can mix it with it.

CB: So tell me more about the Depression, living through the Depression in Sulphur Springs.

CA: Well, like I say, we had this food. I was sitting—or we were sitting—fairly pretty, because we had a grocery store. So therefore, we had access to the food, and then with the restaurant we still had access to the food—and of course they had the stamp book, you know, that thing that you had to buy things with. Well, we got extra because we were having to buy the other, so see, it didn’t hurt us too bad. We got sugar, we got shoes, we got different things that—I’m just trying to think of some other things that was hard to come by. Gas tokens, because of having the place, you know. But we did try to be careful by it; we only got what we were supposed to get, but we fared pretty good.

But like I said—oh, sardines I ate my way and still love them today, but I thought we ate those—see, my mother and dad, like I say, always kind of shielded me from things, and they didn’t tell me that we was on hard times. We had those things because we liked them. I mean, I didn’t know! And I thought that’s why we were eating them all the time. Pork and beans, you know, we liked it so that’s why we ate it. So I didn’t really know that we were having those hard times until I got older and looked back, and then I knew why; but I had already come through it then, no use letting it bother me now.

So I had a wonderful childhood. When we lived in Ybor my granddad was on the police force, as I said, and part of the time my dad was on the police force. And we had a big home and we rented it out to renters. And my grandmother and my mother did all the laundry and the clothes washing, the cooking and everything. And so there was always plenty of people there and most of the time it was all men, and part of them was relatives. And so I was the only child in the house, and so when my family would bake a chocolate cake I would get the top of everybody’s chocolate cake, and each one of the men saw to it that I got it, and my mother would have to say, “Look, she’s had the whole cake; you don’t need to save no more.” But I was always—all the men folks—and my mother never had to worry about me being touched, and they were all good people.
And like I said, I always had anything I wanted, and I was treated like a princess all the time. We were poor, and I know that now, but I didn’t know that then. I thought we were just the richest people in town. I got the icing off the cake; I got the cherry out of whatever was there, you know, I got the olive wherever it was. Somebody at the table gave me something that maybe I didn’t have, and so I always had anything I wanted. And of course my family made home brew and we served it and I drank it. I was allowed to have it because it didn’t make you drunk like the beer does now, you know. And I grew up drinking home brew. I don’t drink today. Now I’ll take—I love the taste of it all, I love the taste, but I don’t like the effect so I don’t drink it. (phone rings) Now, maybe for Christmas or something—

**Pause in recoding**

CA: Anyway, smoke—I’ve never smoked. My dad smoked for years, my husband smoked, and then they both quit. My mother never smoked, my grandmother never smoked. Like I said, getting married again, I didn’t have a very good track record. My grandfather passed away, my grandmother never re-married; my dad passed away, my mother never remarried; my husband passed away, I’ve never remarried. So there’s not much track record about the remarrying bit.

But I had a wonderful childhood. I couldn’t have asked for anything any better. I know now that I didn’t have lots of things, but I had as pretty of clothes as anybody in the classroom made of feed bags. We used feed bags, so my mother would wash the bags and make me beautiful clothing and she would buy material ten cents a yard and make me beautiful clothes. I always had—I was dressed as well as anybody in the whole school, because she made all of my clothes and my grandmother crocheted, so anything that needed to be crocheted—she tried to me to crochet; I’ve never learned. They say if you can crochet a chain stitch that you can crochet anything. I can chain stitch. I can crochet a chain stitch from here to China—

CB: I still can’t crochet either.

CA: But you’d better not ever add nothing back! That’s it. I embroidered, I quilted, I did all those things then because that was our entertainment during the winter months, was quilting and making the top of the quilt and then putting the quilt together. And because at that time we didn’t have TV or anything—had a radio, but even then sometimes the radio went bad on you, you know, or maybe someone wanted to listen to something else because one’s all you had. I’ve got televisions in every room in the house, you know, but then, no.
But we had come along with everybody loving one another; and yet my mother, I never remember putting her arm around me and telling me she loved me, never! But I know that she worshiped the ground I walked on, but she did not know how to let me know. I can remember saying to my grandmother, “Am I my mother’s—is that my real mother?” “Yes, sir, honey, that’s your real mother.” Now, my dad loved me to death and I was a daddy’s girl, but once my dad was gone and I grew up and got grown—and my mother and I were the best of friends, but she didn’t know how to relate to any little person.

CB: Was she an only child also?

CA: No, there was the two, two girls. Now, there was three, but one died young, so she raised that second one. And so she just never was a child, because she always had to take care of that girl, that sister of hers. And so she put me on a pedestal and that’s where I always stayed. She always saw that I had the prettiest of everything; she didn’t care about herself, just as so she had nice shoes on, that’s all that mattered, she cared about those shoes. She always told me, “Keep your head and your shoes and it doesn’t matter what you put between them.” And you’re always dressed if you keep your hair done nicely and have on nice shoes: you’re always dressed. And I hate shoes. I go barefooted all the time. My children, they see me put on shoes, “Mother, where you going?” I like that terra firma underneath my feet! I know what I’m doing when I walk on my feet!

CB: Well, let’s go back to the school. You didn’t know you were poor. Did you observe the other—all the kids look alike to you as far as wealth?

CA: If they looked any different, I didn’t catch it, until I got into the eleventh grade, the tenth and eleventh grade.

CB: Then you noticed?

CA: Then I noticed it.

CB: Okay.

CA: My mother couldn’t afford—it was my mother, my grandmother and myself. My dad had already passed away. And I couldn’t afford, or she couldn’t—didn’t have the money to give me for clubs and things. And I started going to Hillsborough and I noticed the better dressed, and I noticed the club business. And I always loved school and we would be studying and trying to get down to get down to brass tax—you know, school
was never easy for me, but I was willing to dig for it and enjoyed it. And I’d be studying and in would come a note, so and so class is going to meet in the library—I mean, so and so club is going to meet in the library today. Okay, we’d get back down to our studies, in a few minutes somebody would come in; the Greek Club is going to meet in the lunchroom today.

Well, in a minute we’d get back, and I wasn’t in any of those, for more reasons than one. One, the money; one, at that time wasn’t really interested. I was beginning to get interested in boys and I wasn’t interested—the boy I was going with was not in that school, so I was interested in getting home by that time. And then the other thing was that I was interested in school there and I didn’t want any—Hillsborough was a good ways for me. Couldn’t stay after school because there was no way of getting home unless you rode the trolley, and it stopped later on in the afternoon; it didn’t go as often in the evening time. It brought you home, but then it slowed down. So there was no way of getting home, and so all those things together—I didn’t want to join anything.

And so then I noticed that, and so I just decided that when the first boy asked me to marry him, I says, “I’m going to get married, that will help Mama out.” I thought a lot of him, loved his family; it was a big family and I was able to get in the big family that I wanted in, that I’d never been in, and so I got married.

*Pause in recording*

CB: I know that you have long-term acquaintances and friends still living in Sulphur Springs. And I know that you even see them and speak with them frequently. But I want you to tell me about some of those childhood friends—not necessarily who they are, but just about having childhood friends in Sulphur Springs.

CA: Well, like I said before, I wasn’t able to go off much, but they were able to come to my place. One was even Mrs. Patricia (inaudible) that come from Tampa to move out there to be near us, and her twin sisters. And of course she we were like—she’s like a sister to me. We still write back and forth today; we even visit back and forth when we get that chance. Her second husband’s passed away. She has children; those children come to see me, I go to see those children. She live in Cincinnati—actually Loveland, Ohio. And at least—a letter goes back and forth to the kids and to her at least once a month, and the cards—Christmas, birthday, Thanksgiving, Halloween, Easter, all of those. And she’s the only sister I’ve ever had, I guess you would say—except for the neighbor across here I just lost almost three years ago now. This is her picture up here from the time that we’ve been here. She was a very dear friend of mine.
Anyway, then some of the other girls, especially like I told you about the twins. All the twins I seem to associate with there. The Blankenship twins, some of them still come; one’s in a home and the other one comes there. I met some from the place of business that lived and worked in the buildings along there. Like Harriet Wells, she used to work at the theatre. I knew her back when she was ticket taker at the theatre. Then I started going to church at her uncle’s church, so then we became church friends and since we parted there we’re still friends, we call back and forth; she lives in Lutz.

The Hensels, even though I was friends from the restaurant and then friends from school, they’re Catholic, I’m not, so we didn’t have anything from, you know, with church there. I’m Baptist, so a bunch of these friends have been to the Baptist church, like the Reynoldses, like the Joneses, like the Franklins, like the Nippers. And then the Nippers lived closest to me when I first moved to the Springs; they had about twelve children in that family. They go to the reunion. I’ve known all of them. Then, let’s see, the Coopers, they lived up—church with them, then their children and my children went to school together, so I knew them that way, too.

Back when I first graduated from Sulphur Springs, I was going with this same boy I married, but he wasn’t allowed to come to the festivities. So then, rather than be by myself, I made dates with four boys to make sure that I had one. Well, believe it or not, the night of the prom those four boys was on the same road waiting for me to come out. All four of them embarrassed to death! Up comes the boy that I go with wanting to know what I was doing, and I told him, because it was right there. He goes home and tells my mother. My mother sends him back for me, I didn’t get to go to the prom because I had misbehaved; I had done wrong. I didn’t ask him, which I didn’t want him; he wasn’t allowed anyway. But I had made dates with four boys and not knowing if any would show, or if they all—never thinking they’d all show, you know—

CB: You were quite a pistol.

CA: And so I didn’t get to go with nobody, nowhere. It was completely ruined. I have my picture and that’s all I’ve got. Okay, I still write one of those boys and one of the brothers goes to the reunion, so he always comes over to see me and hugs my neck. The other one is in Virginia; his wife is dead and gone and I don’t get to see him, but we do get to hear from one another. And so then, like I told you, mentioned I was president of my student body, so I met a lot of them that way, you know, and we thought an awful lot of one another that way. Corey (inaudible) and Clyde Bellamy and Earl Griffin, he was killed in the war [World War II]—a bunch of them. Lee Chapman was killed in the war, Frank (inaudible) was killed in the war, Yule Smith was killed in the war. You know, a bunch of them went off to war and didn’t come back, and we miss all of those, of course.
And then, of course, I have honeyed up different ones like the Aldermans; we’ve run into one another every once and a while where we’re going, you know, because a grandchild or something like this is there. In fact, when I went to see my last grandchild graduate from the fairgrounds, Jimmy was there seeing one of his graduate, and so we run into one another. And then there’s Alvin Neworth and Judy Neworth, they call about the—see, I didn’t graduate, so I don’t get to go to Hillsborough’s graduation, see, ’cause I didn’t graduate. But she calls me every once in a while and lets me know about that graduation exercise and has even invited me, but I guess maybe I don’t tell it but I’m a little ashamed because I didn’t finish school.

That’s about the only time I’ve ever been ashamed because it’s never really played a big part in my life that I didn’t graduate. But I’m for it for anybody else, and I made all of mine graduate; all seven of my children graduated. And so anyway—and part of them went to college on their own. Not me, I didn’t have the money to send them, but they went on their own. But anyway, schooling is a great part of my life, and my days there in the Springs is a great part.

I really don’t have any recollection of the years of school—I went to Seminole Elementary and I went to Memorial [Middle School], and I went to Hillsborough. Those years didn’t mean a lot to me. I just went to school. I met the ones in the room, I know a few names, but we never had nothing after that to do with one another. We never went to one another’s homes, maybe because I was quite a little distant—not now, but then, because of transportation. Maybe I was quite a little distance from them, because at that time the Springs went to Hillsborough; that’s the only place we had to go, and of course at that time it was quite a little distance there. I walked it, but it’s a good—I’m going to say seems to me like an hour and a half walk, or maybe two hours’ walk, from Hillsborough to the Springs. But anyway—and a nickel was hard to come by to always ride that trolley car home, but if I overspent, well, then I had to walk home, you know.

But anyway, my years at the Springs was, I think, my most enjoyable of my young life; that is, from twelve on until I married. And then I stayed there, but I’ll admit I wasn’t with too many because I was too busy raising my children. Now, if we went to the schools I saw them there, but I married a little sooner than some of the others. So some of the others don’t have children—now I’ve got one [aged] fifty-nine, and so some of them don’t have children that old, and of course it took me out of being around them too much. But I would still see them there at the grocery store, post office, theatre, different things like that. When I would go to them or go shopping at the Arcade, I’d see them.

When I started in politics—not in politics, but I worked—I’m a clerk for one of the elections and had been for years and years and years there and here now, still now, and so I used to work on the polls there in Sulphur Springs. And so I would see them come into vote and we’d get to see them there. And then, of course, went to church
there; every time the church doors was open, I was there because we lived right around the corner from my church. And so I got to see a lot of them there, you know. But that was the most wonderful years of my life, I guess, was from twelve being at the Springs and then until I left from there in seventy-three [1973]. And I’ve loved living here, but I don’t know many of my neighbors here.

CB: That’s what I want to know is, why do you think this—what magic was there that you had that incredible connection that you still have with these people?

CA: Well, I think it was maybe—in my particular case, I was looking for that big family that I liked. I always wanted a big family; I was not in a big family. Then we didn’t go visit many people because it was too expensive, my mother worked all the time. I got to Lakeland, to my relatives over there, that was about it, because not many relatives lived in Florida; some lived in Lakeland, a few later in Orlando. But I didn’t even get to Orlando often, and so the closest relatives was the ones that lived in Lakeland, and they were a great-aunt and her son and his wife, no children, and of course I was worshiped there.

And I wouldn’t go to the bathroom at home, where they had running water, to get to use the outhouse at her house. (CB laughs) I wouldn’t drink nothing at home from the faucet to be able to go to pump my water—something wrong up here, you know, okay, but that’s it. Went there to gather eggs; she wouldn’t gather eggs in the morning so I could gather them when I got there. She lived right by the railroad track. I was out there every the time that track passed. I’d wave, you know, at the conductor or the caboose, you know. And part of it was wanting to be in that big family. And then, I’ve always been friendly. I never see a stranger, never. I’ll talk to anybody out there, whether it’s the devil himself, I’ll talk to him. And people told me before, I’m going to get myself in trouble, but so far I never have. I have talked and wish I hadn’t many times, but I’ve never gotten in any trouble for it.

I’ve always been in a place of business from—you might say from the time I lived in Ybor; our house was, you know, a rooming house. Then grocery store, fruit market, then Sulphur Springs fruit market, then restaurant, and then when we sold the restaurant, then I wasn’t in any kind of business there. Moved out here—then I was in school activities, you know. I was a president of the PTA the year that my son was born; in fact they run around, was I going to miss a meeting because [I was] expecting him, and I remember the day he was born I was at the school working in the lunchroom and had to leave to go home to have him.

And so anyway, then moved out here and didn’t have a business, you know, actually. But then I had to finally go to work, then I worked up until 2000, and then I haven’t worked
since. But I guess that’s why, because I love people, I don’t—I’m not afraid of anybody. I’m not prejudiced against anybody, whether you’re poor, you’re mediocre, or you’re rich, or whether you’re black or white or green or purple. I mean, we are all human beings, and we all have a reason for life, and we all need to be treated right and respected. And we all make mistakes who don’t always condemn somebody because of something that they do that they don’t do, because what you do may be just as bad in their eyesight as it is what they do in your eyesight.

And I guess that’s the reason—I can’t think of any other reasons, because maybe it was because of the years, too. I was in, I’d guess you’d say, my prime. Out here I’ve either had to work, had my sick husband, or was down like I am now. So, in other words, I haven’t had a chance out here to really know people. But now the lady next door—love one another dearly; this woman over here and I loved one another dearly. I don’t even know who lives over there. They lived there about a year, I don’t even know them. The ones in the back, I could care less if they moved or stayed there, because I have no use for them. But they are still human beings and they have their right; they stay on their side, I stay on my side. We don’t converse, and that’s fine. It was over something that is not necessary, but they started it, so they got it and that’s the way that it goes.

I used to go to church out here; it got to where our church disbanded. It got to where I just can’t get up in the mornings and get ready for church. I hurt so bad that I’d rather hear it over the television and not have to dress. If I could go looking like I look, okay, but you can’t do that always. Sometimes I’m in my sleeping clothes until noon or one o’clock; it’s according to who comes in, where I’m going, what I’m doing. Now, since my car is broke down, I’m even confined more so, and it’s getting the better of me and I know that, but I’m just not—too many things going and I’m not able to take care of them, and I know this. I don’t like it.

Like my garbage cans, sitting in the front yard out here, but it’s convenient. All of this—if my husband was alive this wouldn’t be here, he wouldn’t allow it, but it’s convenient. My trash can would not be in here, but it’s convenient. Different things—it’s convenient, you know because I can’t get up and bounce up and go see where the telephone—nobody else has a telephone on their table, but I do! It was hurting to get up to go to that one. Another one died because I kept it on the table all the time. So I found this one and I says, “Well, I’ll hook it up here and it will be here.” So, in other words, convenience now. And so I try and make the best of what I’ve got to work with, you know.

But I love those people just as much as I love them then, and of course some of them I haven’t seen until we started going to that. I hadn’t seen some of them for twenty, thirty years. Now, some, yes, but others, no. But I run into Carrie Thomas; she married a McLeod; her brother and I was an item at one time. I worshiped the ground he walked on, dated him several times; but he was much older than I and I guess I didn’t—he didn’t
—I didn’t have anything that concerned him, I guess. But I always worshiped him, worshiped her mother.

Part 2 ends; part 3 begins

CA: Okay, I loved her mother very, very much—a lovely Christian lady—and so of course after we all finished school, you know, and all started getting married and all raising families, we didn’t see one another. And so I was thrilled to death when she come up to me out there one time, at one of the meetings; she don’t come down too much because she lives up in the country, she doesn’t live in Tampa. And so I was tickled to death to see her, because the brother that I didn’t go with, I introduced him to a friend of mine in school and they married. So in other words, we kind of got tangled up that way, and so both of them are gone now, too. And so I was so tickled to see—I knew J.D., which was her husband, and then I knew her, Carrie. And I was so tickled to get to a chance to see her and talk with her for quite some time. So it’s a lot of fun going back and seeing them and remembering them.

And I know there’s Toby Johnson; he tickled me to death one time. He was joking about huntin’ him—I don’t know whether he said a wife or a girlfriend. And anyway, I says, “Toby, since you’ve grown up—you were so quiet in school, you wouldn’t have nothing to do with nobody. Here you are out here hunting some lady.” And he says, “Yes, I’ve gotten to be real bad in my old age.” And so I don’t know whether or not that he’s married, single or what; but anyway he tickled me because back years ago he was in the grade ahead of me and he never even would speak to me. We’d see one another and play around there together, but no, he wouldn’t speak. And I always thought he was stuck up and come to find out he was just the opposite, shy. And he wouldn’t have nothing to do with us, and here we explained that, you know later. I says, “I thought you were stuck up.” He said, “No, I just was too shy to speak.” So it’s funny how different ones you know are that way.

And I know Neil (inaudible); we talk back and forth, we were in class together. And he married Chris and we don’t see one another too much. Eileen, his sister, and Norma Jean, her—and his mother and father used to eat in our restaurant all the time. And so I remember a lot of the parents of these children that I go to see now out there, or these older people that I go to see now. And then, of course, Neil and I talk over the phone quite a bit and try to reminisce and remember what’s happened to different ones. Sometimes he’ll know one where it is and something about it, and then other times I know ones, because I watch that paper to see if I’m in that. (both laugh) And I save all those clippings.

And that’s one thing I wish that they would bring back to that reunion is mentioning the ones that passed that year. And somehow—at sometime even if they have to do it by
alphabet or something, let them get up and say, “I’m Carolyn Jones Arnold,” because I know there’s some there that sees me, maybe recognizes me, but don’t know who I am, because I am the same way. With me, when you put on gray hair, or put on a mustache or a beard, you’ve lost me. Especially men, you know, like this. Now, a woman I can recognize sooner, because I never was—I liked the boys but not sexually, if you know what I’m trying to say.

I liked the boys because they were different than me, and I was always a tomboy and I liked their games and I liked—in fact, I got in trouble a lot of times for getting out there playing football with them. And going in where they were, I didn’t know I was doing something wrong. The teachers were telling me, “You shouldn’t do that.” But none of them ever bothered me. I was just another one of the fellas, you know. But maybe I got by with it because I was such a tall person. Now I had carried—I guess I have wore out more birth certificates then some people’s ever had. They used to come on postcards—

CB: The birth certificates?

CA: The birth certificates—I got one! Come on a postcard, and on the back it tells who you are, when you were born, and everything. I had to carry one with me all the time because everywhere they wanted to charge me an adult price. Well, of course, I couldn’t even afford the child’s price a lot of times. And it wasn’t fair to make me pay an adult’s price when I was not an adult. So I carried my birth certificate with me. Still have one of them with me in my billfold that I got years ago—I don’t know if it tells on there when I got it. But anyway, showing that I was not an adult. And so like I said, I probably sent off and my mother sent off for more birth certificates than anybody else ever had. Now you have to have to pay for one. Then all you had to was write and tell them you wanted one and they’d send you one.

But anyway, I was always so tall and so big and boisterous. I’ve always had a loud voice—now, not so loud. I’ve got a goiter and I think that’s what it is. I’ve never been told that, but I believe it is, because they keep watching it to see if it’s getting damage in my windpipe; it hasn’t yet, it goes there but it hasn’t bothered—I’ve had one removed, there’s another one back. But anyway the voice is always kinda hit against everything; you can hear me above everybody else.

And I’ve got children just like that, and it is not a habit; they’ll tell you it is, it is not a habit. I did it when there was one of me. They want to tell me that it’s from raising my voice over all the children. Not true, I was loud when I was little. So my mother, “Carolyn, lower your voice.” I couldn’t hear her. “Mother, talk up, I can’t hear you.” But my dad blasted, my grandmother blasted. One of her sisters, you could stand on her front porch, she could call all of her ten kids ten miles away, they tell it—I know better, but
you know, in the next field. And so it’s hereditary, it’s what it is. I’ve got children that can stand on that street out there and you can hear everything they are saying from the street, and then there’s others that’s just as quiet as they can be. And then there’s a few that got sense enough to curb it. I’ve never even found that much sense.

But anyway, I do not hear myself talking loud, if I go to an ear doctor and he says that it’s a habit. It is not a habit; it’s been going on too many years. It went on before I had seven children, so it’s not a habit. Now, it may be now, because I’ve done it so long, but it didn’t start out as a habit, and it is not the reason I’m so loud. It’s just my voice.

CB: Well, for goodness’ sakes. All right, was your family doctor in Sulphur Springs?

CA: Were they what?

CB: Was your family doctor in Sulphur Springs? Did you go to doctors in Sulphur Springs?

CA: Dr. Brown was our family doctor, he was a general doctor. That’s the only one that I ever remember going to unless it was to the hospital. Now, a lot of times, if anything happened we’d have to go to the hospital—the emergency room, especially after children came. It seems like I owned part of St. Joseph’s because I was there—in fact, a time or two, I told them they might as well put me on the payroll, because I was there as much as the administrators were. But as a child, not a whole lot ever happened to me: some broken toes; we’d strap them back up. We found out from the first one that there was nothing that you can do. Sprained fingers: put a splint on it; we kept splints around the house all the time. And we kind of doctored ourselves.

We didn’t go to many doctors then. I don’t know if it’s because there weren’t many, although Brown was there, then there was another one. Over behind the Springs Theatre, Swing—no, Swing was the ones that was with the Arcade. Wait a minute. Started with an S—can’t come up with it right now. Anyway, he was there. I went to him several times. It was just catty-cornered from the Tourist Club.

CB: And so for the most part you doctor—

CA: We doctored ourselves more than anything else, because that’s the only ones that I remember going to in the Springs was Brown and then this one. And—
CB: Did your family or your grandparents or anyone ever get water from the gazebo or from Tourist Club?

CA: Oh, yeah, yeah! Yeah, we put a clothespin on nose and headed down there. Yeah, my family wasn’t that careful, I guess you’d say, about heath-wise. Apparently we didn’t need to be, for whatever reason, because my grandmother lived to be eighty and was in good health. She had had several little mini-strokes, I know now. I did not know back then. She had Alzheimer’s, I know now, but didn’t know that then, because they didn’t know Alzheimer’s then; we thought it was senility.

She would get up in the morning—after a nap she was fine; after staying up for several hours she’d lose it. She didn’t like to go to bed, but she’d sneak off to the bed—well, we called it sneaking off; she may not have snuck. But we called it ’cause she’d disappear, we’d find her in the bed. She’d have a little nap, she’d get up, she was fine. After staying up a little while, she’d get off the rocker. Go back to bed, get up, she was fine. I never could understand—I thought when you lost your mind, you lost your mind.

CB: Yeah, I did, too.

CA: But they told us it was senility, so we took it that it was senility. But we know now that it was Alzheimer’s, because part of the time she’d be okay and then part of the time she wouldn’t. Now we know what it was, but then they did not tell us it was Alzheimer’s.

CB: And I’ve heard that evidently, with that disease, it actually cuts your life short. So if she had it and lived to be 80—if she hadn’t had it, she might have been 103—

CA: Well, on top of it all, the reason she actually died, she fell and broke a hip in the backyard, fell on a root. And she was looking for me and I was in the house watching television. Now, you know she was not right, or she would have been looking for me in the house. I didn’t miss her, or I wouldn’t have allowed her out. It was after dark. I was watching TV, she was out—I was grown, of course, and I had six—five children. I was expecting the sixth one right after I lost her.

And so anyway, she broke the hip and we had to put her in the hospital, because I was expecting and I couldn’t lift her, and she was losing her mind, too. And so we put her in the hospital, and I’d go every day because she wouldn’t eat for them. So I’d go every day. One day she called me by my mother’s name, another day she’d call me my name, you never knew what name. They claim that she would call out mine and my mother’s
names all day long in her waking hours. So they put her by a side door and I was allowed to go in at any time I wanted to go.

So during the day, when the kids was all at school, I’d go to see her. At night I wouldn’t get to go much, because they would all be at home and they weren’t allowed in. Now, a time or two they would sneak—they would put things around to where they could come in, right by the door, and we’d come in and stay a few minutes and get out, so that my children wouldn’t bother anybody. And she never knew who that last one belonged to, but she didn’t know the one before that’s name. But all the rest she could tell you their names at times, she would be okay.

But anyway, that’s what it was, and so we know now that’s what she had was Alzheimer’s, but they did not—and they explained it by telling me about the—it was like a wheel. Your brain is like a wheel, like one of the wheels, you know—at Las Vegas.

CB: Okay.

CA: And you know, where the point stops, if it stopped on a dead cell, that’s when she was no good. As it whirled around, if it stopped on a live cell then she was okay, that’s the way they explained it to me. And so we thought it was senility, but the part of her brain was okay at different places and other parts weren’t. And they never said Alzheimer’s; in fact that Alzheimer’s come many years after that, you know. But we know now that that’s what she had.

CB: That’s amazing.

CA: But like I said, she fell, she broke that hip, she lived about a month after that, and then she passed away.

CB: That’s why so many people are so concerned about breaking their hips. That was pretty typical then, I guess, as far as the—

CA: Right, right, and so—but health-wise, she was still very healthy. And my mother had cancer, that’s what killed her.

*Pause in recording*
CB: But the one thing I want to know is did you ever know anything about the Jim Walters Homes?

CA: Yes.

CB: Or Jim Walters? Or anything about that?

CA: Yes, let’s see if I can come up with her name; she used to work for Jim Walters. Her mother lived in one of our cottages—Geraldine, Gerry. Gerry Bacon; she married a Bacon. Gerry, she worked for Jim Walters when they were building homes then. And all I know about it is just that it was there, and then of course they build a bunch of homes, started advertising down in Tampa, you know. But I know she worked for Jim Walters for years, Gerry Bacon did.

CB: And somebody told me something about—I guess Billy Graham was over in this area, too?

CA: I went to see Billy Graham—now, he went to school in Temple Terrace at the Temple Terrace College out there\(^2\). Now, I didn’t know him at that time, and didn’t have much to do with Temple Terrace because it was just beginning to grow up. But I know that he went to school there, and then of course when he came to Tampa and came to—I went—I’m trying to think now where was it. I know it wasn’t [Raymond] James Stadium. He was there, and I did go to see him there, too. But then he was here before, and I believe that was at the old fairgrounds that I went to see him then, but it’s been many years ago and I can’t be sure where that was. But he went to school at Temple Terrace, at the college there, yes.

CB: Okay, all right. One of the—probably the last thing and most important I want to ask you is: what would you want people or remember or know about the Sulphur Springs that you remember? If we get your grandson or your great-grandson or your great-great-granddaughter in and find these tapes at USF in a few years, what would you want them to know about this town that you seem to love so much?

CA: That it was a great town to grow up in, had a lot of good honest law-abiding people, friendly people, people that would do for you when they see you in need or if you ask for

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\(^2\)The Florida Bible Institute, now Trinity College, was located in Temple Terrace at the current site of Florida College. Trinity College has since moved to New Port Richey, Florida
help: interested, caring people with a lot of good ideas about things that they wanted to do and places they wanted to go. Patriotic people, especially during the Number Two War [World War II], ’cause a bunch of the boys that I went to school with gave their life for that. I’m sure there’s a bunch of children from them that’s gone to war now. I haven’t run into too many, but that’s because I can’t get around too much. We’ve got firemen; we’ve got policemen from our crowd out there.

We’ve got just good true people that come up from the Springs—from poverty, if you want to call it—because some of us was in it. And there was a lot of big families, but they held those families together. There wasn’t much divorce then; when you got married you stayed there, you went through whatever you had to go through and you beat it. You took care of what you had; you might have wanted more but you made do with what you had. You didn’t always feel like the grass was greener on the other side. You wanted to do what you could for who you could because you wanted it—not because someone told you had to do it, but because you wanted to do it. And I think that’s what the majority of the people that I know and I call and I talk to believe.

And we loved their children and are anxious to know what goes on with their children. Sometimes we don’t get to see them, but we ask about them when we get together and share some of our up and downs with one another. A lot of times we tore our heart out, but it was not always taken from place to place in public. In other words, we didn’t listen and tell because of gossip. We listen and told because of caring. We had our problems, we didn’t always like our problems, but we tried to make the most of our problems. Most of us were religious people—not fanatics, but religious people to the fact that we believed in God. We weren’t all the same faith but we respected those others with the different faiths. And we just kind of—you might say lived and let live.

If we saw somebody doing something wrong, especially a child—for instance, say one of my children was doing something wrong and another mother called him down. I’d check with that mother, check with that child; if it was going on, the child got in trouble for it. I didn’t want a teacher touching my child, and they all knew that. Don’t whip my children; you tell me and I’ll tear them up. But don’t touch my children! Same way with my friends: in other words, I’ll stop your child from doing something if they are doing wrong, but I won’t touch your child and don’t you touch mine. You come tell me and I will take care of it.

I didn’t really ever have any trouble with the teachers. They all hated to see one of my children come in school, especially the phys. ed. teacher. You didn’t have shower curtains, the showering bit come in after I went to school. My girls don’t shower in an open shower. Put a curtain up there. No curtain, no shower. If the school can’t buy them, then get some material and I’ll make them—or better still I’ll go to Goodwill, I’ll buy some material or get something else, and I’ll make them and put them up. My
children don’t shower till curtains get on the place. They didn’t like me for that because I fought it continuously; every grade they went in I fought it. And so when they heard an Arnold child was coming, they knew that they’s going to have trouble with Mother Arnold, because there better be curtains put on those shower things. I don’t believe stripping around everybody looking at you, not even sisters. My children didn’t bathe together—now, when they were little, they did, but when they got older they didn’t. And I didn’t believe in that, and my children were not going to do that.

You didn’t take food away from my children for what they did. You could punish them or make them stay after school, but you didn’t take their lunch away. If you did, you answered to me.

CB: Was that a typical punishment in school?

CA: That at some times was punishment, yes, sir, yes, sir. It has even been punishment for grandchildren. And boy, if they want a grandmother to come down on them, they better not do it because I will go—I’ll get in my car or I’ll walk. They don’t take food away from my children. Uh-uh. Uh-uh. No, when it comes dinnertime, my kids are going to eat whether they’re hungry or not. They’re going to eat.

So, as a general rule, I got along with the teachers. Like I say, we discussed things, and if I found my children did something wrong, I was the first one to see that they got in trouble for it, and they were punished. But don’t anyone else touch them, because I’m the one that loves those kids, I’m the ones that brought those kids in this world, and I’m not too sure that somebody else whooping on them is going to do the trick because I have brought bruises or strikes when I love ’em! And when they anger me or they fight me and hear I whip one of them, you know, I didn’t head for that face or something, they turn and they got it. All right, you know, that’s easy done, whereas I know that I didn’t do it on purpose, but I don’t know that Mrs. Jones or Mrs. Brown didn’t mean to do it. So, that was my theory about school.

CB: Well, what would you want—what would you like for future generations to know you about you or your life in particular? How do you want them to remember you?

CA: That I had a wonderful childhood. I had a wonderful life bringing up my children. There’s a few things that I may have changed, but generally speaking I would have done everything the same way over again. I’ve had a wonderful growing up time with my children. Thoroughly enjoy the grandchildren, the great grandchildren. Enjoy being with them, love all my friends, love to see them, love to hear how they are. Enjoy meeting the
people I know. I’m not that wild about meeting new people, because I feel like that I’ve done that.

My family wants me to go to the senior citizens club. I don’t need to go there, I don’t need to go up there; there’s one right yonder and there’s one right up there. I don’t need that, I’ve got this. My home, my family, my animals, my people, that’s enough. Now, neighbors or someone that I already know, friends from the Springs, relatives from Missouri, relatives from wherever, that’s fine, but I don’t need to meet anybody else. I don’t have time to meet—I forget their names, anyway. I forget some of their faces; maybe I met them five years ago and I met them again and I’ve forgotten them. People I met seventy, sixty years ago, I still remember. I don’t have trouble remembering them. I still remember them; I still remember things about them: clothes that they wore, things that they did, things that they said, places they went. This is what I enjoy remembering, not where Tom, Dick, or Harry was last month. That I might forget, but I don’t forget where we were twenty-five years ago. Those four boys sitting on that one road and me walking out there and didn’t get to enjoy diddly-squat, that I haven’t forgotten.

And so it’s not that I don’t think there’s a lot of good people now, it’s just that I’m too old to have time to enjoy or to remember them. So I stay at home. My daughter says, “Wouldn’t you enjoy getting out there?” I enjoy what I’m doing, I enjoy going to the reunion, I enjoy calling—there’s not a day that I don’t call somebody that I used to know. I call somebody every day, or write somebody every day. I don’t write as many as I used to. I love to write! Love to write. I can write a—it may take me a week to get you a letter and wrap the tablet and send it to you, you know, it’s like a novel when I get through, but I love it. And I don’t write as many now because so many of them are dead and gone.

And of course I got the computer in there, but me and that computer we just don’t get along. I took lessons on that thing and I don’t know any more now than I did before I took the lessons. I’m afraid I’m going to break it. You know, in my day and time, you didn’t touch anything that you didn’t know how to run, how to work it, because if you broke it, it was broke and then you didn’t have the money to pay for it. So leave things alone that you don’t know how to work! So I don’t know how to work that, so I leave it sitting in there and let somebody who knows how to work it work it. I paid fifty-two something dollars to take a course at Brandon, went through the course fine. Left there, came home, we have a different computer: you fasten it up different, you punch it different, it comes up different.

I’m just as lost with my computer. Did fine at class, made good grades in class, took a class—two classes, down here at this senior citizens, did fine on their television—I mean, on their computer. Yeah, that’s what everybody says, “Well, if you’d call it the right thing,” you know. Anyway, did fine on there, come home, and theirs is not like mine.
Theirs is connected to the county; mine isn’t connected to the county. Can’t get the same things. I’m afraid I’m going to tear it up, so I don’t touch it because if I touch it and tear it up I got to fix it. They tell me you can’t tear it up. Every time I get on that computer I mess it up. Tell me I don’t know how to mess up things, I know better. Every time I get on there I tear it up.

CB: Oh, no, oh, no.

CA: I only can work the television if it stays the way that I learned. The cell phone—my son bought me a cell phone. “Don’t you ever be without it.” Half the time I don’t know how to work it. I only know what I’ve learned. I’ve got a scooter to take me; my son says, “You gonna have a scooter, so you can go.” He bought the scooter; you can’t get it in and out of the car unless he’s with me. And then he struggles and struggles and hurts his back. I says, “Now, we can’t have that. That thing is sitting out there in the car; what good is it doing me?” Okay, I paid to have a—what do you call it?—a trailer hitch put underneath my daughter’s car. Okay, what good is it unless you have the electric lift to lift it in and out with?

Okay, got the electric lift, had it put on my daughter’s car, because my car’s not running and I can’t go in my car and do all that when I’m not able to get around. Okay, they get it all on my daughter’s car. Okay, now we are gonna go. All right, it’s first one thing and then the other, first one thing and then the other, every weekend, every weekend, first one thing and then the other. You can’t go when it’s down at the sheriff’s department sitting in my daughter’s car. The other day she says, “Mother, we’re going to fix the battery on that and then we are going to go.” Okay, we worked the battery out.

The washing machine gives out on me; I got to buy a washer. I let my daughter wash the comforter and don’t even know if it had anything to do with it or not, but after the comforter it rinsed it and drain it. So we find out what it is, they want to charge us too much for an old washer, so I’m gonna buy a new washer. All right, so we go down to depot, we get the machine out, we get it all set together, turn the key on, know everything’s working. Nothing. We sit there; I try to think of everything that, you know, I know to do. Nothing. We take it apart, we put it back in, we go to Home Depot, we drive one of those rickety-rackety things that they’ve got there that you can’t half drive.

Come home, went to bed at twelve o’clock. I was laying in the bed, thinking, “What on Earth could have been wrong with that scooter?” My son was at the station and I couldn’t call him because he’s on duty on Monday night; he has to spend the night up there. I couldn’t call him to tell him what had happened. Laying there thinking he had shown me that there is a manual switch on there that if you want to push that thing without it being with the key, that you do this to it. Okay, I had to do this to it to get it
pushed over to the car. When my daughter picks it up on the lift to put it in, nobody took it off of manual. This is why it won’t work. I still haven’t got that proved yet, but I know that’s what it is! If I would have let the thing back down, put it back down, switch for electricity, the thing would have run. I thought about it at twelve o’clock at midnight. I get up, go to my daughter’s room. “Becky, Becky!” “What is it, Mother, what is it?” “Wake up, wake up. I know why the scooter won’t run.” “I don’t care why it won’t run.” I said, “Well I know.” And then I told her. She says, “You know, that’s exactly why it won’t run.”

CB: I bet you’re right.

CA: So that’s why the scooter wouldn’t run! So, that’s the story of the scooter. So it just seems like that I can’t get ahead. I mean it’s one step forward and two steps back—but that’s all—

*End of interview*