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Ruth Miller Weaver oral history interview by Connie J. Brown, October 30, 2003

Ruth Miller Weaver (Interviewee)
Connie J. Brown (Interviewer)

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Connie Brown: This is an interview with Ruth Miller Weaver, resident of Sulphur Springs, Florida, conducting in her home on 10-30-2003 [October 30, 2003] by C.J. Brown, graduate student in anthropology for the University of South Florida. Mrs. Weaver, thank you for letting us have this time with you and conduct this oral history; we really appreciate it and we look forward to putting it in our archive.

Ruth Weaver: You’re mighty welcome.

CB: Well, let’s start today with you giving me an idea about who you are and how you came to Sulphur Springs.

RW: Well, my father was in the real estate business, and we came to Florida in September of 1925. And when we reached Florida—it took eleven days back then. So then, when we reached Florida and we spent the night in Sulphur Springs, the first night, and I was four and a half years old and just run up and down those boards. And the fussy tourists did like me making so much noise and my mother said, “Listen that child has been tied up for eleven days.” (tape warps) And then my dad had (inaudible) two room cottage down on Tampa Bay in Fisher’s Pen, and so the next day we went there. We had no water; we had the lights, but no water. We had to use the community bathroom and we had to carry water to wash dishes and all.

And there was a terrible storm that year, in the fall, and the lumber mill over on Fourth Avenue caught on fire and the boards would go over the house and hit the bedrooms. I was so scared. But anyway, (inaudible) we were there I don’t remember how many years. But then my dad rented the home on Harper Street, and so it was just across the park. So we lived there till 1928, I guess. And then we moved out to—halfway between 6 Mile Creek [Road] in Mango and my dad rented a little grocery store there. And we lived there from 1928 to 1939. And I went to the 6 Mile Creek Baptist Church, had a lot of friends there.
But then when I married in July 3, in 1941, we rented for a few months but I wanted to buy. So I picked up Sunday’s paper and there was a little house in Sulphur Springs, 8410 Eighteenth Street. And we looked at it. It was furnished: four lots and a two-bedroom, one-bath house for $2,000, $250 down and $25 a month. Well, you could buy lots in Sulphur Springs then, $25 apiece. Who had the $25? We just didn’t. But anyway, we moved there in December 18 of forty-one [1941] and there—we had two daughters there and they both married there, and we lived there until my dad got sick in 1971. And then we sold that little house. We had put a fence around it and siding on it, we glassed in the front porch—I mean, it was a lovely little house. But my dad was sick, so we bought a trailer and moved out to 6 Mile Creek in January of seventy-one [1971].

And Sulphur Springs just had a lot of memories. My two children went there, I worked in the PTA, and there was a little grocery store on Waters Avenue. There was Randy’s and there was Gilbertson’s, and I worked in both of those stores. I worked for Randy’s a long time, and then they sold out and moved to Turkey Creek. So then the Gilbertsons had sold their store to Riker, Mr. and Mrs. Riker from Michigan. And I kind of went along with the store: when they’d sell it, I’d just be right in there, too. So that was the second person I worked for.

And we were robbed there one night, January 6 of—I can’t remember the year now. But we were robbed, and the man came in with the hat on and he put a stocking over his face as he was looking at me. I was behind the register, and Mrs. Riker was over in the corner putting up Jell-O and stuff, and Mr. Riker was behind the meat counter. Well, the man come in and put a gun on me and said, “This is a hold up.” It was almost six o’clock, and I always made a game out of life, I still do. I saw this man coming across—in front of the windows to come in, and he had a real white face and I thought, “Well, that man must have the flu. I bet he wants 666 [cold medication].” That’s what I thought. Well, anyway, when he came in he flicked that gun and said, “This is a hold up.” But it was so strange: he leaned against the bread case and took off his hat and pulled that stocking all the way down—and me looking at him. And then he put his hat back on and then he pulled the gun out.

Well, Mrs. Riker was over there and Mr. Riker was behind the meat case, and I couldn’t get that cash register open to save my life. I punched every button, I was so scared. So anyway, it finally opened; there was only $135.05 in there. But Mrs. Riker ran out the door and this man had his gun on me. He told me to go behind the meat counter and he went after Mrs. Riker and he hit her in the back of the head with this gun.

CB: Oh, my goodness.

RW: Well, he told me to lean up against this wall, a door facing, and when I leaned up there the sweat just pulled down, it just poured down. So, Mr. Riker, he was just petrified. Well, anyway, to make a long story short, Mrs. Riker had a dress like mine and you could see my house from the store and a friend of mine was there and she told my husband, she said, “Wilfred, hurry, Ruth has been hurt.” Well, see it wasn’t me; it was Mrs. Riker [that] was hurt.
Well, anyway, she got three numbers of that license plate on that car, but they never did find out who it was. Mrs. Riker went to the hospital, detectives came out there and they looked where I was standing. They said, “Mrs. Weaver, you must have got scared: you wet your pants—wet the floor.” I said, “No, that was sweat. Look at it, it’s running down the door frame.”

CB: Oh, my goodness.

RW: So, anyway, that was the end of that. The next day I said, “Well, I got to go back to work, because if I don’t I’ll never work again.” So, went back up there and then Riker sold it to another couple with children and all. And I worked for them for quite a while until I got a job at Charlie’s plant farm, and I worked the mail route on Sunday.

Let’s see. And then my oldest daughter got married at Trinity Church and my youngest daughter got married in the back yard. And one graduated from King [High School] and one from Chamberlin [High School] and they both were married there and we moved out to the country in seventy-one [1971]. I’m trying to think of how—well, my mind’s gone blank. But talking about Sulphur Springs—

CB: Well, let me ask you a question before we get away from that incident at the drugstore, or grocery store. For those of us that don’t know, you said he wanted—you thought he wanted 666?

RW: Uh-huh.

CB: What is that?

RW: That’s a medicine that we used to have years ago; you took it for everything.

CB: Oh, really?

RW: You know, just everything. My grandmother used to put three drops of 666 on a teaspoon of sugar and she took it for everything. And she just thought—you know, I though that’s what he wanted. I have always, always tried to make a game out of life. I mean, you could get stressed out if you don’t.

CB: For goodness’ sakes.

RW: Now, I was active in the PTA. See, both girls went there to Sulphur Springs [Elementary School], but then when Carol was in the second grade the dividing line changed and she had to go to Cahoon [Elementary School].

CB: Right, right. Okay, where did your family come from when you originally moved to Sulphur Springs when you were a little girl, and why?
RW: We came from Davenport, Iowa. Dr. Carnie told my mother that, “If you don’t get her out this bad weather”—I had bronchitis real bad—said, “If you don’t get her out of this bad weather, you will never raise her.” So my dad worked for the railroad and they had a strike in 1922, so him and a friend had come to Florida in twenty-four [1924] and, you know, looked at Sulphur Springs in Tampa and they just loved it. So then they came back and got Mama and I. And there were no houses to rent; if you wanted to live you have it built. So down at Fisher’s Pen, Daddy had this two-room cottage built.

CB: Oh, wow. So how many children are in your family? Are you an only child?

RW: Two. I have a sister that lives in Sapphire, North Carolina, and she’s ten years younger than me.

CB: So she was born down here?

RW: Uh-huh. Yeah.

CB: Okay, okay. And you said your dad was originally with a railroad, and then you said he went into real estate; is that pretty much what he did the rest of his time?

RW: No. See, the—you know, the boom—1929, the Wall Street—

CB: Right.

RW: Well, real estate went down the tube, too. So we had this little store there and that’s what we—and then my dad started driving the school bus in thirty-five [1935]. Times were rough then, I mean real rough.

CB: Well, and that was one of the questions I was going to go to. Tell me about what you can remember about the Depression, and how it was living here at that time.

RW: See, wages in the South weren’t near as good as they were in the North, and we—well, if it hadn’t been for the—now, this sounds terrible, but it’s true. The Ku Klux Klan, they got—they had a meeting over on Davis Island. That night my mother and dad went someplace, and I thought, “I wonder where they are going. They never go together.” Well, that’s where they went. And a friend of ours, Dr. W.J. Davis, he was in it. My mother and dad, I don’t think they ever joined it, but they went for this meeting. And then Dr. W.J. Davis—the Christmas after that wouldn’t have no Christmas at all. But he came out with a cardboard box with a chicken and some other things, and a red pocketbook for me and a stuffed chicken for my sister that they made in the WPA [Works Progress Administration] sewing rooms.

CB: Right. Oh, for goodness’ sake.

RW: And so—I mean it was really rough then. When I graduated from Brandon [High School] in 1940 my daddy couldn’t even give me a dollar to buy the class picture, it was
that bad. And then in that time my dad fell off the roof of the store and broke his hip, so he was in the veterans' hospital for months and months and months and months and months. And Mama and I was trying to keep afloat in this little store.

CB: Right.

RW: So, I mean, things were really rough. But you know, I guess it makes me appreciate what I’ve got now. I don’t have a whole lot. What you see, this is what I got, but it’s much better than I had when I was little. And you know, I’m kind of a person that if I’m not happy with what I’ve got, God will take it away from me. (both laugh) You better be happy with what you got, because you can lose it. Really, I’m not a real religious fanatic as you say, but in my life God has led me—

CB: Exactly, right. So did you—what were you doing during those Depression years from 1930 to 1940? You were in school, right?

RW: Yes, and I was going to school and then—you know, in the summertime if you could get a little job raking or pickin’ strawberries or something. I mean, I remember when we picked strawberries for a penny a quart. If you made seventy-five cents a day you were rich.

CB: Oh, my goodness.

RW: Yes, ma’am.

CB: And that all went to your mother to help pay for the groceries right?

RW: Oh, yeah. And then when my dad got out of the hospital he started driving a school bus: and that was $50 a month, and that was big money!

CB: Was it really?

RW:Yeah, $50 a month.

CB: So, you tell me that he built this first little house. Can you kind of describe what you want to of it, or where the location [was], everything about it?

RW: It was up on kind of like stilts, because the water was right there, and it was just a—nope, it wasn’t sealed inside, just two-by-fours and two rooms. Nothing: no sink, no cabinets, nothing, just two rooms. And we lived there, like I said, until we moved down on Harper Street. I started going to the Concord Baptist Church then because my dad was in real estate and he was gone every Sunday, that’s when he’d sell real estate, so she [her mother] and I would walk down to the Concord Baptist Center.

CB: So, did you buy the second house?
RW: No, we just rented it.

CB: Rented it, okay.

RW: I got to tell you something about that, one story brings another. One night we had been gone, Mama, Daddy and I. We parked our car over in the park, and we walked down about a block maybe. I was walking down and I saw Santa Claus going down this chimney—and it was on my side of the street—and said, “I don’t want to go home. I don’t want to go home. Santa Claus hasn’t got to our house yet.” My dad says, “Oh, I believe he has.” I said, “No, Daddy, he went to this one and he went to that one.” So anyway they kind of talked me out of standing out in the street waiting to see him go down our place. So when we went in the tree had candles—candle lit and everything. To this day, I don’t know how my mother and daddy managed that.

But while I was inside and I was looking out to see where he was, the Philips lived across the street and I saw him going down their chimney, but we didn’t have a chimney. So he must have went through—

CB: You were worried, weren’t you? (laughs)

RW: Kids are funny.

CB: So, tell me about this Christmas tree and the candles. That’s the first time that’s come up anywhere.

RW: See, German people—my mother and dad are German people, and we didn’t have electric. We had lights in the house, but you didn’t buy tree lights; they didn’t have any. So you had candles on each branch and you had to light them all each night, you know. And you know, we took like little tins, like Vienna sausage cans and stuff, and you cut around and round and round them and pulled it and then it made a little spiral, and you painted it and hung it on the tree. My grandkids think that’s just awful. We popped popcorn and we strung it and hung it on the tree. We bought green and red construction paper and made, I guess—you know, those—

CB: Chains.

RW: Chains, that’s it! Made chains and put that on the tree. That’s all we had. We didn’t have Christmas decorations; it was unheard of in those days.

CB: So, how did you celebrate Christmas?

RW: See, German people, Santa Claus decorates the tree on Christmas Eve. You might set your tree there, but no decorations go on it, and Santa Claus does all that.

CB: Oh. And when do the presents come? When he comes?
RW: The night before.

CB: Okay, okay.

RW: And then when we moved out to 6 Mile Creek, to that big house—we had a big house there, just rented that grocery store and that house and two acres of land for $35 a month. We had made a garden and my dad got pigs, and we had a cow. We didn’t realize we were poor. We had just a good time. My cousins, boy cousins, came down with us and so we got a baseball, you know, got to playing with the neighbor kids. They had a dog named Bum, and there’s three boys and me. Well, play ball, you know. Well, Bum wanted us all together, so he’d pull us by the seat of our pants and make us all four of us stand together. And Mama used to say, “Ruth, how did you tear out the seat of pants all the time?” I said, “Mama, that’s Bum. He pulled us all together.”

Oh, we used to have some—I feel sorry for the younger generation, they just don’t have the memories and the good times that we—you know. Now, Halloween, we all got together and had a big bonfire, and like you’d bring mustard and I’d bring ketchup; someone else would bring hotdogs, somebody else bring buns. And we’d get around this fire and have our party and tell ghost stories. Well, then nobody wanted to go home because everybody lived in different directions, and you couldn’t say, “Will you walk me home?” “Well, who would walk me back then?”

I tell you, I could reminisce forever; it’s so wonderful, life. You know, material things—I don’t have a lot of them, but you can’t take them with you.

CB: That’s right, that’s right. Well, so which house do you have the most special memories about? And what are some of those memories?

RW: I guess the big house at the store, out there in 6 Mile Creek. That’s where my sister was born, and that’s where I went a strawberry school to start with and then they changed it. A strawberry school—went to school not during strawberry season. November, December, and January I think was the three months.

So I went to Brandon School for second grade, second or third grade, and Dick Harris drove me. I think my dad paid him a dollar a week or something; a dollar a week was hard. I went to Brandon. Then Gillette School turned into a regular school, then I went to Gillette and I graduated from there; that’s the eighth grade. In 1935, in thirty-six [1936], I graduated from Benjamin Franklin, that was one year. Then I went to Brandon, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade. And then I graduated from there in 1940. And then I married in 1941 and moved to Sulphur Springs and had a whole new life.

CB: I’ll bet. What was Sulphur Springs like when you first moved there?

RW: It was a lovely—today I think the people today call them starter houses. Just a small community, everybody knew everybody. You never locked your doors; you walked back
and forth to Sulphur Springs all the time. You never thought about bad—it was a lovely place to raise children.

CB: Well, tell me how Sulphur Springs was laid out at that time and where your house was in relation to everything.

RW: Okay, Waters Avenue—I always called it the main part of Sulphur Springs, but the ones who lived over on River Cove, they called it the main part. But we lived on Waters and Eighteenth Street, and there was a railroad track there. And we moved, like I said, in December of forty-one [1941].

CB: So how did you meet your husband?

RW: We worked at the shipyard. I went to work at the shipyard before the war, and Wilfred was working there and he belonged to the paper—what do you call those people that did the bookwork? It had a funny name, paper-workers union or something like that, and my dad was the president of that union. I had quit working at the shipyard and I was working for a retired colonel over on Hyde Park Avenue. Well, I went to the union meeting just to get to see my dad; you know, you didn’t have telephones and all that stuff back then. So I would go to the union meeting to see my dad, and Wilfred was a member of that—I guess it was paper-workers union—and we met there.

CB: Oh, for goodness’ sakes.

RW: And we dated till the spring of forty-one [1941]. And then I went on a trip by bus, I had a bus ticket to Davenport, Iowa to see my grandparents and across to New York to see my aunt and uncle and cousins. And when I got back here Wilfred had a ring, had me a ring, and we got married July 3 then.

CB: So, tell me about getting married?

RW: Pardon?

CB: Tell me about getting married—or tell me about getting married. Was it a church wedding or was it done in the home?

RW: That’s another story. E.E. Laney was my history teacher in Brandon and his wife was my first grade teacher in Ybor School, but they weren’t married then.

CB: Right.

RW: So when we’d go out to play, Mr. Laney would (inaudible) so he would come and park and he would play with us. Joni Murray was her name, and his was E.E. Laney. So they were dating and us kids, we didn’t know what was going on, but he would be there everyday, as we would be playing. So then when I got into high school, Brandon High School and wanted to take American history, guess who my teacher was? E.E. Laney. I
said, “I can’t believe this.” So, then he was preaching at the Broadway Baptist Church. So when we were going to get married, I said, “I want to get married at the Broadway Baptist Church with E.E. Laney.” And he married us.

CB: How wonderful. Okay, so let’s go back to Sulphur Springs and how it was laid out. Kind of give me an idea of what was where. Any stores you remember or anything in particular?

RW: They had a theater down where that—there’s two streets that comes together in Sulphur Springs, and there was a theater there. And then we had the arcade across the street, and then over on this side was a lot of small businesses. Margaret Ann’s store was on the corner there of Bird [Street] and Nebraska [Avenue]. A lot of people on Saturday night would walk down to Sulphur Springs and the few people who drove their cars there would leave their doors open, and that’s where we had fellowship. We visited with everybody on Saturday night.

CB: Oh, my goodness. Okay.

RW: The Berkums, and just all of the names there again. And then Margaret Ann moved up on the corner of Waters and Nebraska, and then it was called Winn-Dixie—it was Winn-Dixie, then it had another name—no, they didn’t. They were behind the arcade there, they moved on Bird Street; it was another grocery store that was up on the corner.

You know, the medicine man used to come around to Sulphur Springs. He had a big oak tree on the corner of Waters and Nebraska, and the medicine man would come there with his show, you know, on the back of his truck. We’d all go up there to see him.

CB: Oh, my goodness.

RW: I had forgotten about that.

CB: So somebody said to me not long ago something about—I thought the dog track was always right where it was, but somebody said no, it was one place and then when they rebuilt it, they rebuilt it somewhere else?

RW: It’s always there.

CB: Oh, it’s been on that one spot?

RW: (murmurs in agreement)

RW: Okay, do you remember anything about the dog track?

RW: I’m not a gambler, and my husband isn’t either. But the night he was laid off from the shipyard he went to the dog track with some friends, you know, men he worked with. And he came and I said, “What did you do?” He said, “I lost $17.” I said, “Wilfred!” It
was 1945 when a dollar was a—but he just, he was laid off and he just—first and only
time he had done such a dumb stuff. Then he’d come home and then he went to Gaylord
Container Company and applied for a job there and he got it. He was making $1.41 an
hour at the shipyard, and when he went to work at Gaylord Container Company he was
making fifty cents an hour. So our lifestyle had to—

CB: Shrink.

RW: Shrink. And then I had used to work at the little stores. I worked at Red Scissors
coupon downtown. I used to pick up odd jobs to help, you know.

CB: Right.

RW: And then I ran a star route on Sunday for Ralph Calvin, who was real active there in
Sulphur Springs; she was a schoolteacher. And I worked at the little stores, too, and that
job with the star route got me into the post office. In 1963 David Malone lived across—
David Allen lived across the street and his sister needed a substitute carrier; they needed a
part-time carrier. So they called me and I said, “Yeah, I’ll try anything once.” That’s
what saved me. I didn’t make a lot of money the first year I was there because I just
worked a little bit, but then it worked into a full-time job. I been on rural route A, and I
worked for the post office for twenty-one and a half years.

CB: Really?

RW: I met so many lovely—I had four routes: eight, nine, two and three. And I met
lovely people on all of those routes.

CB: Oh, for goodness’ sakes. And you drove the mail truck? It was a rural route, you
said.

RW: It was my own car. The rural carriers have to use their own car. We got paid so
much a mile.

CB: Oh, my goodness. Okay, do you remember the train depot in Sulphur Springs?

RW: Oh, yes! I’ve carried bushels of fruit up there and mailed them up north lots of
times.

CB: Is that right?

RW: It was on—it’s on Busch [Boulevard]. I’ve lost my—yeah, Busch; it was right on
the corner there. I don’t think that was—was that called Busch back then?

CB: Was that Temple Terrace Highway?

RW: Temple Terrace Highway, I think that’s what it was.
CB: Because I’ve heard other people talk about Temple Terrace Highway.

RW: There was Temple Terrace Highway and then it turned into Busch. Yeah, I used to send my grandmother and grandfather a bushel of fruit every year, and I’d go there.

CB: Oh, wow. What do you remember about the trolley?

RW: Oh, gee, that was a lot of fun—a nickel—you could ride all the way to town, and if you got—you know, was real friendly with the conductor and you turn the seats back for him, he’ll let you ride all the way back for nothing! (both laugh)

CB: Well, where did you—since everybody seemed to be coming to Sulphur Springs on the trolley, where did you go to since you were coming from Sulphur Springs? Where did you go downtown?

RW: We went to downtown, you know, to pay bills. You know, you rode the streetcar down. The first washing machine I ever had I bought at Allied Appliance on Tampa Street, and the payment was fifty cents a week. So every Saturday I rode the streetcar downtown—it was a nickel—and pay on the washing machine, and paid on this and paid on that, and paid this and paid that and got on the streetcar and came home, and that’s what you did.

CB: Well you know, today people are paying their bill by computer, and of course I pay my bill by check. So you are telling me that people had to go in person to pay most of their bills?

RW: You didn’t have a checking account. Heavens, no.

CB: Okay.

RW: No, not in those days! When my husband went to work at Gaylord he made $14.85 knowing that was (inaudible). When we got married at the shipyard he made $14.85 a week.

CB: And they handed it to him in cash?

RW: And then he got a raise up $21.78, and then we had a baby and bought a car. (both laugh) Money went a long ways back then.

CB: And everything was in cash?

RW: Oh, yeah.

CB: So was your child born at home?
RW: No, both of them were born in St. Joe’s. Joan was—Dr. Constina delivered Joan in September of 1942. I stayed in the hospital a week and the doctor—it cost $50 for the doctor and $50 for the hospital. Four years later Carol was born and I forgot what Dr. Constina charged, but the hospital was way out of sight like $85 or something.

CB: Oh, my goodness.

RW: For five days.

CB: For five days, isn’t that amazing. Okay, and somebody told me there were boats in that area. Did you ever ride the boats from—let’s say from downtown to Sulphur Springs? Something about there were boats on that river.

RW: They were just family, you know, friends—if you had a boat you’d go up and down. There was no way you could get on a boat and ride to town, no. And the boat ramp was in the park, Lowry Park; right there was the boat ramp. I think they had one in Sulphur Springs behind the tourist things back there, too.

CB: Tell me about the pool.

RW: That was the bottomless pool.

CB: Oh, really?

RW: Oh, yes, there was no bottom to it. Back before we moved there—and I’m not going to tell you this for the truth, but everybody said it. Somebody out in North Tampa was a bootlegger, and they were about to catch him and he put a five-gallon thing of whiskey into the creek and it come up in Sulphur Springs pool. Now, I don’t know that, but that’s what was always said. So I don’t know if that’s true or not. But they had a big oak tree up there, and you used to get your bathing suit on and swing on the rope and swing out and jump in the pool, all in the pool. The streetcar barn, you know, where you sat and waited on was here, and the pool was right back there. Well, you just—I mean that was the whole world right there, that’s—and the show was across the street. What else did you need?

CB: At your age, was the pool more important to you or the arcade? Where did you do all your socializing?

RW: We socialized at church more. We went to the North Side Baptist Church and then it broke away to Trinity was closer to where we lived. My kids went to the pool and they went to the movies every Saturday, but I didn’t. I mean, I was more homemaker.

CB: Right, what about the skating rink? Especially as a young person?

RW: My kids liked that too, yeah. I used to go to the skating rink before I was married, it’s Sweetheart skating rink out on Broadway. But after I got married and had children, I
wasn’t into skating and dancing and all that stuff. I was trying to help my husband and make a living and raise my kids.

CB: What did your husband do?

RW: He worked at Gaylord Container Company, that’s a box factory down on Howard Avenue. He worked there for twenty-seven years and he retired in seventy-two [1972]. He died in ninety-four [1994], so he was retired twenty-two years. Would you believe that June 1 of next year I will be retired twenty years?

CB: Isn’t that amazing! Oh, that’s wonderful. So how did you—when you came back to Sulphur Springs in forty [1940], as you said, times were hard? How did you mostly get around: by car, walk, trolley?

RW: We walked. We walked.

CB: Lots of walking in Sulphur Springs?

RW: Yes, yes. You know, I’ll tell you, before television there was a man who had a show, just boxes in out in the lot—right across from school on Thirteenth Street and we’d walk up there, the girls and I. My husband always worked from three to eleven. So the girls and I, we’d walk up there and sit on those orange crates and watch the movie.

CB: Is that right?

RW: I don’t know who that was who sponsored that.

CB: It was like an outdoor movie?

RW: Yes, ma’am.

CB: Oh, was it free? Did you pay for it?

RW: Oh, yeah, it was just free. Just somebody there, I don’t remember who.

CB: How fantastic. Okay, let’s go back into, kind of, some of the home life. What was your favorite food growing up as a young person? Do you have special food memories when you first came to Sulphur Springs, or traditions in the family? Tell me about food.

RW: My favorite meal—and my kids’, too—was meatloaf and baked potato, and take the squash and cut them in two and put butter in them and bake them. But that was a meal, you know, meatloaf, baked potato and squash. But I don’t know, I love food, all kinds of food. So I really don’t have any. Now my mother, she used to take Spanish onions and boil them and she’d take them apart—take each apart and then she’d take hamburger, ground hamburger—browned hamburger in each one and pour tomato juice over the top and baked it. My kids today, they just love that.
CB: Isn’t that something.

RW: Really, I never had any particular—well, when we lived there, I had to figure a dollar a day for meat for the family, and so I’d always look forward to Margaret Ann sales when they’d have like three cans of Spam a dollar or three cans of corn beef at a dollar or something like that. And Randy’s store had fresh meat and she always got liver in on Thursday, so I always splurged and bought liver on Thursday, I could remember that.

CB: So tell me about eating during the Depression, what kind of things you ate?

RW: Well, I can remember I came home from school one day for lunch, and my sister was born then; she was a year or two old. I came home from school for lunch and my dad had boiled cabbage and a glass of water: that was my lunch. And I can remember going in and I said, “Well, I don’t like cabbage. I don’t want that because I don’t like cabbage.” He says, “When you get hungry enough you’ll eat it.”

So I thought, “Well, that’s it, I’m going to have this cabbage. I got to learn to eat it.” Now I love it. I love steamed cabbage. (inaudible) lived next door to me there on Eighteenth Street, and we used to get a head of green cabbage and we’ll slice it up and steam it, and she and I would sit up on the front steps eating green cabbage. We just loved it.

And then chicken backs, that was another thing. Down at Margaret Ann you could get large packets of chicken back and there’s no much meat on them, not much. We’d barbecue, put barbecue sauce and we’d cook them sit out on the front steps and eat chicken backs. And another thing was tomatoes. I used to go tomato picking sometimes and bring them back home, and Will and I would sit and eat tomatoes till—it’s funny how little things like that is such a pleasure to be together. And she and I are still friends.

CB: And that was going to be one of my questions. Do you have long-term acquaintances or friends that you still contact from Sulphur Springs?

RW: Oh, yes.

CB: And are these people from your childhood experiences there, or being a mother there? Where did you meet them, in other words?

RW: They bought the house next door to us in fifty-two [1952]. And she had two little boys and I had two little girls, and then she had another little boy; so she had three boys and I had two girls and they were raised up like brothers and sisters. Fought just like brothers and sisters. And we lived on a railroad track and Tommy, the oldest one, said something about me one time. I don’t really remember what Joan said he said, but Joan drug him down to the railroad track and stuffed his mouth full of sand. We was reminiscing over that not long ago. I said, “You know, wasn’t that awful?” I bet you he
said something about her mother and she wasn’t going to have it. She put sand—Tommy and Joan was reminiscing about that a while back. It seems so funny, little things that happen.

CB: So what, do you have other friends that you see at the reunion?

RW: Oh, yeah, Katie and Mary Wannamaker. And Susie and Bob, but I don’t know what their last name is; she’s a retired mail carrier, too. She was Mrs. Randy’s goddaughter. And the Hensel girls—gee, I saw them—I went to their dentist; the dentist was married to one of the Hensel girls. And let’s see, who else do I see? Howard Garrett, I saw him down there. And the Smiths used to live across the street from us and they all live up in Floral City now, but they come back. Betty, Betty Jean Smith said something to me at the reunion the other night; she said, “Do you know, Mrs. Weaver, I thank you for the way I am about having a house: neat but lived in.” And she said, “I think of you so often.” And I thought, wasn’t that a compliment?

CB: Yes, it was.

RW: Sure a compliment, and she said, “I think of you often.” I said, “Don’t call me Mrs. Weaver, call me Ruth or Nana.” Did you hear what they said? “We have too much respect for you.” I thought—and the McFarlin boys are the same way. We go up to Pappas’ [Restaurant] together about once or twice a year, and I go out there and see them a lot, and it’s Mrs. Weaver, Mrs. Weaver, Mrs. Weaver. It makes me feel so old. Why don’t you just say Nana or Ruth? “They got too much respect for you, Mrs. Weaver.”

CB: So tell me about the—I know your experience with the school was with your children there, but tell me about the teachers at the school?

RW: Had a good group of teachers. My kids loved everyone. We used to work in the Halloween carnival, you know, and all, and the maypole and all of that. We had nice teachers.

CB: Well, tell me about the maypole, because it’s not a holiday that they seem to celebrate today.

RW: No, they don’t.

CB: So tell us about that.

RW: Wasn’t that May 1? Yeah, that’s Carol’s birthday is May 1, so she was born on maypole day. You know they just had a pole out with ribbons on it, and you had to know what you were doing. The kids danced around the pole and when they got to the end of the ribbons there it was.

CB: Oh, for goodness’ sake.
RW: It was so pretty.

CB: And so talk about the Halloween carnival?

RW: Oh, that was—we built little booths out of wood, you know, and stuff. We’d have a fortuneteller and then apple—dunking for the apples. We’d have a hot dog booth. And then they had the parade of the costumes and whoever got the first prize and all. It was just like a big happy family. Sulphur Springs was so good—I mean, back in those days, I couldn’t have raised my children anywhere else that they turn out as well as they did.

Joan is a nurse, she’s been nursing I guess forty-something years; and Carol, she’s married to a older man and they live up in Greensborough and they’re in the mercantile business and she’s active with computers and all that stuff.

CB: Okay. Well, let’s turn to probably not as quite as fond of memories, maybe so, and that is: tell me about experiencing the war during that time there in Sulphur Springs? The war, World War II—

RW: You know, other than rationing and a few of our neighbors—two that I can remember went. The war seemed like it was in another—you know what I mean, it doesn’t seem like it was—well, I have to tell you this. My husband was thirty-something years old and [President Franklin] Roosevelt upped the age. Well, Wilfred was too old then. So then they lowered the age and he got his draft notice, and we read it as eight PM. So he worked that day at the shipyard and came home, we went to where he was supposed to be at the First National Bank building, and when we got there at eight PM there was nobody there. I said, “Wilfred, this doesn’t make sense.” He said, “What are we going to do?” I said, “Well I don’t know.”

Well, he knew Charlie Wall that was the head of the draft board; his daddy had cleaned rugs for them and they knew him. So we went out to their house while he was having a party, so Wilfred wouldn’t go in. He come back out and got into the car and we went home. Well, we stayed awake all night. We didn’t sleep because we thought, “What are they going to do with him?” The next morning he went down to the draft board, and he walked in and he started to tell the lady his story, and she said, “Oh, wait just a minute, Mr. Weaver. I have a deferment for you; I forgot to mail it.” She handed him a deferment, he came home, got his lunchbox, and went back to work at the shipyard. Same guy was a good (inaudible).

CB: So was he supposed to been there at eight AM?

RW: Eight AM, and I read it eight PM. But see, like I tell people, that’s the way it’s supposed to be.

CB: Oh, my goodness.
RW: But wasn’t that an awful chance? And then he was never drafted, see—I mean, the war was over in forty-five [1945] and Carol was born in forty-six [1946] and he worked for Gaylord’s by then. But wasn’t that strange, though?

CB: But it didn’t really affect your home life, then, as far as—

RW: No, no.

CB: I mean, other than the rationing?

RW: Well, I knew if he had to go away to the service I was going to have to go home because my—I mean go home to Mama’s with—we had the baby and all, and I sure didn’t want to be, and it just seemed like it was just in the cards that he didn’t have to go. And we paid $25 a month on that house. But we spent a lot on it: we had siding put on it, we had the front porch glassed in.

CB: Now, describe that house for me.

Part 1 ends; part 2 begins

CB: All right, so back to the house. It was crummy?

RW: It was just a little two bedroom and bath house, and Mr. Richardson—he used to be the bigwig in Sulphur Springs—he owned half of it. Well, he tore a house down and built this house out of that material. And the wood, the lumber, was so hard. You want to hang a picture up the wall, you hammer a nail, and the hammer would bounce and the nail wouldn’t go. That was the best lumber in that little old house you ever saw.

CB: Now, you rented it?

RW: Yeah. No, no, no.

CB: You bought it?

RW: Yeah, $250 down and $25 a month. And there was no garbage service then and we just dug a hole out in the backyard and buried it and filled it up and when that got full you dig another one and buried it, yeah.

CB: My goodness. And so what other utilities, did you have any?

RW: Tampa Electric; that bill would usually run five dollars and a half a month. Well, the water, I don’t remember—all I can tell you is I could take a $20 bill down to Whitehead’s Drug Store and pay all the utilities and have enough left for a piece of coconut cream pie and a cup of coffee. And this was Depression glass: you bought so many gallons of gas, you could get something or whatever. And right now—oh, I’ve been offered $35 for this a lot of times. I said, “No!”
CB: Oh, for goodness’ sake.

RW: I just have two, and one belongs to one daughter, one belongs to the other one. And that’s what they call this, Depression glass.

CB: That’s a cake plate. I have one like that my grandmother gave me, just identical to it. It’s rose-colored and—isn’t that pretty.

RW: Well, I got mine for Super (inaudible) gas, and I don’t know where you get them.

CB: Oh, heavens, that’s amazing. Okay, so tell me: you were a full-time mommy and you worked a lot, but were you involved in any clubs or organizations there in Sulphur Springs?

RW: No.

CB: Most of your work was with the church?

RW: The church and school. I worked in the PTA, and then I was the person that had to put the notice in the paper; they had a title but I can’t remember. I’m surprised I’m remembering as much as I am, because my memory, it’s getting—it fades!

CB: That’s because you have so much important—so many important things in it, right?

RW: I guess so.

CB: So did you have any hobbies? Or did you have hobbies that time?

RW: I used to sew. I made all my mother’s and sister’s clothes. My mother was very large, and she had a dropped shoulder and she couldn’t ever buy any clothes, and my sister never had a store-bought dress until she went to Hillsborough High School.

CB: Is that right?

RW: I made all of their clothes. I used to love to sew, but see, I can’t see that well now to thread a needle. And I just—I like my patio and then I like to travel, which I had enough money I could travel all the time. I’ve driven up Greensboro, North Carolina four times already.

CB: Is that right? Oh, my goodness. So, as a child, did you have any chores when you were growing up that were specifically yours?

RW: Oh, yes, I had the cows to feed—and see, we had this little store here, but there’s big pasture land around us. And my daddy—our cow, calves would go out in that pasture, and then I had to chase them in, you know, to feed them and all. And Mama used to put her face right up in there and she’d, “Oh, you smell so good, you smell so fresh.” I used
to couldn’t hardly wait till I got the cows in to where my mother would put her face up there and say “You smell so good.” It’s funny what little things mean so much.

CB: So did you as a result did you give your children chores? Did they get chores growing up?

RW: Yes, yes, yes, yes, ma’am. My kids will tell you that so much was their responsibility. And now, my oldest daughter was a good cook. I worked at Red Scissors Coupon Store, and I would ride the bus home at night. She was about fourteen, fourteen or fifteen, and I could walk in the door and dinner was ready to put on the table. Now, my youngest daughter cared nothing about cooking, nothing about yard work; now she’s the best cook and got a beautiful yard, so I don’t know.

CB: So what’s the biggest change you remember in Sulphur Springs as a young person, and then I’m going to ask you the same as an adult. As a young person, what was the biggest change you can remember in Sulphur Springs?

RW: See, like I tell you life was so—it just rocked along. I don’t know of any big change other than dividing Sulphur Springs: part had to go to King [High School] and part had to Chamberlin [High School]. Which that was a big deal back then, but really it was just a—it was just different. I was just happy there. I hated to have to move, but after I moved and I saw how bad it went downhill, I was glad I was out of it.

CB: Right, right. So did you have a family doctor? And was that family doctor in Sulphur Springs?

RW: No, my children’s doctor was Dr. Martin and he was over in Grand Central [Avenue]; it’s Kennedy [Boulevard] now, but Grand Central back then. And I don’t know if I even went to a doctor.

CB: And that’s where I was going is did you—

RW: Oh, Dr. Laferty over here on Busch Boulevard. My kids were little and I had been sick, coughing and everything. My dad called me up one day and he said, “You sound terrible.” I said, “Oh, I’m all right.” Well, him and Mama thought about it, and so he came and got me and took me to Dr. Laferty’s office. The kids were kind of big by then, like six and ten or something. And Dr. Laferty said, “You’ve got walking pneumonia. I’m going to put you in the hospital.” I said, “No, you can’t put me in the hospital. I’ve got two little kids at home, my husband works at night. I cannot go to the hospital. I don’t have any fever.” And you know what he said? He said, “There’s people die every day without fever.” I thought—well, so then he made me promise him I’d go home and lay on the couch and really have bed rest and watch the girls, you know, take care of them and all that stuff, so I did.

CB: So, that’s where I’m going with this. You didn’t have a need for much medical care. What did you do to keep yourself so healthy?
RW: Just eat good food, I guess, and [be] real active, you know—so many.

CB: Did you drink the sulfur water?

RW: Yeah, I guess we did. I mean the water—you know I can’t remember if we had—I don’t think we had a pump, they must have had water piped in up there then, because I don’t remember having a pump.

CB: Okay, what do you remember about the tourist club?

RW: See, I didn’t go there. I really can’t comment on the tourist club. Talking about water and stuff, my neighbor back of me, Mrs. Scott, she—let’s see now, there’s something about our wash water going out in the alley. Their street got sewer way before we did. So then, when I let my wash water run out in the alley, the health department came and said, “Well you can’t do that,” and I said, “Well, why can’t I? I’ve been doing it for years?” And he said, “Well, the germs—” something about the germs in the water or something. And I said, “Well, that ridiculous Mrs. Scott let her water run out of here till just a few months ago, and our germs were together.” Oh, I was just—my husband was so mad at me. He said I had to hook up to the sewage with my wash water and I said, “Well, I’m not going to.”

So he come by and he’d leave a tag on the door, you know, bring the tag or something. And Wilfred would say, “Ruth, we’ve got to hook up to the sewage.” I said, “We don’t have to hook up to the sewage. They got to prove to me that my germs are different than other people’s germs, and I’m not going to do it.” Well, we sold our house, and I never did hook up to the—the lady across the street was Mrs. Willis. She come over one day and she’d say, “You are stubborn, aren’t ya?” And I said, “Yes, ma’am, I’m German. I’m as stubborn as they come.” But if they could prove to me that my germs are—they’ve been going out there for twenty years. So anyways, that was the end of that story. We sold and moved and I still didn’t touch it. I was a bad girl, I guess.

CB: I think you were a lively girl. So what adults do you remember from your childhood that you think shaped who you are?

RW: Omar C. Mitchell, the principal of Gillette School, is one person who really had a lot of—whatever you want to call it. I just—he made me feel proud of myself. You know, if you take these young people today, they’ve got to have parents or friends or somebody make them feel—don’t make them feel like they’re just here, and they don’t know what to do.

And Mr. Mitchell, he called me his little secretary. I used to fill out all the report cards and everything, and I was only in the seventh or eighth grade. But, I mean, he made me feel important. And my dad used to say, “You’re my little secretary.” You know, dads today don’t do that. It gives you an inner peace when you know that you can do whatever you want to do. If you set your goal, you can do it. There’s only one thing that I haven’t
mastered, and that is I stutter. And it bothers me. I feel very self conscious about it, so I’ve never been able to get up in front of a group and talk.

CB: And I haven’t heard you stutter once! (both laugh)

RW: Well, sometimes I’m real bad.

CB: You’re doing pretty good, if you ask me. So what about the tourist camps? Did you remember anything about the—somebody said they brought the tin can tours?

RW: Oh, tin can tourists, yeah! Well you know what tin can tourists meant? It meant that you come down in those Model-T Fords, you know, and made out a tent and you camped on the side of the road, and that was just a name that they adopted.

A tin can tourist, I don’t think the Southern people appreciated them as much as they should have then, because they brought other ideas to here. I mean, better wages, and you know—I know when my dad—when we came down from Iowa in September—I got to tell you this story. It’s got nothing to do with Sulphur Springs. We had this car and we were riding along, and we got into Kentucky and there was a big tree across the road. See, there was no paved roads then; there was just clay wet roads. And this big tree was across the road. And my dad, he used bad words, and so these two men came out with guns on their shoulders and spitting tobacco. And my dad says, “Will you move the tree?” And he said, “Five dollars. Give me five dollars and we’ll move the tree.” So they moved the tree and we went through, and they put the tree back. See, that was their way of getting money from tourists.

So we went down the road and we got down into Georgia and we went down a thing like this, and across there was a creek and then it went back up like that. So when we got down there, we get on this raft, you know, with the thing on the back, and we got the car on there and the man said, “That will be five dollars.” And my dad didn’t have five dollars, he had twenty was the smallest he had. So he gave it to the man and my dad started fussing to Mama, he said, “I bet I’ll never see my change again.” And Mama said, “Now, Fred, you just wait. Now wait till we get over there and you said wait and see.” So we paddled over there and it started up the hill, and the man came out of the woods with the ten and the five and gave it to him.

And so we went on then and we stayed in—somewhere in Georgia, Forsyth, Georgia. And the garage was full of cars, so my dad had to park our car out on the street. It was a Saturday night, so the guy at the desk promised that they would watch out for it. And we went in, you know, in to bed. The next morning, we got up; we were having breakfast in the restaurant down the stairs. And Daddy looked out the window and our car was sitting right there and the little fly window was busted. Well, my dad got up and went out on the street, Sunday morning in Forsyth, Georgia—a very religious little town, very quiet back then. And my dad got up and cursing and swearing and all this stuff about the window being broke and they were supposed to watch the car and blah, blah, blah. And the police came up and said, “Mister, if you don’t shut your mouth, we are going to put you in jail.”
So I can’t remember now how they got it fixed, that part of the story I don’t remember. But I came back into the restaurant and sat down and finished his breakfast and all. And I know we didn’t leave right away because they fixed the window or something.

Then whenever we’d go back to Iowa, Mom would say, “Fred, don’t go through Forsyth, Georgia.” That was all on that eleven-day trip. Kentucky they got us for five dollars with the tree across the road. Down in Georgia we had to across—that was another five dollars. It was some experience, but I can remember when we got to the arcade in Sulphur Springs just like it was yesterday. I can remember that just—I was four in March and we came in September. I would have been five the next March.

CB: And that was what year? Nineteen—

RW: Twenty-five [1925]. I was born March 20, 1921.

CB: So how did you feel when they tore the arcade down?

RW: It just broke my heart, it really did. I just thought that should have been a historical thing, I think. Mave’s Five and Dime was there for years, and then we had a—a Jewish boy had a clothing store in there. And then Sanders’s Drug Store, and Whitehead’s Drug Store. I remember walking down to Whitehead’s Drug Store and it was just—it was family. You know, Mrs. Whitehead took your lights and water, phone and whatever bills you had, and then over here—you know, the girl that worked behind that lunch counter is working at Krispy Kreme, Tiny. I’m telling you, she’s eighty-four, I think, or eighty-five years old. And she’s working at Krispy Kreme on Florida and Waters.

CB: You’re kidding?

RW: I was in there the other day and she’s still in there, she’s still working. They don’t let her take money or anything, but she keeps the things filled. I think she works just part-time. Her name is Tiny. I wish you could go by there and see if she’s still working there. Tiny, and she was the girl at Whitehead’s Drug Store, she made all the salads and everything. And we’d go down there and get a lunch plate and have four different kinds of salad on a cracker.

CB: Oh, my goodness. Oh, my goodness. Have you ever heard of Jim Walters Homes?

RW: Oh, gosh, yes.

CB: Did you know Jim Walters?

RW: Yes, I did; the people across the street were friends of his. In fact, Julia Reedy worked with Jim when he had a used car lot over on Florida Avenue. Yeah, Jim Walters was over there to their house one day, drinking coffee; you know, he could show you (inaudible). He never carried any money. He couldn’t invite you to a cup of coffee in the
drugstore because he never had any money. He never carried any money. I used to laugh at him, I said, “Well, that’s one way of keeping it, if you don’t spend it.”

CB: And other one that several people have mentioned is Billy Graham, that they saw Billy Graham a lot.

RW: Now, let me tell you, my husband in 19—let me see, let me tell this straight. My husband and Billy Graham went to this Christian school, Temple Terrace Bible School, together. And Billy Graham would go to the Tampa—down to the Hillsborough River where those cypress knees are, and that’s where he practiced preaching. And my husband would be with him. And then at that time Billy had a street—what do you call, street—church, I guess, or whatever you wanted to call it. He would preach down on Franklin Street, and Wilfred would lead the singing. And then they had a program on the television over on—the first station that we had here was over in Pinellas County, it was Channel 36 or some number like that, and Wilfred used to sing and Billy would preach.

CB: Is that right? Oh, my goodness. So tell me more about your church activities. Obviously somebody was a singer?

RW: My husband was a singer, not me. I can’t carry a tune in a bucket with four handles. Now, Joan, the oldest girl, she can sing; and the youngest girl, she’s fifty-seven now, and she’s—she was just telling me on the phone a while ago that she’s going to Atlanta for four days for a music seminar.

CB: Wow. Oh, wow! Okay, I want to visit one more time the idea of health routines. Were there any particular health routines you did, either as a child or as a mother for your children? You know, why do you think everybody was so much healthier then?

RW: Don’t you think it’s a lot of insecticides and stuff they put on fruits and vegetables today? We never were sick, we just weren’t sick. Now, one time, we all four had the stomach flu. That was really—that was a trip! We all four was in the bathroom over the tub, up-chucking our—oh, we all were so sick, but you know a day or two and we got well. Now, my oldest daughter had scarlet fever when Carol was a baby, so I sent Carol out to Mama’s and we were quarantined. My husband could come in and out the back door to go to work, but Joan and I was—I couldn’t pay any bills. We couldn’t put any milk—back in those days, you got milk from a truck and you put the empty bottles out. Well, I couldn’t give him any bottles back. He could leave me milk every day, but I couldn’t.

CB: So what did you do with all those bottles?

RW: I just kept them until we was out of quarantine. And I want you to know they came around, too, boy, and checked.

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1 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.
CB: Is that right?

RW: Yeah, she was a lady at the time, kind of an elderly lady; I don’t remember her name. And she’d come and she’d put the sign on—“Quarantined,” out on the front door. And nobody could come in, nobody could go out. Wilfred could come in the back door and come out, but I could pay no money because money is the carrier of germs. Back then, that’s what they said, so I couldn’t pay anything. And the vegetable man would come by and I would holler out the window, “Leave me some of this,” whatever I wanted, you know, and then I would just write it down and I’ll pay you whenever I can.

CB: Oh, for goodness’ sakes.

RW: That’s when Joan had scarlet fever.

CB: Well, I know someone told me about taking, what, malaria shots when the dam broke. But I hadn’t heard about the other quarantines. And the dam broke in thirty-five [1935], so you wouldn’t have been there.²

RW: No, I wasn’t there.

CB: But I hadn’t heard about the quarantining, you know, being quarantined or anything like that.

RW: Yeah, I was quarantined, and we never did find out where Joan even got it from. I mean, it was nobody in school or nobody in the neighborhood.

CB: So it didn’t run through the town? It just happened to be you.

RW: No, no.

CB: Amazing. In years to come, when your great grandchildren are rummaging through the tapes and want to hear this, what do you want them to know about Sulphur Springs or your time living there?

RW: Well, I would like for them to know that, that was a very happy place, happy place to raise your family. There was no strife and no—everybody loved each other, and it was just a different world than what they know. The school activities and the church—I mean, the church was the main part of our life because we could walk there. And every fifth Monday of the month—there’s four months in the year that’s got a fifth Monday, and that’s the Monday that we had dinner on the grounds, and we’d all carry stuff. Nick Nuccio³, who was the county commissioner back then, he built us concrete tables on the

²The Tampa Electric Company’s dam actually broke in 1933, after heavy rain from a hurricane. It was located between present-day Fortieth and Fifty-sixth Streets in the Temple Crest neighborhood.

³Nick Nuccio also served two terms as mayor of Tampa, from 1956 to 1959 and 1963 to 1967.
side of the church with benches, and we had a little building with a sink and storage in it. And you looked forward to those—you know, to me a birthday and Christmas back then was a big occasion; you looked forward to it. But now they get something every day, birthday doesn’t mean anything, Christmas doesn’t seem to.

I mean, I just—I feel sorry for them that they don’t have the memories of the—see, my sister is a person that doesn’t have any memories, either. She’ll listen to me talking and she’ll say, “Ruth, I don’t remember all that.” It’s so strange. I can remember my mother said to me many, many, many years ago, she said, “Ruth, let me tell you one thing: People can take away your home, they can take away your car, they can take away everything you got, but they can’t take your memories. You’ve got them, and nobody can take them away from you.”

CB: That’s wonderful. So, is that church still standing today?

RW: Trinity, yes, ma’am. But it’s got eleven or twelve is all that’s there now. Joan went one night here a few months back and she said, “Mama, it’s—” you know, you kind of want to step back to where you used to go, or where you used to—you know how that is. She said, “Mama, it’s real sad.”

CB: What about the houses you’ve lived in, are they all still there? Are any of them still there?

RW: The one that we lived in on Eighteenth Street is still there. I go by it every once in a while, and it looks like a toy. It looks so little, you know. But we had some good times there, real good times.

CB: Well, what have I not touched on that you would like to comment on? You’ve had wonderful stories before we started this tape recorder, so—

RW: I can’t remember what I was telling. Oh, the robbery at the store was one.

CB: Right, yeah.

RW: That was Riker’s Store. That was a—I worked in that store during three owners. When this one sold it I went with it, this one sold it I went with it, this one sold it—I had gone to work at the post office. But that night was a real funny experience. It was ten minutes to six and I was getting off of work at six o’clock, and I looked out at the front window of the store and this man walked across. His face was white and I thought, “Well I bet he wants 666 or something.” I thought he had the flu or something. And he came in and looked at me, took his hat off for the lady at the end of the bread rack, pulled a stocking out of his pocket and put it over his face and put his hat back on.

And I thought—and he said, “This is a stickup.” He said, “I want your money out of the cash register.” Well, like I said, I punched every key in the book and nothing would
make—finally, I thought, “Now, Ruth, just calm down; you know how to get this cash register.” I opened it up and it was $135.05. Well, Mrs. Riker was over in the corner and she knew what was going on, so she run out the front door and he took the gun that he had on me and told me to go to the back. He hit her on the back of the head and I went to the back.

And Detective Mills was the one that came out—that’s another ironic story. He came out and he said, “You look like you wet your pants.” I said, “No, sir, that’s sweat; just look at the water running down here.” He said, “Boy you must have been scared.” And so then, that Detective Mills—I had befriended a schoolteacher of Joan’s. Her and her husband were having problems. She had adopted this little boy, and I said, “Well, you just come stay with us and we’ll see if we can help ya.” Well, she lost him, the child: welfare, whatever they had back then, came and got him and took him away. And guess who adopted him? That Detective Mills, he had—what did we call that little boy? I’ll have to ask Joan; Joan might remember.

But she lived with us about six or seven months. I was trying to help her to be able to adopt because she wanted children, but her and her husband—her husband was a manic-depressive, what we know of today. But we didn’t know what was wrong with him back then. So anyway, she divorced her husband and she lost—Wilfred just worshiped that kid. He was a little boy, he was real cute. Well, the child services came and got him, and I had all his clothes ready to go and everything. And later on she told me that Detective Mills adopted him. And when I was robbed at the store—

CB: Isn’t that amazing? Well, all right then, what would you want people to remember about you or your life? What would you like be made public knowledge about you or your life? Or what would you want them to remember about you?

RW: Just remember that I was hard working. I loved to work. I’ve got German in me and we just don’t give up, you just keep going. I would like to remember that I was a good mother and a good wife and I just liked to work. I’ll tell you what, I went to Trinity Baptist Church one night after bible school, and then you have graduation. And so I went one night down there, and this lady came up to me and she says, “Mrs. Weaver, I have so much respect for you.” I thought, “What have I done to warrant all this respect?” She said, “Raising those two children right, by yourself.”

I said, “Ma’am, I have a husband, but he works at night, three to eleven. So nobody ever sees him.” I said, “Well maybe that’s a compliment.” At least it lets my husband know that I’m not running around on him, because you thought I had respect raising these two girls all by myself. I said, “No, I have a husband.” She said, “Well we never—he never—” I said, “He works.” And back in those days at Gaylord Container was during the citrus season he worked three to eleven seven days a week during the orange and grapefruit season, you know, from June till about February or March, and he just worked. But it was funny how she said that, “I have so much respect for you.” I thought, “What have I done?”
I’ve just enjoyed life. I love people and I just enjoy life. I’m just happy with time. I love to travel, but that’s kind of expensive, so I go up to Greensboro, North Carolina. In fact, I’m leaving the fourth of December; this time I’m flying, and I won’t be back until the eighth of January. See, I have two girls, one daughter I have Thanksgiving with this year and Christmas this year. The next year I have Thanksgiving with this one and Christmas with that one.

CB: So you are still a very close family?

RW: Oh, yes, ma’am. Yeah, yeah. In fact, that was Joan just now. They’re working on her telephone system. She moved up to Hernando County and it’s a Sprint system, and she got a new modular home. Well, they have to come and put poles in and everything and she said that they were there. But they told her that she still wouldn’t have a phone when they leave because there’s something else that’s got to be done.

CB: Well, I have really enjoyed this. I greatly appreciate it, and I know that people that get to listen to this in the future are going to really be glad you gave me these few minutes.

RW: I’ve enjoyed it. I mean, probably when you leave I’ll think of a dozen other things I should have—“I should have told her this, I should have told her that.”

CB: Well, you keep notes and I’ll come back.

RW: Mrs. Randy, who had the Randy store. She always got fresh liver on Thursday; you know, we looked forward to Thursdays because we were having liver. Isn’t that funny how something like that is in your memory? You just do.

CB: I bet you remember what that liver tasted like, too?

RW: Yes: delicious, I’m telling you.

CB: All right. Thank you very much.

RW: Oh, you’re mighty welcome. Oh, we went up to (inaudible), New York to visit my cousin, and up in this little town, instead of parking against the curb they nose in, you know. Well, he was backing out and this car came around the corner and blew his horn, blew his horn. I wound the window down, I said, “What else did you get for Christmas?” And my cousin said, “Where did you get that from?” I said, “I don’t know.” What else did he get for Christmas each year when he’s using that horn? He said, “Ruth, I wish you’d write all these things out.” Old Charlie Weaver, the old man on the—he say, “You come up with some things.” I said, “You know what, Dick, if you gave me a piece of paper and pencil, I couldn’t think of one of them.” It’s just things that—what was one—Carol used one the other day and she said, “Mama, Granddaddy used to use this saying,” and I thought, “Yes, he did.” It’s funny how things stick with you. But I’m getting old now, and my memory’s failing me.
CB: I don’t think so. (both laugh)

*End of interview*