

**SARASOTA COUNTY WATER ATLAS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
NEW COLLEGE OF FLORIDA—FALL 2012**



Interview #1

Interview with: Deborah Harvey and Peter Stults
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A conversation about life on Cabbage Key, owned by the Stults family from 1944 to 1969, with additional comments about the family's arrival in Florida from Illinois

HARVEY: This is an advertisement for Useppa but here's Cabbage Key. And so it tells you the location of the island and this is the original sales brochure.

FISH: Oh wow, when's this from?

STULTS: From the late 30s

STULTS: This is actually what mom and dad got [showing a brochure of Cabbage Key, then known as Palmetto Key.] They purchased the island. The brochure was available back then, in '30s, '40s.

HARVEY: And then when they established an inn they called it "The Inn and Studio on Cabbage Key." So these were some of the early brochures and part of another one. These were just for interest's sake. I don't want to give this up, because I don't think I have another one. But this is the current...

FISH: So this is the current one?

HARVEY: This is the current Cabbage Key brochure

STULTS: Well this old yellowing one, that's from the '40s and '50s

FISH: Oh wow

HARVEY: These are the old ones. Historically, I was giving you the brochures of the purchase of the house, the original brochures to look at, and here is the current Cabbage Key and this is placemat used on the tables with some history- their history. We have a little longer history. Let's see if there's anything else that would be. I have some photos- one of the original signs. This was taken after Hurricane Charlie. This will show you where Cabbage Key is also. This was how you get to Pine Island by boat and there's Cabbage Key right there

FISH: Okay

STULTS: And you have to get to Cabbage Key by boat or by seaplane or amphibian. You can't drive a car

HARVEY: There's a lot of information if I can find where it is. This was our father. He was an artist.

STULTS: Is that the school boat?

HARVEY: Yup

STULTS: Show her that. I went to school on a school boat.

FISH: Really?

HARVEY: And our younger brother went there for three or four years ,more I think.

STULTS: I went there for one year. I was the eighth grade. It was one room and teacher, eight grades, Sixteen pupils.

HARVEY: Not a good photo but it's also of my family. If you see anything else in my collection of photos, Peter, that you think would be useful.

STULTS: Sure. I'd like to look at it.

STULTS: The first thing we handed you at the bottom here, I think you'll want to look at that because it shows what the other student did. It's the transcript of the interview that I participated in last year and it will show you what the other student was thinking about when she put it together... what she thought was interesting. I think she also tied it in with the photos we gave her.

HARVEY: I just threw away something I could have used. So this is the island currently. It has some of the cottages which are now used. This was a playhouse for the original owners' children and this was a caretaker's cottage. My mother and dad made them into housekeeping cottages. In the main house they could really feed no more than twenty-five at a time. Nowadays there are dollar bills all over the dining room walls. And the living room, our living room has become a bar that's just full of these dollar bills.

STULTS: I talked to the owner, Rob Wells, several years ago and the prior year he served seventy thousand meals. In the twenty-five years that we were there we didn't begin to serve that many.

HARVEY: and the kitchen has not been enlarged. It is the same kitchen, which is amazing.

STULTS: They have commercial equipment left, I think, by the original owners which is amazing that they can pump out as much food as they do. And here's a little article about the school.

FISH: Wow, that's a lot of information at once. I'm definitely going to ask a little bit more about the restaurant probably in a second interview. Some questions to start. So were you actually born in Florida? If not, can you tell me how or when your family ended up on Cabbage Key?

HARVEY: My mother went to school in Evanston, Illinois, with Lo and Gord Whitney who built a small resort at end of Longboat Key in the '30s. We came down to vacation occasionally at Whitney Beach and when my father had an illness in 1943 which required a lot of rest, we spent a year there. During that time, Mother and Dad went on a fishing trip to Charlotte Harbor and Pine Island Sound and saw Cabbage Key which at that time had been not been lived on for about five years. It was for sale. Whether it was because my father was an artist or whether it was just a whimsical idea, they thought it might be a great idea to buy this island. The tentative plan was that they could have an inn and Dad could teach painting to guests who came to vacation. With this idea in mind, they bought the island. The asking price was \$45,000 but they purchased it for \$25,000 which in today's world is just unbelievable.

FISH: And how long ago was this?

HARVEY: We came from the Chicago area in 1943 and they purchased Cabbage Key in 1944.

FISH: And how old were you?

HARVEY: I was fourteen, and Peter was twelve, I would imagine

STULTS: Eleven

HARVEY: Eleven. Our younger brother, Taylor, was seven. We all went to school in Sarasota for that first year while we lived on Longboat Key. When our parents purchased the island there was a problem because the only school I could go to was in Boca Grande. So it developed that I stayed with families in Sarasota and finished high school there. Eventually my brothers did the same thing. Peter had an interim period in Boca Grande and I don't remember whether Taylor did or not, but ultimately we all graduated from Sarasota High School.

FISH: So you said you stayed with families while you went to high school?

HARVEY: Yes

FISH: So did you just spend summers on the island?

HARVEY: Yes. It was very difficult to get to Boca Grande, and from there to Cabbage Key. It took almost a full day. I don't know if you want to know how we did that.

FISH: Sure.

HARVEY: There were two ways to go. One was to go down to Punta Gorda and walk quite a way with your suitcase to the Punta Gorda Fish Company where there were runboats which came down to the Pine Island Sound to first deliver ice and mail and items to the fish houses for the fishermen who live down there. And then on the return trip to Punta Gorda they would pick up all the fish that the fishermen had brought to the fish house. One of them was called Iris and one was called the Ray. I think there was a third boat, too. It took two to two and a half hours to get down to Cabbage Key

STULTS: Which is about twenty-five miles

HARVEY: It was a very long morning and I had to get up very early to catch the bus to get down to Punta Gorda. My mother and dad would see the boat coming and they'd get in our boat and come over and pick me up. It was about half a mile away. Is that right?

STULTS: About a mile

HARVEY: And it was a real focal point. The fish house was lived on by a man called Chief Joe Dewitt. He did not have a boat, but did business with the fishermen.

STULTS: And it wasn't attached to the land it was on pilings off land.

HARVEY: Yeah. There was a series of fish houses and I am not even sure how many, if any, exist now. But years ago a lot of them were burned down as a protest against the ban on net fishing. So that was one way we came down, and the other way was to get off the bus before you got to Punta Gorda at a little hole in the road called Murdock which is still pretty small, I think, and then again you had to walk down the road to a little shack where you could flag down the train which came from Tampa.

STULTS: It would stop for us

HARVEY: I don't understand how they did that. But the train was the only way we could get into Boca Grande. There was no bridge coming across. There was a ferry which cars could use. But the only way really to get to Boca Grande was by train and my parents knew I would be coming then. So they would come in by boat to Boca Grande to pick me up at the train

FISH: Oh wow

HARVEY: As well as groceries and mail.

FISH: The train?

HARVEY: Boca Grande. Which is still, you know, a very tiny town but much more upscale than it was at that time. But it was a resort for people who had money and had homes on the beach.

STULTS: And if we had more money we could have just flown on that every weekend. That's the amphibian- not ours. It was a commercial service that flew in guests

HARVEY: Gulf Airways, was it? And his name was Buddy Bobst. So he would bring us laundry and sometimes guests.

STULTS: The Sunday paper

FISH: So you weren't at Cabbage Key until you were fourteen, right? Can you tell me about an interesting memory you had from your first couple summers there. Or anything that particularly sticks out in your mind?

HARVEY: On Cabbage Key? Oh my. The first thing that jumped into my mind was at that time in the '40s there was no mosquito control on the island. I probably should describe what the place was like. There was a boathouse. There was a main house which was a U-shaped house. If I understand it was a Bermuda design and it was built on a hill about 30 feet high on a shell mound, so it was pretty well

protected from high tides- that was considered a good thing. There was a caretaker's cottage, a playhouse for the children of the previous owner, the builder of the house. I should go back and tell you about him I guess. I'll do that later. There was another cottage which was used for marine scientists who came to do work there, but it was used as a lab. That was an interesting project for the wife of the man who built the original house. His name was Alan Rinehart, and he was the son of the mystery writer Mary Roberts Rinehart who was well-known for years and years and from a publishing company family. So they bought the island in the '30s. The house was built, I think in '35 about that time and unfortunately they not only had illness in their family but Alan and Gratia Rinehart were divorced and she died. They really probably had one season there a very, very short time. So it just sat there furnished, with everything, curtains, draperies, blinds, silverware.

STULTS: Books in the library

HARVEY: Books in the library. I'm surprised they weren't mildewed when we got there. And the boat.. It was just sitting there so it was ready for the taking. They thought this would be a very unique and interesting change in their lives and they took us along for the ride. I'm thinking about the house. There were six primary bedrooms and two which were really for servants. They were off the kitchen and. how many fireplaces? We had fireplaces- maybe five, I think.

STULTS: No central heat

HARVEY: Oh no (laughs) No air-conditioning. No nothing. And so that's when we would come down and spend the summer. We had hot summers and my first story was we would be sent out, my brothers and I which were- do you know what sand spurs are?

FISH: A little bit. Can you explain?

HARVEY: They are awful. Because you can step on them and they can hurt and they don't come off your feet or your socks or anything. So we were pulling up sand spurs and we would be out working out in the heat and come into the house to get a drink of water or something and there our father would stand at the screen door and he had what we used to call a Flit gun. It sprayed DDT on us so that all those hordes of mosquitoes that followed us couldn't come into the house. We wore high necked shirts, long sleeved shirts, hats. So there it is 88, 90, 92 and we're out there all bundled up, long, long pants on, no shorts, no bikinis. So that was one thing we did when we were there. Now the island was an interesting place with 80 acres approximately. We had a jungle path. We had a water tower which stands, still. We had some skiffs, some small boats we could take out and go around the island. We had an oyster bar which was just off the island and just a short boat ride. We would just skiff over to the oyster bar and bring in oysters and my mother would fry them. It really was a very different kind of life. And they made it more exciting by doing things like making bouillabaisse out of local fish.

FISH: Bouillabaisse?

HARVEY: Bouillabaisse is a fish stew. You could put all kinds of things in it. Shrimp, different kinds of fish and local seafood. And we could make hearts of palm salad. You'd have to take a tree to do it, but that was not too bad on that acreage. So we had a lot of native things. We also could fish right from our dock. And we had talked in recent years about the lack of all the natural things that were there that are not so plentiful now. The fishing certainly isn't as much. Nellie Coleman, a fisherman's wife, was a neighbor on another island, Cayo Costa which was not too far away. She was a great help to mother and dad. But she was also a fisherman as was her husband. She would pull in nets in front of the island.

In fact, when you do see this you would see Nellie at work hauling in an abundant pile of fish. That's just not there nowadays. It's very puzzling and a little sad. We used to use fiddler crabs for bait to go fishing which were always crawling along the waterfront and I've never seen any in the recent years that we've been visiting. Did I cover enough of what we did?

FISH: So far. So can you tell me how long the house has been in your family? What happened to it after?

HARVEY: Yes, yes indeed. We bought it, we opened the inn in '44 and we had it until 1965.

STULTS: '69

HARVEY: '69 I'm sorry. It was 25 years. And then they sold it to, I don't recall well the people who bought it. But there were two owners between us and the current owners who have now had the island for maybe 35 years. Quite a long time. In the interim some of the property was sold as lots. So people built cottages. But the current owner who came in and really took it over has just done a marvelous job. Except that it's not a home any more. Now the long porches which connected the living room and dining room have been expanded and they are dining areas. I think I have mentioned the dollar bills on the wall and that the living room is now a bar. So it's not the same kind of getaway place that it was when mother and dad had it. It's still going strong. It's very, very popular. Folks come from Captiva and you just better hurry up and get your table when those boats come in. I remember seeing three or four people deep at the bar waiting for tables to have lunch. It's just quite a different place. The cottages that were built by other people have mostly been purchased by the owner and we've stayed in them on various visits. We were there last Thanksgiving for instance which was just great fun. So it's very different but it doesn't bother me. It's just that's what happened. And Cabbage Key is still a very unique place.

FISH: You said earlier you also mentioned you spent some time on Longboat Key?

HARVEY: Yes we lived at Whitney Beach which was at the north end. And at the time there was no bridge going over to Anna Maria. It was destroyed by the storm so we were isolated, really. And again as a fourteen-year-old I wanted to be social and this was impossible because it was also war time. We had blackouts, and we didn't have a car- we shared a car with the Whitneys and it was either a Crosley or another very small little car. They had four boys and there were three of us plus the parents. So we really didn't have a lot of access to do fun things, but it was a beautiful place. There were lots of activities there. You could play tennis. The beach eroded over the years and it's now a very narrow resort now by comparison. Not the same one that we knew.

STULTS: Tell her about getting to school through the strafing

HARVEY: I'm going to. So we went by school bus into town to, I don't know what ???

FISH: Was this also when you were in high school?

HARVEY: Yes. Talking about our year there. It was basically a long ten miles to get into town. As it was war time, there was a strafing range. The airport now was then an air base. And every day they would send planes over the middle of Longboat Key to strafe targets. If our school bus didn't get past this firing range at 3 o'clock, then we had to wait and it was an hour of strafing. For me this was horrible, because everybody was in 3rd grade. They were all younger than I was, I thought. And it was

terrible!

STULTS: Going to school they'd stop the planes from firing, remember?

HARVEY: I don't remember that. But that's-

STULTS: Oh yeah, because we had to get to school on time. They would radio the flight leader and tell them to circle.

HARVEY: We were never

STULTS: So we could go through. We were never held up

HARVEY: We weren't held up there but in the afternoon we could be and it happened fairly frequently. Sarasota was a small town and I think the population then was about 12,000. But it would jump up to about 25,000 during the season, and, of course it wasn't the place that it is now. We had the Players Theatre which was here, which is an old established theater. And lots of other cultural things – and the Ringling Museum. But I don't even remember how far it had been developed. I just went to school. The school bus went around St. Armand's circle. St. Armand's meant nothing to me really. I was much more interested in boys- and school. I wanted to go to school and be with my friends there but I never thought about the development of Sarasota except from the point of view that it was quite small. I lived in two homes. I lived on Main Street right across from the county courthouse. And there was a place called Smacks which was a popular place to go and a former elementary school was a teen center that's where I learned how to jitterbug! It was a very friendly small town. I thought Siesta Key was absolutely the boondocks. Nobody wanted to go there and I felt so sorry for a friend of mine who lived at Point of Rocks. We went to Lido because there was a very nice casino, and a good pool and a deep beach and beautiful white sand. And that was the beach to go to. So that was what we did.

FISH: So you went to Lido all year round?

HARVEY: Oh yeah. Just like now.

FISH: What was that like for you?

HARVEY: Oh wonderful. Great. The beach was again deeper as I recall. But again the beach changes over the years so you can't compare that really. But Lido was the place to go.

FISH: Did you usually go with your friends from school?

HARVEY: Oh yes, yes, And I don't know why some of our friends did have cars because there was gas rationing and it was very difficult but we certainly did get out there. There was a part of Lido Shores, just beyond St. Armand's Circle and full of very nice houses now. We used to go out there and there was nothing there, we would have picnics on New Pass. So a lot of what's all been developed now in Sarasota was just nothing. Just a nice beach and mangrove, or something like that. I was on the swim team and we'd practice at Lido. At one point they were repairing the pool and we had to swim in the bay. I remember it was cold and it was March I think and was not any fun at all to do that but I remember nights when we would go down to the beach and there'd be phosphorous. I haven't seen phosphorous recently.

STULTS: Do you want to describe the phosphorous in the water?

HARVEY: It's like white blue silver starbursts in the water.

FISH: Bioluminescence?

HARVEY: Some kind of luminescence, yes

FISH: There was actually some a couple weeks ago at the bay by New College.

HARVEY: Well that was called phosphorous and I haven't investigated it any further. But it was a great time for children to be in, a great place to go.

FISH: I can definitely use a lot of what you're telling me. It's really interesting. I want to ask some more questions about Cabbage Key again. So it was you, Peter, your younger brother and both your parents?

HARVEY: Yes, oh yes absolutely. After they sold Cabbage Key, they came back here to Sarasota and moved to Siesta and both were in their 90s when they passed away. My father continued his artwork originally when we moved here. He was so pleased because he had been in commercial art in Chicago had a very good business up there. But it was commercial art and he really wanted to do fine art, so the move allowed him to make that change. He spent full time being an artist except there at Cabbage Key. It was impossible because there were too many other things to do as an innkeeper. So he painted as much as he could down there and then was an innkeeper as well. They used to have boat dinners for our guests. They'd go out around the islands and in Charlotte Harbor and the Pine Island Sound and it was just a very easy kind of life for our guests. My mother was the cook and Nellie the fisherwoman came and would help her. We also had some students from Antioch College in Ohio who would come down occasionally on Antioch's work-study program and would be helpers although many of them thought it was meant to be a vacation. It was more fun not to work but they were helpful too. Did we talk about the schoolhouse?

FISH: Not much,

HARVEY: It was on another island near where this fish house was we mentioned. It was called Punta Blanca. I don't know if there were ever any more than 20 children

STULTS: Yeah

HARVEY: Classes went up to

STULTS: 8th grade

HARVEY: 8th grade. So then I think Peter was the only one in his class at one point and Peter and Taylor were from the island and the rest of the students were all fishermen's children who lived in the area and Joe Celec ran the school boat

STULTS: Mhm

HARVEY: Yes. This was a fishing community. And Joe would take what we would call the school boat

and he'd go around to all the islands for these children and would take them to the school. The teacher I remember was Lizzie Williams. I always pictured her as sort of a little square person.

STULTS: There's a picture of her in that

HARVEY: Is there a picture of her in there? But she must have ruled with a ruler. Not heavy-handed necessarily. Taylor is now retired but taught at Muskingum College in New Concord, Ohio, where he had a long and successful career as a professor of history. Peter was a very good businessman and worked for Eastman Kodak to begin with and other companies before moving back down here and starting a business of his own. And I married a naval officer so my life was- I never really had a career except as being a Navy wife and we traveled a lot around the world so I never had a chance to really sit down and put myself together and do something. The one-room school was, I think, very successful. After that school closed—it must have closed because Peter, did you go into Boca Grande too?

STULTS: mhm

HARVEY: There was a fast speed boat which went into Boca Grande and took them to school. But I'm not as privy to that period because I was too busy having fun in Sarasota. And we did come home. I don't recall coming home for Thanksgiving because that was really an impossible thing. You wouldn't have any time to be there at all. But we did come home at Christmas and in the summer.

STULTS: And Spring Break

HARVEY: Yeah- Spring because that was a longer period

FISH: How was living with the families in Sarasota?

HARVEY: I often wonder now how it was because they took in a new child and I think of that and wonder what kind of child I was. I must have been successful because I still maintained my friendship with those girls, those classmates of mine with whom I lived. So I must have done all right, but it was a different world. One thing that we learned, I think Peter and I both learned, is we became very reliant, self-reliant and I don't think anybody ever had to worry about me being a bad girl. I was always a good girl. I don't think we wanted to disappoint our parents and I think that they just for some reason trusted us to go off and be wonderful good people, so we were.

STULTS: They had no choice either.

HARVEY: No, they didn't have any choice but they also didn't agonize over it. And they didn't tell us to do this or do that or anything, they just had great expectations of us. When you're living on an island and your family does that, the whole dynamic of growing up creates an utterly different childhood. Mother used to say "why don't you bring some of your friends down for the weekend and have a house party, which was a wonderful idea but I would think 'who wants to go down to an island?' I wanted to go to the drugstore and drink cokes. Who would want to do that? Of course I did do that and the one friend I still have living who remembers her visits never stops talking about how she was on an aquaplane and she saw a big turtle come up in the water and how frightened she was. She also kept talking about what wonderful soup our mother made so, I can't think of anything bad that happened while I was living with other families. I think it very well prepared me for being a Navy wife where I

had to be flexible which-

STULTS: Do you remember about what they were paid?

HARVEY: No

STULTS: Fifty

FISH: So you said you were a Navy wife and left Florida for a while. What was it like coming back that many years later?

HARVEY: Oh well we came back as much as we could always to visit family. We made every effort to do that- we'd come down. I have four children and this was a place they really wanted to come to. We have two who live here now, so no question about coming down, especially to the island. We were living in Japan at the time my mother and dad sold the island and our children felt so helpless- they were really upset because their grandparents were selling the island and they weren't there to halt the sale. So that was tough- they hated to have that happen. But they came here whenever they could, whenever we could bring them, and still do.

FISH: Do you have anything else you would like to add?

HARVEY: Our stories are so many. I know that there are more. And not having a script it makes it difficult to go back and fill in the gaps.

STULTS: Do you want to glance at what you gave her before, those talks you've given?

HARVEY: Yes, where is it, where is it? Let me see where it is. On the bottom, there we go. Underneath that...

HARVEY: One concern was that we did have a couple of bad hurricanes. One was particularly bad and the only way we could be notified of hurricanes at that time was by a plane flying over the island. We didn't have a phone, I should have said that too. We did not have a phone and we generated our own electricity Here's a message from the Coast Guard saying there was a storm coming and they dropped a note. This message stated that a storm was coming and to prepare ourselves. They put it in a wooden box and it had yellow streamers so we could find it. It didn't always be we could find it, but the warning was maybe not adequate enough really. But we did have storms there. Also, thinking flying and dropping things from the air, I had a boyfriend who had a plane and he would fly over the island and drop me letters. And he would drop them in orange juice cans and maybe they'd land on the roof, and maybe I'd find it and maybe I wouldn't find it. But that was a unique thing. I feel as if I should tell Peter's story. My brother Peter lived in Boca Grande also to go to school when I was first in Sarasota. He lived with a family. One family he lived with was nothing but women, I think. And the

STULTS: Grandmother, mother, and three daughters

HARVEY: And he lived on the sleeping porch. He lived in a much more primitive way than I did. I had a bed. One thing about the island also is that we remember the fisher-people, the fishermen with great affection because we arrived and here's this family from the suburbs from Chicago. I had gone to dancing school. I had been down to see the ballet in Chicago and we lived an utterly different life. They must have watched us arrive and they didn't really jump in and say 'how can we help you' they sort of

sat back and watched us get acclimated and learn what to do. I remember so well one time coming to the fish house in our boat. We had been to Boca Grande to get groceries and you undoubtedly know you can't just put on the brakes. So my father put the boat into reverse too late and he wanted to stop and the boat kept going forward but he'd already thrown the rope over the piling. So he went forward and pulled the piling down. And all of these fishermen had to have been laughing, chuckling all the faulty things that they did.

STULTS: And the boat broke down

HARVEY: Yes, I was going to say that. But in fact they were more than generous with their help and care. I think they must have had a certain amount of affection for these crazy people who came down and bought this island. But there was, I have to say, also another story that I missed before. One of the fisherman's family was named Darna and during one of these bad storms that we had, it was dangerous. In fact, I think it was during this very very bad hurricane they were liable to be flooded and blown away. The Darnas were in our caretaker's house and while the father was taking care of boats Mrs. Darna and her children were sitting in the caretaker's cottage and they had a kerosene lamp. We didn't have any electricity and so mother went out to see how they were doing. The wind is howling and the rain falling y'know really bad. So she came to the house and knocked on the door and there's Mrs. Darna and she's reading the book to her children by the light of the kerosene lamp and was really happy to see that they seemed to be comfortable and happy with themselves. And she thought maybe they were reading the Bible. So she said to Mrs. Darna, 'what are you reading?' And Mrs D-- said *Dracula*. (laughs)

FISH: (laughs)

HARVEY: There is the wind blowing and howling and it was just the perfect setting for *Dracula*. So there were also little stories like that. What else?

STULTS: The eclipse

HARVEY: Yes. This is a story I didn't even know about until I read this, but our younger brother was going up in the water tower. If you go down to Cabbage you'd pass one of the landmarks. That is the original water tower which is amazing that it stood for so long all these years but Taylor went up into the water tower because he wanted to see an eclipse and he had a light with him too to shine and see where he was going.

STULTS: This was at midnight

HARVEY: Yes at night- an eclipse at night and so he was swinging the light around and I don't know how long it occurred that he eventually heard the sound of a boat coming up to the dock. It turned out that a fisherman had seen these lights swinging back and forth and thought maybe we were in trouble- that there was some problem at the house. And this is how generous those fishermen were. They came over, they got up at midnight and came over in their boats to see if they could help.

STULTS: We ended up being very close after several years- it took a few years

HARVEY: Yes. It took a while but there was a great affinity. There was another water tower story which is fictitious and that is that John McDonald who is a very famous author, was a friend of mother's and dad's and he wrote a book called *Where is Janice Gantry*. My parents sent it to me when

we lived in the Middle East and my husband was at sea. So I was home all by myself. I'm reading *Where is Janice Gantry* and the setting is very familiar, it's Florida. So the hero jumps off a boat which is being run by the villain and he swims to shore to get away from the villain and he sees a water tower. So he swims toward the water tower and crawls up on the beach and Jan and Larry Stults come down help him into the house and give him coffee and take care of him. It was about 2 o'clock in the morning while I was reading all this and I think 'My gosh that's my mother and father' and John MacDonald had a habit of writing friends into his stories occasionally and so this was mother and dad who sent me the book without telling me that they were in it. So that's another water tower story, I guess.

STULTS: That's a good one

HARVEY: Let me see if there's anything else. There's lots of lots of things that we're not even thinking about.

STULTS: Gail may have more questions if she takes this and reads it

HARVEY: Yes. If you do. I don't know how you put this all together.

FISH: Transcribe it all first

HARVEY: And then and try to sort it out

FISH: Yeah

STULTS: And this is from last year

HARVEY: So this will help too. Upside down page. How'd that happen (laugh) (shuffling). Also with the water tower. During this particular bad storm which was 1947 this hurricane, the wind was blowing the water, as if it were just blowing straight. And we had French doors and that just wasn't adequate enough to keep water out of the living room and dining room. So we were putting towels down at the door. I can't describe this well enough to you. There were sets of French doors on either side of the living room and dining room. And so we would get the water from one side in the towels and run back to the back side and wring them out on the porch that was out there, and run back and put the towels down again so they'd get more water. And sometime during the night somebody went to get a drink of water or run water for something and there wasn't any- no water. And our thought was that the water tower had blown down. And if you can imagine, no water. But what turned out was that apparently the circulation of the current of the wind apparently had just pulled the water out from the water tower and

STULTS: Six thousand gallons

HARVEY: Yeah- a huge amount of water

HARVEY: And then it was that was another water tower story that was very amazing. Oh we had chickens. I forgot to tell you. We had chickens. For a while we had guinea hens. We had mango trees.

STULTS: Muscovy ducks

HARVEY: Yes, we had ducks

STULTS: A pig

HARVEY: Ducks, chickens, Guinea hens, briefly. And then our younger brother was given a little pig for a present. The pig was penned but he would often get out from under and he would go eat mangoes and eventually the little pig became dinner. But my father was really really mad at the raccoons because the raccoons would come into the chicken yard and catch chickens. He was all right with them if they had eaten the chicken and taken it away. But they would just kill the chicken and leave the carcass there. So he decided he was going to get this raccoon. And we had our pump house and our electrical generator all out by the chicken house so many times he tried to catch this raccoon. One solution was to sit in the rocking chair in the pump house and tie a string to his toe and tie another string out the window to the carcass of the chicken.

STULTS: And hanging in the tree

HARVEY: Yes and then he had a shotgun and he was going to wait until the raccoon came to get the carcass and then he would shoot him. And it never worked. It was a Rube Goldberg sort of arrangement to try to get him. Somebody did kill a raccoon, I think a student, which really irritated my dad because that was his project. Trying to kill the raccoon. But we did get eggs and we did have chickens and they formed our meals so we could subsist very easily with fish.

STULTS: Lots and lots of fish

HARVEY: And chickens and the eggs and kitchen gardens didn't work very well. Lettuce and that sort of thing we didn't do very well. There was just a lot of available food right on the island. We could live a very comfortable life there- without much effort.

Interview # 2

Interview with: Debbie Stults
Date of Interview: October 24, 2012
Subject of Interview: Cabbage Key
Date of Transcription: October 31, 2012
Transcriber: Gail Fish

FISH: So if you could give a quick introduction of yourself.

HARVEY: My name's Deborah Harvey, my maiden name was Stults. I was born in Illinois but my family moved to Sarasota, to Longboat Key in 1943 while my dad recuperated from an illness. We lived at Whitney Beach. I was fourteen when we moved to Sarasota and the family moved to Cabbage Key in 1944.

FISH: And for my clarification, you mentioned Useppa, Boca Grande and Cabbage Key. Could you tell me what the relationship between Useppa and Cabbage Key is?

HARVEY: Cabbage Key sits in the water's between Cayo Costa Island part of which is now a State Park and on the east side was Useppa Island which is a resort which has been there for at least since the early 1900s. While I was in my teens it was not used, but now is very popular place and rather exclusive. Boca Grande was six miles north of Cabbage Key and that was the town where we got our mail, did our grocery shopping, and picked up guests who arrived by the train. Our guests could come by car on a ferry from Placida. There was no bridge to Boca Grande at the time.

FISH: I was a little confused at first how Useppa

HARVEY: Useppa was about half a mile from us and we could see it easily from our water tower. There's a long history of Useppa. If I had the material I think I'd be able to tell me more about it but I don't recall when it was built. There was a hotel and cottages, and I believe a small golf course. Now it's expanded and is quite an exclusive club.

FISH: So what were your mother and dad like when your family first moved to Cabbage Key?

HARVEY: As a teenager I think I just saw them as my mother and father. I think they were very ambitious and somewhat out of their minds to think they could move to an island with three children and somehow have us all go to school and survive, do well. They knew nothing about island living. They had been suburbanites in Evanston, north of Chicago so I would call them adventurers and trailblazers in a sense because there had never been an inn or a studio down there. It had been a private island and this was a new adventure so I would say that they were an adventurous couple.

FISH: Is this your dad right here?

HARVEY: That's my dad. Yes, he's wearing a beret which identifies him perhaps as an artist. He loved art and he was interested in it from a very early age and went to what was then Carnegie Tech and had a degree in fine arts. Would you like to know more about him?

FISH: A little bit.

HARVEY: He went to Chicago to work and began his career and was a commercial artist. And had a growing business down in Chicago he might have stayed there had he not become ill. And we had to move. But we had been down to Sarasota previously visiting family friends so that brought him down.

FISH: And what about your mother? How did she feel about the move?

HARVEY: I never asked her how she felt, but I think she was quite willing to start off on a new foot again. She had been busy in the suburbs, but it had been that sort of life. I think that she picked up on the doing something different, and followed right along and I think they both enjoyed their life there.

FISH: So you said they ran an inn. What actually was your role at the inn during the summers when you were at Cabbage Key?

HARVEY: The first thing I think about is that we were groundskeepers, my brothers and I. We would have to go outside, pull sand spurs, and do that sort of thing. Try to help maintain the island. The boys I think were busier on boats. I think I helped my mother in the kitchen, but we didn't have guests very much in the summer. We had tarpon fishermen in June sometimes but I think I helped as best I could there as a teenager

FISH: Right

HARVEY: I don't think I was expected to take a big role. But I tried my best.

FISH: And how did you interact with the guests? Are there any stories or situations that stand out?

HARVEY: Oh, I wish my younger brother were here because he's the one who interacted. I think we told you before that he went to the neighboring island to go to school, so he was there during the season. I was in Sarasota most of the time during the school year, which would be the season. My interaction when I was there, with the guests was, I think the type of people who came to the island were very relaxed people, sort of laid back people. They were artists, they were authors. And it was such a different kind of life. Everybody sort of melded together. There'd be a coffee pot on the stove in the morning. It was a very casual lifestyle. And there's a wonderful poem which is somewhere which sort of describes their feeling of shared enjoyment of being out, away from the business of their lives.

FISH: So, how would you describe Cabbage Key in the 40s- or now if you choose- to someone who's never visited?

HARVEY: In the 40s, when the house was bought, when the island was bought. The house was there. It was furnished, there was a boat, there was a caretaker's cottage. It was obviously meant as a getaway place for a family who had a fair amount of money. When my parents came and decided to have an inn, the atmosphere changed somewhat. We didn't have a phone when we first came we had none of the amenities which are there now. There wasn't any way to call people. We had to be notified by whatever way possible. Usually a plane if there was a major storm coming. It was a very very simple life and we had to make do a lot there because there wasn't a lot. And it was during the war as well. It was a very simple life. Now the house has been enlarged to accommodate more people for dining because that is what it is primarily, a restaurant. But there are now cottages where there weren't before. And I think there are at least five buildings that were not there when we were. The current owner's home, another private home, and other cottages beyond what my parents had. My parents made the island cottages

into housekeeping cottages so that we could accommodate about 25 people at a time and that was just about the amount of people who could come and stay we could accommodate.

FISH: So you mentioned planes. This is one of the pictures you gave me

HARVEY: Oh yes

FISH: What kind of plane is this? Is there a story behind this one?

HARVEY: Again, my brothers would be better to talk to about that, but Buddy Bobst came, I believe it was Gulf Airways. He flew in weekly to pick up laundry to take it back to Fort Myers. He brought newspapers, he brought gifts sometimes and he was a good source, an easy source, for getting people back and forth who wanted to travel that way from Fort Myers. I'm not sure how we called him before we had a phone. We finally got a ship-to-shore telephone and that may have been a big part of contacting him. But he was a very good friend and great helper especially carrying laundry back and forth was really good. He usually came once a week

FISH: Did you stay in touch with him a lot after your family moved away from the island?

HARVEY: I don't know whether they did or not. They probably did, because he was such a presence in the running of Cabbage Key, I don't have a good recollection about that.

FISH: You gave me another photo which was interesting but I wasn't sure what exactly was going. What can you tell me about this one

HARVEY: Alright. This one is actually my aunt and uncle and my brother and this is a

FISH: Sting ray?

HARVEY: I don't know why I wanted to call them manatee (laugh) the manta ray. A very large one. And somebody must have hooked it and brought it in the boat house. That's not a normal catch.

FISH: So, could you describe for me the water tower and give a little more background information for me?

HARVEY: Well the background of the water tower is historic with regards to Cabbage Key because the same water tower which was there when the house was built still remains. I'm sure it's been patched in some places but it's the same water tower. People liked to climb up at the steps that go up to the top and look across, you get a great view of the gulf and Useppa and other islands nearby. And on T-Shirts and on the menu which the island has, they always have a picture of the water tower, so it's sort of a symbol of Cabbage Key. The story that I remember most about it is not real, but fictional, and that is that John McDonald wrote a book called *Where is Janice Gantry?* The hero of this story at one point dives off a boat to get away from his pursuer and swims toward a water tower and he gets to the island where the water tower is located. He calls ashore and my parents, by name, come down and bring him up to the house and bring him a cup of coffee. So the water tower even got into popular fiction.

FISH: Did you ever climb up the water tower?

HARVEY: Oh, yes, that's the thing to do. I think there are 44 steps. I'm not remembering the number

of steps exactly but it's a something you do, when you go to the island. You climb up the water tower look around, survey the scene. It's a popular thing to do. We had a jungle trail which they still have so there are certain things that you just do.

FISH: I remember the last interview you told me a story about the hurricane in 1947, can you tell me again some of your recollections of that and what happened to the water tower?

HARVEY: Ah yes. It was, I don't know how high the winds were and I don't recall whether we were notified. We told you about the little wooden box with the yellow streamer which notified us. I don't recall whether we were notified by that means. But it was a large storm and during the night it went through the night, and during the night in our living and dining there were French doors. It seemed as if the rain was parallel to the ground. It blew and blew and it blew right through it seemed the French doors so we mopped up with towels, all the water that came in, trying to preserve, to save the floors. And then we would pick up a sodden towel and run to the back side of the living room or dining room and wring it out on the porch back there so that we were running back and forth trying to sop up all the water. And it was sometime during that night that somebody wanted a drink and turned on the water and there was no water. So we feared the very worst. We feared that the water tower had blown down. But in the morning we found that it was actually still standing and what we surmised was logically with the circular motion of the hurricane that the water had been pulled out by this circular motion of the storm. So after that it was a terrible job for cleaning up because the wind had blown all sorts of debris against the house so everything had to be scrubbed and cleaned and picked up

FISH: Yeah, I have a lot of family on the Gulf Coast so, heard a bunch of different hurricanes and similar stuff family had to go through

HARVEY: Well, we're fortunate here in Sarasota because there hasn't been a major storm for quite a while. There was a hurricane here in 1943 or 1944 where we were evacuated from Longboat Key. And we've been evacuated here in recent years but those have been "nothing" storms.

FISH: I remember in the last interview you talked a lot about the fishermen with your relationship with how helpful they were. Do you know what the role of fishermen today on the island is? Do stay in touch with them?

HARVEY: Oh, I wish I knew, I wish I knew. My feeling is and I'd like to check it out with somebody down there. But it seems to me that there is less fish. When we told you about Nellie and Arthur Coleman. Nellie who worked for mother and dad could put down a net and bring up all sorts of fish and you just don't see that kind of sea life and we used to have an oyster bar. You wouldn't even dream of eating oysters now. I fear that there is a lot of reduction in all that type of seafood that we used to have in those days but I can't give you a reason why. I'm sure there are experts that can tell you that this is actually true but it's my, our, gut feeling that there is so much less. So much less fish, and birds and natural things.

FISH: Along those same lines, what are some challenges you see for the future of Cabbage Key and of this area in general?

HARVEY: Well, the current owners are good conservationists and I think they will do their very best to keep the island as best they can. I don't think there can be a lot of growth there. The other islands are really very difficult to put houses on, so I don't think you'll see any population growth. The boat traffic is heavy because that's a wonderful thing to do, go up and down the intra-coastal waterway. I don't

know what the future would be. I never thought about wondering what would happen in the future. I think I was expecting Cabbage Key to just be there. Nowadays they go over to Pine Island to pick people up. They don't go to Boca Grande to do shopping or do anything of that sort. And I'm not sure but I think that the Wells children, there were two boys, I think they may have gone to school in Fort Myers. They may have gone to elementary school in Bokeelia. So that everything is more south of Cabbage Key. But I wish I knew what to tell you. I wish I had a picture. I hope that the area stays pristine and doesn't become clogged up. I can't imagine any development. That's the beauty of the place. It's isolated. Cabbage Key when we were there didn't have the traffic coming into the island because we didn't have a restaurant. We had an inn so it was really like a predecessor to a B&B if you will—very casual. And now we have tour boats coming up and dropping off and people will stand at the bar which was our living room, and they'll put dollar bills up on the wall which, again was not our home so there is a definite difference today from yesterday. It's an utterly different place but it's fun to go to.

FISH: So how often do you get to visit Cabbage Key nowadays?

HARVEY: Actually, we haven't been there for about a year. We were there last Thanksgiving. We rented one of their cottages, not one of the original cottages but it was a great family get-together. But as I say, it's different when you go into what was your living room and there's the bar. And the dining room is part of the dining complex but because there had been add-ons to the long porches, for dining, it's really much more of a restaurant that it is a place to stay.

FISH: Do you have any other comments or stories you want to share?

HARVEY: I think we mentioned previously that if we wanted to come home for the summer or for Christmas we had to either go to Boca Grande. By doing that we had to flag down a train or we could go to Punta Gorda and go to the Punta Gorda Fish Company and get the run boat which was a two hour bus ride down the waterway. I think we told you that the fish houses were where the fishermen took their fish. And our friend and the fish house owner, manager, Chief Joe DeWitt bought the fish from the fishermen and then they put it on the boats to take back up to Punta Gorda. Again we got mail that way from the runboat if anything was there. Any kind of packages. We would go home on that. So it was a dirty old boat. You'd sort of bounce along for two hours. But when they, my parents saw the boat from the island, they would come on over and get us. So it was a complicated kind of a trip, but it was one way to get the island. No guests ever came that way; it wasn't what guests would do. They would come by train or come by Buddy on his plane. To describe this better, they would come to the fish house and go down through the Pine Island Sound and stop at all the other fish houses there and leave ice, pick up fish and take it back to the fish company for processing. I don't know when they closed when they stopped doing it, but several years ago when there was a net ban on fishing, some disgruntled people destroyed fish houses. So this fish house was destroyed also, so it no longer exists, which is a shame.

FISH: So there's actually a photo archive online and this is one of them. It says from Cabbage Key. Do you know who this person is? Or is it a guest? Can you tell?

HARVEY: Well, it looks like my uncle. That looks like my uncle Hugh who was a doctor. The long porch was expanded. So this wall is still here, but this patio area is filled in—it's all patio now. And the porch itself was expanded too so they could include seating for, oh my goodness, at least fifty more people. Long tables. That may be more than fifty. They can handle a lot of people. Several years ago, when I asked, the kitchen used 800 pounds of potatoes, 700 pounds of cabbage, 1400 pounds of top quality ground beef, 450 pounds of shrimp and 300 pounds of fish.

FISH: Wow

HARVEY: Chefs make and sell fifty key lime pies and thirty mile high mud pies a week. And I suspect that that hasn't changed very much because the kitchen is still the same. It takes up the same space, they haven't expanded it. I'm sure that it's much more- the equipment is much, much better. I'm sure that the space in which the kitchen is located is the same as it was in the 40s so that's amazing. Let's see what else. They also told me at that time, that Cabbage Key serves 450 to 650 people a day during the season. And of course there were additional piers. Do you have a picture of the boat house?

FISH: I think so

HARVEY: In any event, the boat house was set separately. There were no other docks. Now there are piers.

FISH: Is this it?

HARVEY: There piers running out from the boat house which can take, I imagine, well depends on the size of the boat but they can handle 15-20 I think.

FISH: Oh wow

HARVEY: Small boats maybe. I don't know how they would handle but there are several piers jutting out from the boathouse and there's a dockmaster who helps now. So that's utterly different from our very quiet kind of life. Now where we used to have, I wonder if I told you before that we would have an island party that could make a bouillabaisse from local fish

FISH: Yeah, I was actually looking for the name of the soup, or the fish stew that you

HARVEY: Well whatever was caught. And we caught a lot of sheep's head and snapper and local very local fish there. ... But they were wonderful and my dad used to make drinks from coconut. He'd open up a coconut, one of our coconuts, and pour out the coconut milk and pour in rum or something like that and use a straw. I think we also told you we made heart of palm salad from cabbage palms so we had a really highly local native type of meal which was fun. Again it's just utterly different than hamburgers that they sell now. And the boat dinners we may have mentioned also, but they would have a turkey or ham, something large, and bread and pies and go out and look at the birds and boat around the islands.

FISH: Did you ever participate in that?

HARVEY: Do what?

FISH: Did you ever go on the boats when there were guests?

HARVEY: Oh yes, when I was there when there were guests yes. but that was a very popular thing to do and see the sunset. So it was a very lazy, laid back type of activity. No TV, and the library which we had was there when we came so more books were added. But that's what people did. Play bridge, play card games. We had a lot of games, and read books and it was just utterly different from today's really busy world. I wish I could think of anything we didn't talk about. Peter knew more about all the boat

things that were going on. You could rent one of the skiffs and go over to the Gulf and there was no time for- no specific, well they probably ate dinner at a certain time. But it was very casual, and the kind of thing that a lot of us like to do now. Not have to keep to a schedule. So that would be the comparison between Cabbage Key then and now when it's so full, so bustling, so full of people. I'm sure I told you we had chickens, ducks and geese – not geese, guinea hens, and a pig. What else can I say? I'm sure we told you that many people believe that Jimmy Buffet wrote *Cheeseburger in Paradise* there.