

Oral History Project
New College of Florida -- Fall 2017
Interview with: Dr. Freeman Epes
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Interviewer: Emily Lovett

E. Lovett: Okay. So this is Emily Lovett, it's November 4th and I'm interviewing Freeman Epes. Would you mind introducing yourself a little bit... your name, where you're from?

F. Epes: I don't have a middle name, my name is Freeman Epes, and I'm from a very small town in Virginia... Blackstone, Virginia between Petersburg and Farmville. And I went to school at Blackstone. I went to college in Hampton City, which is an-- it's still an all-male school, one of the few left-- and then I went to the medical college of Virginia to get my doctor's degree.

E. Lovett: Okay. And you're not from Sarasota, you're from Virginia.

F. Epes: Yep. I worked my way south from Virginia. I trained in Georgia, then I came to Florida.

E. Lovett: Oh, so you were just making your way down, just slowly going south! Um, can you describe a little bit where you grew up?

F. Epes: It was a small town, maybe 5,000 people. Everybody knew everybody else... half the people were kin to each other and-and you better not do anything because once you-- once anybody saw you, they reported to your parents, and the same with grownups! If they ever did anything bad as far as criminal, they might as well leave town because they can never live there anymore.

E. Lovett: That's true... small towns. And how long have you lived in Sarasota?

F. Epes: I came here in 1959. So it must be 50, no close to 60... 57, 58.

E. Lovett: So you've been here for a while!

F. Epes: Yeah.

E. Lovett: What was your family like?

F. Epes: Well, I had one brother and two sisters, and I'm the oldest. I-my sister two years younger than me, Jacqueline, a brother four years younger than her, Peter, and a sister two years

younger than Peter, Alice. And Alice is married to a dentist, Peter is a college professor, or was I think he retired this year. He got his PhD in Germany in several German universities and he taught German, but he noticed his classes were getting smaller, German. There were a lot of Spanish people and they were getting bigger, so he went to Mexico two years and to Spain one year to... before he left he was teaching Spanish and German both. And my oldest sister was married to a teacher. She lives in Lexington, Virginia. That's where VMI and Washington Lee University are, if you've ever heard of either one of them.

E. Lovett: And your parents?

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F. Epes: My father was born in this town [Blackstone], but my mother was born in Danville, Virginia. His grandfather started the first fertilizer factory. They call it Guanicom in Blackstone. And he learned it there and went to Richmond and had his own fertilizer company.

E. Lovett: It's a long history in Virginia! What made you move to Sarasota?

F. Epes: Well... I was very lucky. When I finished my training in Atlanta-- it was Grady Hospital, a charity hospital-- the chief had recommended me to a doctor there, I would be good to work, he thought I'd be good for him. And so I was working with this doctor in Atlanta, and you know these pharmaceutical detail men that call... I was friendly with the man and one day he came by and said, "I'm gonna say goodbye to you, Dr Epes. I'm going to go to Sarasota. The detail man there is going to start a drugstore." So I said goodbye to him, I didn't think any more and in about a month or so, he said the drugstore he started is on Siesta Key and there's a vacant space next to it, and they don't have a doctor. And he said, "You should call John Davidson"... Are you familiar with Davidson Drugs here in town? No? So it's a chain of several drug stores, one in Siesta Key, one in town. So anyway I came down and met him, and I was lucky. And of course Siesta Key is a great place to live and practice, the people were very nice. Lot of writers and artists and authors and... it was sort of like an artist colony. It was less than 500 permanent residents, and that was before the condos. There were no condos. Yeah, they didn't come until in the 60s. A fellow by the name of I. Z. Mann, who must be some big, rich fellow from Miami, he was building them in Miami and he was sort of... he brought them to Sarasota. There were no... you could ride down Siesta Key and Longboat Key and look at the water. There was no... on Longboat Key there was even less dense, it was very few homes, two restaurants, the... Far Horizons and Colony Beach on the water just before... there's a village on the north end of the key called Long Beach, and there's a place in that called the Buccaneer, the way that it's drafted in pirate. And the kids all loved that. And they had just finished widening 41 from Bradenton to Sarasota, and they were starting to do it from Sarasota to Venice and... it actually caused a lot of accidents at night.

When I came here, I was the 50th doctor. I know there's five or six hundred now. And they didn't have emergency room physicians, so for your privileges at the hospital, certain days of month you had to be on call to the emergency room... and I had a lot of people getting hurt at night where they were widening 41. Luckily I was busy. In fact, believe it or not after the first two years, no new doctors were coming to Sarasota, so few that I had to volunteer for another two years. But luckily I had gotten busy and the other doctors wanted to work there to get the practice.

E. Lovett: And I... actually you mentioned some authors and artists... I did see that the person who referred you mentioned that you knew, let me see if I can find the name... MacKinlay Kantor?

F. Epes: Yeah, he wrote *Andersonville*.

E. Lovett: Yeah, can you tell me a little bit about him and how you met him and how you knew him?

F. Epes: Well all-all those were at the Beach Club. Have you been to Siesta Key? Well, have you been to the Beach Club? Well, it's nothing like it used to be. The people that were there wouldn't even recognize it. It was a small... it had a fireplace, people would be cooking fish in the fireplace and all of these artists hung out there... artists and writers and everything. And a fellow by the name of John Z. Clark ran it and he was... quite a drinker. And people couldn't understand why he didn't hurt his liver and when I'd check it, it'd be normal and he told me "That's because I drink nothing but" oh, what was it... "Sigamsville." He was quite a guy. He used to give a birthday party for all of these artists. It was just sort of a... hang out for them all. And he had parties and from there they'd go and have other parties. I know I was coming from my office late one night and one of those artists says, "Epes, come over to my house, we're going to have a spaghetti and marijuana party!"

E. Lovett: That's so specific! That's such a specific party.

F. Epes: And they used to... Siesta has what they call the Grand Canal, the main canal, and a lot of canals off of that. And one of them lived on the Grand Canal, and every Sunday they would get either in rafts or tubes and start at his house and have all that eats and drinks. And the tide would take them in and when the tide turned and brought them back, that was the end of the party.

E. Lovett: That's amazing. And so you met a lot of the artists who were at the Beach Club and participating in these parties. Can you tell me a little bit about a few of the specific ones you knew?

F. Epes: Well, John McDonald, he was quite... he wrote this thing about Travis McGee, but he wrote a book called Condominium. He was quite an environmentalist, and he knew a lot about geology. And in Condominium, it was quite controversial, he slammed these real estate people that were building substandard things and doing shady deals and the names of this guy. In fact I think my wife had it over here... it may be around here somewhere. What book is that called? Does that say Condominium?

E. Lovett: Let's see... yes!

F. Epes: Yep. And he... and by reading it, he disguises, you know the Beach Club because the way he describes it, and you know the people. And he calls Siesta Key, Fiddler Key, but you know exactly what was going on back then. And it ends with a hurricane. And all the time he's telling, "You're over-building, you're... and this is a result of you not paying attention to the environment." I don't know whether this is a good story to tell about him or not. He had an American Express card and, he kept getting... he owed a lot that he knew he never charged, so he called and wrote them. And finally he was at one of those restaurants on Longboat Key, one of them was a pretty fancy restaurant, entertaining people, and I guess the credit card people can put a notice out to take somebody's card if they don't pay the bill. They took his card, so that made him so mad he got a lawyer and sued American Express. And they said to him, they didn't want to come to Sarasota, "What would you want for you and your lawyer (he had this lawyer in town who was unbelievably good) to come to New York?" "Well," he said. "We'd like a suite of rooms in the Waldorf Astoria, we'd like tickets to all the shows, we'd like a chauffeured limousine." And he, in the meantime, had found out that American Express had a room, one fellow was in it, and they did send out these bogus bills-- and most people just gave up and paid it. And so he and this lawyer, they'd meet with high powered Wall Street lawyers and they would curse them and say, "We're gonna wipe your floor with you, we're gonna do this and that." And they realized they couldn't, you know they told them they'd discovered this and they realized they couldn't cope with them, so they brought in these public relations people and they settled them, and they couldn't reveal the sum. Sean McDonald couldn't write a book about it and... what was the other thing? They had three stipulations.

E. Lovett: And we talked about it a little bit, because you mentioned with the Beach Club and the expanding of 41 and the lack of condos... how has Sarasota changed since you've been here? Or what do you feel like have been the biggest changes?

F. Epes: Well, these condos are just becoming overpowering. I mean it's terrible. Downtown, have you been downtown? They've built them, you can't even see anything. And in medicine it's changed too because, see I practiced at a charity hospital and I practiced before Medicare and Medicaid, so you just did what you thought was the right thing for the patient. But now they've got so many rules and regulations, HMOs and this, doctor's are spending half of the time doing paperwork. That's one reason I retired and went to work in the Senior Friendship Center. It was... the rules and regulations were... for instance have you ever heard of OSHA... O-S-H-A... don't know what it stands for but they, it was designed for safety rules in big factories and not for doctor's offices, but over on the East coast, dentists gave three or four people AIDS, and they had some of the people who, to testify in Congress. I know this because an OSHA man was a patient of mine in the office, and I'd ask him why in the world did they bring OSHA into the doctor's office. He said it was the stupidest thing Congress ever did. They had some hysterical people up there testifying. no scientific basis at all and just on the basis of their hysterical testimonies they... it was one rule after the other: What I could do in the lab? What I could do here? I had to have a book... somebody went, this all had to be on book, if somebody went to the bathroom and drank liquid soap, what to do.

E. Lovett: What do you do?

F. Epes: It was so many rules. I was glad to stop practicing, and I feel bad for the doctor's now.

E. Lovett: When did you retire?

F. Epes: About five years ago. Then I worked in the Senior Facility, you know with the Senior Friendship Center. That's the people who gave me that award. They look after people that can't afford doctors, and they have everything: they have the dentist and they have all the specialists and everything. And the good thing is, you can do like I did when I first started practicing, you can do what you think is right for the patient, not to satisfy all these rules and HMOs.

E. Lovett: And can you talk a little bit about the award you received recently?

F. Epes: It's-well I'll show you, see...

E. Lovett: Oh, I see it! It's the circular one?

F. Epes: Yeah, it's in that very top thing... It was for my service, which to me was a privilege. I enjoyed it.

E. Lovett: And I also wanted to ask what you do for the community, but obviously you do a lot... you got an award. Are there any other ways you're involved in the Sarasota community?

F. Epes: No. Like I said, I was in the Rotary Club, but they have a rule that they practically brow-beat you to be there every time, and I couldn't be there every time. Even if you were going on vacation, they'd want you to go to a Rotary Club, even in Europe! And see I was busy, I was doing everything, surgery and OB, and I just couldn't keep it up.

E. Lovett: And do you want to go from whatever you prepared?

F. Epes: Let's see... Oh, I don't know whether I told you, but there weren't any emergency room physicians so we had to—yeah I told you about that. So believe it or not, not enough came so we had to volunteer a second time. And I made a lot... people expected to have house calls. You know, no one will make house calls now. And I was the first doctor on Siesta Key, and I would make a house call, and the people at that house would say, "Can you see our neighbor?" Or somebody else. So sometimes the people they told me to see were worse, much worse off than them. One had been a lady who'd fallen and broken her hip, and she'd been lying on the floor for days. And one was a man who was actually bleeding to death, coughing up blood. He had an ulcer. So some... and you got some surprises too. One night, I was coming back from a house call on Royal Palm Harbor, that's on Midnight Pass Road right near the Catholic Church, and this is before Siesta Isles was made, this is all... it's a lot of canals now, but it was a vacant field, and it was a dirt road that went from Midnight Pass Road to Beach Road. And I'd go all the way down to the stoplight and short cut. So I went flying down Beach Road, and all of a sudden a cop pulls up behind me. And I speeded up, and he speeded up, and I slowed down, and he slowed down and I... He had no flashing lights or sirens, but definitely following me, so I knew. I turned into Palm Island, which is a dead end. I knew if he turned into Palm Island, he was definitely. I stopped, and he jumps out of his car and runs up and says, "How do you get to the Tamiami Trail?" He was lost in the middle of the night. So you run across some strange things!

E. Lovett: Yeah... wow!

F. Epes: That's about all of that... And I think I told you, the fellow who brought the condos here was named I.Z., I.Z. Mann. I think the 'I' stands for Irvin. And the population has at least doubled since then. Let's see. They were finishing 41 from Bradenton to Sarasota, they were working on 41 from Sarasota to Venice, which was causing all sorts of accidents. They'd just built the new bridge from Longboat Key to Ana Maria. The old one got washed away, I think by a hurricane. You know, there's only one hurricane that has hit Sarasota, and that was in 1921. I wasn't here in 1921, but it washed everything away over Siesta Key, Longboat Key. But before that, Longboat Key, believe it or not, people homesteaded there, and they had farms and they raised chickens and vegetables, papaya, mangos, hogs. And they would build a fence from the Gulf to the Bay so that animals couldn't get into the gardens. But after that hurricane, most of them all left. And a fellow... Burns, I can't think of Burns's first name, but there's Burns Court...

he was in with Ringling. There was a big land boom right after that in Florida, people were selling land that wasn't really... people got jipped. The land wasn't what they said it was. In fact they say that people were walking down Main Street with deeds in their pockets and selling land right on the street. And just, they were jipping people. So this fellow Burns was buying up these farmers because Ringling wanted to develop Longboat Key. I think they got most of the south end, you know that's where Country Club Shores. He actually built a Ritz Carlton Hotel there. You know where the Chart House is? Just as you go across the bridge from Lido, it's right on the left. Well, that's where the Ringling hotel was, the Ritz Carlton. But a few people got killed messing around there, young people, and I think most of them fell down the elevator shaft. So Arvida... the reason Arvida is in on all of this is because Ringling lost all of his money. And so he must've bought all that land that he had and developed Country Club Shores and the golf course and everything, and all of those things on the south end of Longboat. And I have a friend who lived on the north end of Longboat Key, in fact they call it Land's End, and he was planning on having a fish camp. And he'd just built a lot of docks for people to come in, and when they built that new bridge, they must've dredged up a lot of sand or something. All of the sand came in and filled up his docks and everything.

E. Lovett: That's just a nightmare!

F. Epes: I think that's about all of that. Oh, also they were making-41 used to come right down through town. They made the bayfront 41, and then they dredged up, have you been to Island Park? It's a whole island they dredged to make, and that's where O'Leary's is now. And then they put in all of these fancy docks. It was called Marina Mar, but evidently that fellow wasn't doing too well so Jack Reim took over, and now it's called Marina Jack. It's a big-nice restaurant, two story restaurant... okay that's all of that.

And... we had population more than doubled. The Orange Blossom Hotel was the highest structure, it's about a block away from the waterfront. And it was good if you were on your boat, offshore on a boat, you could see that and know where you should head to get back in. Because if you're headed from that, you'll come right in. You see, there's Longboat Pass between Longboat and Ana Maria, and Big Pass between Lido and Siesta, and then Midnight Pass was down by the field. It's a big controversy about that. I was told at first that a hurricane... these keys are not like the islands in the Caribbean that are volcanic; they're... when Florida was underwater, and they started getting out of the water, it was made up of all the water and the debris, the sludge washed down the rivers. So the keys aren't solid. So all up and down here passes have been. So much water gets in the way, and it can't get out, so it makes a pass. But there was... on Siesta Key there was a place called... what was it called? Siesta Inn now, but it was a fellow called Captain Frank Roberts had shore dinners there, and people would come by boat. And his father came over years ago, and his mother was named Ocean Roberts because she was born coming across the ocean. Then he must've sold it to Mrs. Devise. He was a charter boat

captain when I knew him. And I would, on Sunday, I would take my two kids down and let him tell stories. And he says “It was not a hurricane.” He said, “My relatives were digging sand and selling it. And if they dug too much in, they would stop them.” And they were digging where Midnight Pass is now, and they had dug quite a bit in towards the Gulf and, you know, on the east coast, the strong winds are northeast, over here it’s southwestward. And a strong southwest wind came in, and they were having a party there and they go, “Let’s take our shovel and dig a little trench.” And that’s what he says caused Midnight Pass... Let’s see. Orange Blossom Hotel, I talked about that. It was a hotel, and then it was apartments and now it’s a condo... Orange Blossom, and it was used as a beacon...

I always had a sailboat until... I started with a small one and got bigger and bigger until finally my last one was a 38-foot. But when my kids, my two boys, got to be teenagers, they didn’t want, they didn’t like a sailboat. It was too peaceful, so we had to have one that was more for water skiing. And that’s when I sold it. And you can do what they call bareboat chartering. I did it in the Bahamas and the Virgin Islands. You tell them what food you want and what drinks you want, and they provision it, and you just fly down. And it’s actually cheaper than owning a big boat, because you know with the insurance and everything. And you don’t waste time sailing there, you’re already there. And you don’t have to worry about provisions, about getting ready or cleaning it up when you get back, you just step on it and step off. It’s called bareboat chartering.

There were two theaters: one called the Ritz on the first block of Main Street after Five Points, and one called Florida Theater. The Ritz went out of business, the Florida Theater is now the Opera. And when the Seaboard Coast Railroad merged with the Atlantic Coastline Railroad there was... they had a station on Lemon right downtown, you know where, oh, what’s the name of that restaurant? It starts with an M... Mattison’s is? That’s where it was. When they merged, they used the ----- station of the Atlantic Coastline which is ---- in the Main Street. And now there is... at first it was a restaurant, but now it’s a big, tall professional building, mostly doctors, right down at Main Street at the Seaboard. Oh, and then the next thing that happened, the Ringling brothers had been here for years and years, and they moved to Venice. They moved right near the airport in Venice. And I think I told you there were no condos on... there was a little village on the end of Longboat called Long Beach... I think there was a restaurant called something-stone, Moore Stone, and not only were there a lot of authors and artists and writers, but there were a lot of famous architects. Have you ever heard of the Sarasota School of Architecture? Yeah.

E. Lovett: Yeah, my dad’s an architect...

F. Epes: Oh yeah, then he’d be interested in that then. The first one-they consider Ralph Twitchell the granddaddy or the dean of the rest of them, but there’s Ericson, there’s the guy that did the high school, well there are so many famous architects. And the buildings they built are

prized... some of them were built before air conditioning, so they built them to take advantage of breezes and things. There's the cocoon house and the umbrella house and they're famous houses of the Sarasota School of Architecture. Somewhere around here I have a book about that.

E. Lovett: And it was Long Beach that was the little village?

F. Epes: Yeah.

E. Lovett: When was that?

F. Epes: Oh, that was there when I came. Long Beach, a little small village on the north end, on the Bay side... on the Bay side. The little camp I was telling you about that my friend had, called Land's End, was on the Gulf side. Oh, and Ralph Twitchell was the first one, and he hired a lot of them when they first came. And his son, Colin Twitchell, built my office on Siesta Key. Like I said, I was lucky to come here, I was lucky to meet John Davidson because the two of us built the Siesta Key shopping center for his drugstore and my office. And... I think I told you about Tony Wilcox's Sarasota engineering firm down on the Trail, that he invented things. Here, I'll show you. It used to be everybody's hip had to be pinned. These artificial hips are new. I remember the first person to do it around here was in St. Petersburg, and he came down to give us a talk in Sarasota Medical Society. But here's the femur, and here's the trochara going into the joints here. And this angle isn't the same in every-it's a struggle. So a friend of mine, an orthopedic surgeon, used to ----- Illious Constantinu, went to see Tony Wilcox's and told him the problem and he invented the Wilcox-Constantinou hip pin, which once you got it in-I'll show you-you could adjust it. He-the same time that Twitchell was building my office, he was building Mark Wilcox's house at the end of the key, and his wife was making so many crazy suggestions. She wanted to have the pool come under the house and come up in the bedroom so she could jump in the bedroom! And finally he said, Twitchell said to Mark, he says, "Please send Jane to Europe for a month or so so we can finish this house!" There was one other thing south of here... do you know where Osprey is? Yeah. They built something called Florida Land, and it had a little bit of porpoises, a little bit of Western territory, a little bit of every, all the different types of things in Florida and put it in one thing. And they would take people from Marina Jack down by boat and that was a big hotel, a big hotel. You often wonder, "why is that so big?" when you go to Osprey. They built it for Florida Land, but it... Florida Land didn't last. All of the attractions of Florida they tried to put a little bit into this one.

E. Lovett: Did you get to go to Florida Land? How'd you like it?

F. Epes: It was interesting, it was... it had shoot outs. It had everything.

E. Lovett: I did hear about-they had shoot outs. It's like the um wild west type thing, shoot outs like staged shoot outs... so I did hear about that. It's so interesting though.

F. Epes: Yeah, it was like I said, a little bit of everything. A little bit of Silver Springs, it really was quite a thing.

E. Lovett: And you had your own practice in Sarasota as well?

F. Epes: My what?

E. Lovett: Your own doctor's office in Sarasota?

F. Epes: Yeah, it was- I told you John Davidson and I built it, the Siesta Plaza. And we built offices and we built stores, but it was a drugstore for him and an office for me. My other office was so small that by the time I got the x-ray, the labs, the rooms in there, my waiting room was so small that people had to sit in their cars, and when they saw somebody leave, then they would get up and go in.

E. Lovett: So your new office was a little bit bigger? People could actually come inside!

F. Epes: Yeah. Luckily we had trains that passed, so my mother used to come down from Virginia, and I'd meet her right in the Main Street. The passenger train and Bird Key... have you ever seen the aerial photographs of Bird Key? It's probably-I'll show you in one of those books. You know, Bird Key is a big, huge residential section. Well, and it was just a little split of land, and the end was a little island with a big mansion. I think it belonged to one of the Ringlings. And it was going to be Warren G. Harding's White House, like a White House away, like Truman had a White House in Key West, but it didn't turn out. But that's the reason they named all of those streets on Lido names: Washington, Jefferson, Cleveland all of those, because they thought that was going to be Warren G. Harding's headquarters.

And... I told you about the Roberts having the restaurant on Robert's Point Road, it's named after them, but the lady that ran it was called Mrs. Deville. And she had, the rooms were super small. I mean, some of them weren't any bigger than from here to that thing over there. And some of them didn't even have doors, they just pulled curtains across. She had a group of people that stayed with her every winter, and the same group when the summer came, or the spring came, went up to, oh what's it's name... I'm trying to think of the name of it. Georgia... Georgia Bay, it's in upstate New York... Lake George! You ever heard of Lake George? It's supposed to be... I've been there. So she had the same people from one to the other, the same old people. She had a captive audience. She... and I told you about the Beach Club, how the artists were-oh and the bridge to Ringling, it was about a year or two fight because people didn't want a tall bridge.

And some multi-millionaire on Bird Key, all of the people working in his factory, he was having them protested if they had anything to do with it. And it made the bridge cost twice as much as it should've, but anyway it finally got built. And Siesta Key had a new bridge and the sister... you know Siesta Key has the Siesta Drive Bridge and the Stickney Point Bridge... the Stickney Point Bridge was hand operated. The bridge down there, a man and his wife would come out there and would put a big thing, like a nut, into the bottom of the bridge, and then they would put this thing and they would walk around and around to open the bridge. That bridge is a regular bridge now, a drawbridge, but the bridge from Osprey to Manasota Key, I mean Casey Key, it still swings like that, but it's motor operated.

E. Lovett: Yeah. So someone doesn't have to go crank it every time...

F. Epes: It was unbelievable! There were no condos on Siesta Key, there were two co-ops, Siesta Royale and Jamaica Royale, and then they made those condos. Evidently the condo has an advantage. The thing I know, in a condo you just own the building... no, I'm sorry a co-op, you just own the building, a condo you own the land under it. But I don't know what the advantage is. It seems to be that condos are better than co-ops. I don't know the technical thing of it. So all of those condos started going up, and I had patients who were like president of the condo, and they had so many old people in there complaining about this, that, and the other, they would tell me, "I look around to make sure there's nobody there before I leave in the morning." And several of them I had to treat for high blood pressure because they were being harassed. That's one thing nice about this building... this floor is the only floor of residents, all of the other ones are commercial. So it's only 16 or 18, and it's mostly younger people, so they're... so it's not like those condos. And I think I told you, a lot of the houses were built before air conditioning and the mosquito problem is also... They had planes, I think it's DDT, and these huge tank trucks came around spraying at night. That was in the summertime, it wasn't that bad in the winter. But, one reason I didn't want to go below Venice, anything below Venice, Ft. Myers and Naples, they were terrible all year round, so I definitely didn't want to go lower than Venice. Venice had an interesting thing called the Kentucky Military Academy, have you ever been to Venice?

E. Lovett: I went just north of Venice... Nokomis area.

F. Epes: Oh, yeah. That was called... horse and chase. Because... I don't know why it looked like that. See, all of Florida at one time was bigger cattle than Texas. And they were taken down to Ft. Myers and put on boats. But what made Venice was the union of all the locomotive engineers that decided that they'd have a place there. And that Kentucky Military thing was interesting. They went to... in the wintertime they came down here, and then the rest of the year they were in Kentucky. Several of those boys at the military school down there, Riverside Military Academy, had a home in Gainesville, Georgia, or in Ft. Lauderdale. Now on Siesta Key, not only was there no air conditioning and the mosquitos, but everybody had pumps. The water

had a sulfur smell, so it was pumped up into an aerator, and would sit there in the aerator to get the sulfur smell out, and then from the aerator it was taken into the house. And there was a man who was a real entrepreneur, Mr. Archibald. He made a water factory on Palm Island. And the central part of the key, where my office was and the village is, all had Archibald water. It was John's drugstore, my office, and then his wife and her sister ran the petticoat. And her husband, the wife's husband, I mean her sister's husband, Mr Archibald's brother-in-law, rode around on a motor scooter reading the water meters.

E. Lovett: I had heard about the Archibalds a little bit!

F. Epes: Yeah... they were here long before. In fact that hurricane that came across everything, that's the only hurricane that's come across in 1921... according to him, he got into a second story window in a boat. And he was a pretty big talker. There's a thing in the Presbyterian Catechism that... how does it go? "God is the final authority on all matters living or dead." There's nothing you could mention that he didn't know about. He would come into my office and say, "This is a -----, now take it out!" He had water going. But even before that, they'd been here forever. At the end of Ocean-yeah at the end of Ocean Blvd, you come out, he had a bath house there. He was quite a... There was another family here, the Whipples, William and Esther Whipple. They had the first hotel, the Gulf View Hotel. It's now been torn down because it was wooden, and made into the Gulf View Condos. And he owned all the property. In fact, you notice a lot of streets that have Spanish names? They named those, William and Esther. I understand, I don't have the right understanding of Spanish, that some of them don't have the right spelling, whether you notice that or not. You know, he owned all the property from State Point Road, from the Gulf to the Bay, all the motels, all of the businesses, and he would come around and collect every month with a fellow named Penn Mercer. He was the first person to run the Siesta Key Marine, and he comes round to collect the rent. And Penn Mercer says to Mr. Whipple, "You already collected the rent." "Are you sure?" He said, "Yeah." And he starts pulling checks out of his pockets, "Oh, here it is!" He and Archibald were kind of like... Finally when they put water in everybody's, and I had the school engineer in my office one day, he had a bad cold, and I told him what his problem was, but anyway he was telling me that they wanted to incorporate Archibald's water plant into the school, but Archibald had done such crazy things that they couldn't figure out what he did! And the Whipples were the same way, the doctor that went to his house, anytime you wanted something you ran a pipe, you ran a wire, something it was in code. He practically had to have the house demolished to get it in code. Both of them, they were kind of two of a kind.

E. Lovett: Very eccentric?

F. Epes: At first I didn't have anybody to help me because my office was so small. And then once I got in the big building, at one time I had two or three people working with, but that's

when I was able to... My cousin knew somebody in the cruise business, and I was what they call a 'relief doctor.' Always in the Caribbean and Bahamas cruise line, if somebody gets hurt, or some death in the family, and I'd go over to Miami for a week or two. So I got to go to all of the islands in the Caribbean, and in the wintertime they moved all of their boats up to New York and up through the St Lawrence waterway and down to Quebec and Montreal. That was actually a better trip than most because nobody got seasick on these waterways.

E. Lovett: That's nice!

F. Epes: Yeah, and let's see... I told you about cooking fish in the fireplace in the beach club and the hand-operated-and the two co-ops and the Royale in the spring and the Archibalds and the Whipples, they were two characters. When I first started practicing, every summer they had to close the theaters because of polio.

E. Lovett: Because of what?

F. Epes: Polio, polio. In 1960 I think it was, Sabine invented the oral polio vaccine, so that was a big improvement.

E. Lovett: I actually wanted to talk about a little bit of the historical events and how they, like how you've seen them in Sarasota. Especially in the 60s, you know the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, and how you've seen them in Sarasota in your time here, and how you experienced them.

F. Epes: You know, between 1959 until I got help, I wasn't reading newspapers or looking at the television. At that period of time, I hardly knew... sometimes I would watch television and see things I hadn't known, that I didn't even know about. I was so busy that I couldn't... I was making house calls, and I went to the hospital, and by the time I got to the hospital, the patient was asleep. And this doctor I worked for in Atlanta, I got it from him, when the patients... late at night, he would write notes on the pillowcase, and that's what I would do with a flashlight and ballpoint pen, I'd leave notes on the pillowcases. A lot of the patients took them home as souvenirs. Mrs Martin, who's a very wealthy lady, if anything went wrong in her house, if it was her telephone, she called the president of the telephone company. If it was lights, she'd call the Florida Power and Light. And I put her in the hospital one time. She had emphysema, so she was real skinny, and she's in the x-ray room and she says, "I need a pad, I can't lie on this thing." And they said, "Mrs Martin, we don't have a pad." She says, "Call Jack Floyd." He's the administrator at the hospital; she always went to the top.

Did I tell you about Arvida? Oh yeah, Arvida bought Ringling's land that the fellow Burns had bought for him and they, Ringling had the idea that he'd build residences and not condos. I think

he said he didn't want anything higher than the tallest palm tree, or something like that. But Arvida was a big corporation, so they didn't care, and they developed Longboat like that. They developed Bird Key; Bird Key is all pumped up. There was nothing but that little split of land and that one house. And then they wanted to develop the south end of Lido, that's a park, and Otter Key, which is a little, tiny key. The people in Sarasota formed "Save our Bays," and thousands of people signed it and people in boats of all sizes patrolled up and down that so they couldn't. So they saved the south end. Have you ever been to the south end of Lido? It's a nice park. And Otter Key is... you wouldn't know about it, but it's a key just back of Lido. There's a marker there and you can go around Otter Key and back in the other and back out again and there's an old dredge in there. I think Ringling might've been planning on doing something because if you go around on your boat, you can see where there was a pylon for a bridge to go across. But anyways the new bridge from Lido here... the old bridge, do you know where Golden Gate Point is? Well, the old bridge came on the Golden Gate Point and then you drove down Golden Gate Point to the bayfront, but the new bridge comes right into the bayfront.

And there were two newspapers: an afternoon newspaper, the father's name Kent McKinley, and a morning paper, which was owned by the Lindsey's. I think the Herald Tribune has taken over now, but they were the two newspapers. And the new airport.... one of the fellows that was with Twitchell was Rudolph, he designed the new airport, but it's nothing like this one there. Say you were flying into Sarasota, you came from a fairly cool area. The planes just stopped, and you have to walk from the plane into the lobby across the tarmac, and you have the humidity hit you. This one has been built since I've been here. And the first Sear's was downtown on Main Street and the second Sear's was in midtown. Do you know where midtown is? And now they got one, it's been moved three times. I was a doctor for a while, and when Arvida wanted to develop the south end of Lido and Otter Key, it caused a huge uproar. I think I told you about this... in the 20s there was a boom and people selling land and people not being responsible and... I guess that's about all I have down. Yeah, I think that's it.

E. Lovett: Any stories like interesting stories about like cases or people who came in just interesting-I don't know, anything that stands out?

F. Epes: Well, between these artists and between retired officers, colonels and generals and admirals, there was a lot of alcoholism. You know Florida is probably the only state that has a state alcohol rehabilitation program. You have to promise to stay 30 days, and then they have satellite locations to follow up on. So some of the more interesting cases, you know it's amazing people's tolerances, like John Z. Clark at the Beach Club drinking all of that... a husband and wife, a lot of couples alcoholics, would drink the same amount, eat the same food and one would get serious sclerosis and one wouldn't. So it was an individual tolerance. So if your liver gets sclerosis, it gets hardened, and right where your esophagus goes into your stomach, it can press on those veins and they enlarge and they can pop and rupture, and you can bleed to death. And I

had a patient like that. And I don't know how many pints of blood we'd given her and the husband came in, drunk as usual, and said, "How many fists of blood have you given my wife?"

E. Lovett: Fists? Oh no... I actually know someone with sclerosis and he gets internal bleeds and it's a tough situation.

F. Epes: There's tubes-a double tube, that you put in the stomach and blow it up, and then you take it out and it hits the esophagus and presses down.

E. Lovett: Well, I'd love for you to show me some of the...

Oral History Project
New College of Florida -- Fall 2017
Interview with: Dr. Freeman Epes
Date of Interview: November 18, 2017
Interviewer: Emily Lovett

E. Lovett: I actually wanted to start with Arvida-I know we talked about it a little bit, the “Save our Bays,” but I thought that was just a really interesting story that you told. Do you mind repeating what you said to me just a few seconds ago about the corporation?

F. Epes: Well, Ringling owned all that property. And then in the 20s when the land crashed and he lost all of his money, Arvida bought the Ringling property, which was all the... most of Longboat, but the south end and Lido and Bird Key.

E. Lovett: And... so it was in the 70s that was the Save Our Bays movement?

F. Epes: Yeah.

E. Lovett: And Arvida wanted to develop the land?

F. Epes: Yeah.

E. Lovett: And can you describe what happened with the Save Our Bays? You mentioned that there was a protest and the boats...

F. Epes: They protested both by meetings and by getting in their boats, everybody in their boats, no matter what size boat, and staying in front of the area they wanted to develop.

E. Lovett: And did you go out?

F. Epes: Oh, no.

E. Lovett: You didn't?

F. Epes: I was so busy then that I had to... by the time I got through at the office and made my house calls, I had to make rounds at the hospital at nighttime. One thing though, if you're late at night and the patient's asleep, you can make very fast rounds. I would write them notes on the pillowcases.

E. Lovett: Yeah! And so I heard there was a referendum vote, did you participate in the vote?

F. Epes: Yeah.

E. Lovett: Yeah? And how did that, how did that work? Was it just like regular voting for elections that you went in or was it a meeting?

F. Epes: No, it was a special thing.

E. Lovett: Well, that's so interesting. And so... it was the city that bought the land?

F. Epes: Yeah, the city bought the land. Yeah.

E. Lovett: Okay. And- oh did you want to say something?

F. Epes: Just, Arvida did develop Country Club Shores and all that Longboat Key Golf Course and condominiums and Bird Key, which is totally pumped up land. In fact, that's another thing they complained about, that they were destroying the bay bottom by pumping up all that land, so that every house over there is on land that has been pumped up.

E. Lovett: Crazy. So they did end up developing a little bit, but they saved the south part of Lido.

F. Epes: But if you get a chance, it's really nice getting out in a canoe and going through these little passageways in there.

E. Lovett: I need to do that! And then you also mentioned that polio was a problem. You mentioned that theaters would close during the summertime? Could you talk about that?

F. Epes: The theaters, the swimming pools, any public things were closed because of the fear. Well, people were... it was a terrible thing until they got the vaccine. They-Salk-actually it was two, Salk and some French fellow, fought over who did it first.

E. Lovett: Somebody did it, and that's good! And was that going on when you came here as well? You experienced all of the closures and everything? When do you think-when did you see it getting better? Was it immediately after...?

F. Epes: Yeah, right after the vaccine. It was... actually it was getting better when I first, they were in the transition stage when I came here. When I left Atlanta, that's where I trained, they'd already gotten the vaccine.

E. Lovett: Okay, so it was already getting better. And did you deal directly with the cases of polio because you said you volunteered at the hospital?

F. Epes: Well, only when I was at Grady. They put all of the infectious diseases in a separate building. They called it the 'pest house.' But they had... it was terrible. All these kids in iron lungs, just rows of them, it was awful.

E. Lovett: And what were iron lungs again?

F. Epes: Polio would affect the respiratory system, so they couldn't breathe, so this breathed for them, kept it breathing for them.

E. Lovett: So they were kept in a separate ward. Still, at least it got better.

F. Epes: It was a big, huge cylinder, and just the head was sticking out. It was terrible.

E. Lovett: That is terrible. I'm glad that's not as much of a problem anymore. It's a really-it's a really terrible way to live.

F. Epes: And, you know, the only antibiotics we had back then was sulfur and penicillin, and that wouldn't kill a lot of the bacteria, so there were cases that you wouldn't ordinarily see of smallpox and tetanus and things in there too.

E. Lovett: Was that mostly during the summer?

F. Epes: Yeah.

E. Lovett: That's not great for summer vacation! And you also mentioned briefly that you were a relief doctor? For different cruise lines, can you talk about that?

F. Epes: Yeah, when I got help, I had three people working in the office, I was a relief doctor for Norwegian Caribbean and Bahama Cruise line. And if somebody got sick or there was a death in the family, for some reason if the doctor wanted to go for a week or two, I would go to Miami and go through practically all of those islands. And then in the summertime Norwegian Caribbean moved their operation up north, and we went up the coast and down the St. Lawrence Waterway and to Quebec and Montreal.

E. Lovett: And how often did you do this?

F. Epes: Oh, I would say every month or so.

E. Lovett: So you got a nice vacation every month or so! And you went on the cruises with them?

F. Epes: Yes, I was the ship's doctor, and they had a nurse. One time they told me they needed a nurse, so when I was making rounds, I asked any of the nurses, did they want to go on a cruise? So I took one of the nurses with me. And if you took your wife, you got paid much less.

E. Lovett: Do you have any stories? Were there any interesting cases, or was it a mostly uneventful-

F. Epes: No, at one time this fellow, he swallowed a huge... I guess he was eating too fast. He was a big, obese fella, and he got a big piece of meat lodged in... it wasn't in his trachea luckily, he could breathe, but he couldn't swallow and he couldn't... it was painful. I tried sedating him and that didn't... and pressing on his abdomen, trying to pop it out. And finally I got... you know what KY jelly is? Well it's a lubricant that we use on our gloves and things, and I got him... his wife thought I was nuts... got him to drink this lubricant in, and once he got it in there, I popped it out. 'Cause otherwise he would have to... if you were close to a port, but if they were too far away, they would send a helicopter and take them into port.

E. Lovett: That's amazing... so funny. He just got it stuck.

F. Epes: I had some funny people... One fellow bought a very expensive watch, and then he realized it was supposed to make all kind of music. And I guess somebody told him to go see the doctor, but his ears were blocked... because his ears were blocked with wax, he couldn't hear, so...

E. Lovett: There are some interesting people on cruises, I can't imagine the stories.

F. Epes: Not so much going up north, because they're mostly protected waterways. But in the Caribbean, the first few days were people not being used to sea and stepping, and people would fall and hurt themselves.

E. Lovett: Oh, I would think it would be a lot of sea sickness?

F. Epes: Well, back then they had just, luckily, that's the thing called transderm. It's got scopolamine in it. If you should put it on the day before you get on a boat, you won't get seasick. They'd put a patch right on here. Yeah, they'd been perfected by the time I was a ship's doctor. I don't know whether I told you, but the sad thing was in Haiti, we would stop in Port au Prince and Cape Haitian at first, but the poverty was so bad and the begging and the passengers

complained about it, so they didn't stop there anymore. Which is too bad because they really needed the money. Haiti, you know what a contrast with Saint Dominica and Haiti, you know the other half of the island of Hispaniola. So many people have gone across, and that's a problem... the natives, the Haitians, are going into Santa Dominica.

E. Lovett: Yeah. I just have a couple names... so you mentioned a Mrs. DeVille? Can you tell me a little bit about who she was?

F. Epes: She ran an old, two-story, wooden structure called the Siesta Inn. Originally, it was on Roberts Point Road which is on Siesta Key. It's named for Captain Frank Roberts who, his family were the first people to settle here. In fact, he had a restaurant he served what's called Shored Dinners. There's no bridge, people came over by boat to it. But she had enlarged the edge of this two-story structure, and she had the same clientele down here in the winter as she had on Georgia Bay in New York and they just rotated. And the rooms were so small that some of them didn't even have doors on them, just curtains that you pull across them. But the food was delicious. I ate there a couple of times.

E. Lovett: So you did stay there a couple of times?

F. Epes: Yeah, I'm trying to think of her mother's name, Ms. McArthur... Ms. McArthur couldn't sleep and wanted to order some sleeping pills. And she had them delivered, and she said, but don't deliver them between one and three, that's when I'm taking my nap.

E. Lovett: That's great. And another person you mentioned was Archibald.

F. Epes: Yeah.

E. Lovett: Can you tell me a little bit about him?

F. Epes: He was an original native. He was here in the 1921-- the first, the only hurricane that's come across Siesta Key and Longboat Key in 1921. In fact, he said he had to get out of his house and get in a boat to get ashore. And his family had a bathhouse at the end of Ocean Blvd, if you go down to the end. He was in with another fella building houses, and he was really quite an entrepreneur. He had-he built a water plant on Palm Island on Siesta Key. And all those houses in that part where the village is had Archibald water. His wife ran the shop next to me, a petticoat house... she and her sister. And the brother-in-law ran on a motorscooter checking the, Mr Archibald's water. But they decided they wanted to have a central water for Siesta Key, it was called SKUA. Those initials, I don't know what they stand for, I guess it would be Siesta Key Utilities... anyways, they thought they could incorporate Mr Archibald's water plant into theirs, but I had one of the engineers, he was sick one day in the office, and he says, "We can't do it

because we don't understand his plan. He's got pipes going here and there, we don't understand his methods."

E. Lovett: So he said that he was... how old was he when you knew him?

F. Epes: I guess he was in his 60s or 70s-I guess in his 70s.

E. Lovett: Okay, and he said he'd been around during the hurricane and was able to make his daring escape. And someone else you mentioned in relation to him was Twitchell?

F. Epes: Twitchell was... They called him the dean of the Sarasota. There were a lot of famous architects, in fact they call it the Sarasota School of Architecture. And he was the first one, and I'm trying to think of some of the other famous ones, he did the high school... it slips me the other names, but his son was an architect and made the plans for my office. I had-in different offices I'd been in, for some reason or another, I asked the doctors could I have a copy of the plans? And so I showed him the plans, and he used a lot of that to make my plans. And he got a prize for it, and I said, "You should've shared it with me since you used my plans!" He was building a house for a fellow and his wife kept wanting unusual things, it was unusual. And what she wanted was a swimming pool that went under the house, under the bedroom and it came up so she could jump out of her bed and go swimming. He said, "Send your wife to Europe for two months so we can finish the house." Yeah the family with the... what was their names? Esther and... William... I can't remember their last name, they named all of those Spanish streets on Siesta Key. And he was someone else, whenever he wanted to do something, he didn't care about the code, and so when someone bought his house, and they had to almost redo the house because pipes and wires were running and none of it was up to the code.

E. Lovett: So, it's like Archibald, nobody could understand! I also wanted to talk about-you mentioned the younger Twitchell and how he helped design your office, I wanted to talk about how that came about... I know it was right next to the drugstore? Just how you came to have your own office on Siesta Key.

F. Epes: Oh, well, my first office I was between John Davidson's drugstore and Mrs. Archibald's petticoat house. But it was so small that the waiting room wasn't even as big as to that door over there, so people had to sit in their cars and wait for someone to come out to go into the waiting room. And I knew I'd never get any help you know, until... so that land was, a lady by the name of Ms Marie Langer, her brother-in-law was Dr Langer here, owned all of that property and she... it'd really been developed by, oh what's that road before you get to the village? A lady had an artist colony, and there was the inn where they had their meals, and there were little cottages around that bayou. And it's all condominiums now, but that's who John Davidson and I bought the waterfront, not the waterfront, but the frontage on Ocean Blvd to

build the Siesta Key Plaza. So we build his drugstore and my office and an office for a dentist and three or four other offices.

E. Lovett: And it's obviously grown since then. How have you seen it change since when it was first built?

F. Epes: Well, the Siesta Key Plaza is the same size, but there are so many more people. I mean, I guess there were maybe 500 people on Siesta Key, you know, when I came here, but I don't know how many now.

E. Lovett: A lot more!

F. Epes: A lot more-a lot more normal people! They were mostly authors, artists, and retired colonels and generals.

E. Lovett: I think it's interesting, and you mentioned this before, that there were a lot of retired colonels and generals on Siesta Key... can you talk about that a little?

F. Epes: They were interesting... I had one who was on a submarine, I think the ----- admiral was a vice admiral and... I'm trying to think why they were coming into the Aleutians, but anyways he ran a submarine aground there, and his wife told me to never mention about that. I don't know. It attracted... people I haven't seen in a long time that have moved away, and they say to me, "Freeman, what happened to all those crazy people on Siesta Key?" And I said, "They've been diluted out with normal people."

E. Lovett: I was going to ask since you mentioned it was a lot of artists and authors and-

F. Epes: Eccentric people!

E. Lovett: And now it's very normal people, how have you seen that change?

F. Epes: It's been dramatic, they really have been filtered out.

E. Lovett: Do you think it's just because there are more people?

F. Epes: Yeah, I'm sure.

E. Lovett: So they're still there somewhere! Anything else about Siesta Key?

F. Epes: Well, those artists and architects have gone on to bigger things. One of them painted the President, and Princess Grace. So, you know, they've gotten famous. I wish I could remember some of the names, they're very famous architects. Yeah, if you have a minute, I can find them in my Sarasota books.

E. Lovett: Yeah, I definitely have a minute!

F. Epes: Yeah, there was Twitchell, he designed the Lido Casino. He was the first, that's the reason they call him the dean. Let's see... one of them has become the dean of architecture at Yale. Paul Rudolph, yeah, leading light in the Sarasota School of Architecture, and he's the chairman of the department of architecture at Yale.

E. Lovett: What did he design in Sarasota?

F. Epes: He designed the high school, the new high school, and I think he designed Riverview high school. Marina Mar was the first name that it had, then a man by the name of Jack bought it and that's why it's named Marina Jack. Oh, and Philip Hiss was another and he had something to do with starting New College. It's called Kensington Park, I thought it was called Palor Park, it was the first big, onshore thing.

E. Lovett: I did want to talk about briefly, you mentioned this, but transportation. You said a little bit about the trains that came through?

F. Epes: Yeah, if you go to the end of Main Street, there's a big high-rise office condominium, and that's where the train station was.

E. Lovett: When did it close?

F. Epes: I would say... well I can say, the first house I lived in, my mother would come down and spend the winter with me, and I'd pick her up from the train and that was all during the 60s, so I'd say in the 70s. There was a restaurant there and I think a bowling alley and now there's a high-rise-- if you go to the end, as far east as you can go on Main Street. I wish I could find some of these other... but I think Rudolph was the most famous. There were two theaters, the Ritz Theater on Main Street and the Sarasota theater on-is that Pineapple? The Ritz is not there anymore, but the one on Pineapple is the Sarasota Opera House. And the Orange Blossom Hotel was the tallest one and it was... when you're out of sight of the city to get to the big reef where the fish are, you couldn't see anything but the Orange Blossom Hotel, so that was your landmark to come back in. At the end of Longboat Key, Ringling had started to build the Ritz Carlton Hotel, but it was built, but not finished. And a couple accidents-kids would play in there and fall

in the elevator shafts so Arvida tore it down. The Charter House-that's where the Ritz... huge thing when they tore it down.

E. Lovett: So it was built, but it was just never used?

F. Epes: It was never completed. In the 20s they had a depression here before our Depression in the 30s. It was all to do with overselling land. They said it was so crazy, that people would be walking down Main Street with deeds in their pockets selling land, and some of it was on swamps and places so it was a real fiasco.

E. Lovett: And again it was Arvida that tore it down?

F. Epes: Yeah.

E. Lovett: Do you know when that was?

F. Epes: I don't know when... they tore it down when they developed Country Club Shores and Longboat Key, but I don't know exactly when. 1959 was the largest construction year in history... Sarasota Memorial Hospital, housing projects, that's all it doesn't say when they came. One of the big corporations... he wanted to build 580 homes on Bird Key, that all had to be filled in, 291 would be on the waterfront. Here's Save our Bays... it was on December, 1967, it was formed against Arvida, so they came right before 1967. It was to fight Arvida's bulkhead plan. Oh and he wanted to develop Otter Key, Otter Key was a completely deserted key it's right in the back of Lido.

E. Lovett: Did you know anyone who went out in their boats?

F. Epes: Oh yeah, a lot of my friends did. They were honking their horns and ringing bells. Oh, the Orange Blossom Hotel closed in 1969, then they made it rental apartments... I think it's a condo now though. Oh, the Plaza Restaurant... it was a restaurant that a lot of these people had their own stools at the bar, so you couldn't sit at the stool there. I had eaten there because you could go in at 11:00-11:30 and order a meal. You know most restaurants are closed, they stayed open. I went to New York and to the world's-the second-well when I was a kid I went to the first World's Fair in 1939-1940 and I went to the second one, which I can't remember the dates. And I had a room at either the Marriott or the Sheridan, and I was late and they couldn't find my reservation. And I was fussing and fuming, and I heard a voice behind me said, "What's the problem, Dr Epes?" It was one of the waiters of the old Plaza Restaurant that was a night manager. He said, "I'll fix you up," and booked me a suite of rooms in the Waldorf Astoria.

E. Lovett: It's really interesting that you mentioned that you went to New York for the time in the 30s... could you talk about that for a little bit? Or the time when you couldn't get your reservation?

F. Epes: Well, it was the second World's Fair, it was a wonderful experience. I think it was in the same place the first was and some of the old structures were there. And they had shows from each country and all kinds of exotic things like that.

E. Lovett: And you went to the first World's Fair as well?

F. Epes: Yeah. You know, the first one I was twelve years old. And I remember the General Motors was the world of tomorrow, and you sat in and rode around and saw what the world of tomorrow was like. The main attraction was they made lightning and they proved... they had somebody in a car and they shot lightning at the car and they said if you were in the car you couldn't be hurt cause of the rubber tires... man-made lightning. That's all about... I remember that the Heinz pickle gave me a little pickle pin to put on my... Oh and the parachute thing, that they'd take you up and drop you in a parachute, was moved to Coney Island, I've seen it in the amusement park. ... They've torn it down now, but in the old Ringling Towers, they had a-oh what was the name of that room? Well, the room was so high they had trapeze in it and in the dining room and bar they could do trapeze.

E. Lovett: That must've been such a tall building!

F. Epes: It was Ringling Towers... it was a hotel, then apartments, then they tore it down and what happened to the big building right next to it? Oh, Karl Bickel, he was a famous newspaper man... they jacked that. They moved that over to Palm Avenue and jacked it up to put it underneath, and now that's, I think that's the University of South Florida, the students come there... The circus was in Venice, 'cause I would take my two boys down there, so it must've moved by the time I came here.

Oh I didn't know this, they got engineers from all over University of Florida and they made a mock-up of the bay, how the currents would be changed from all this dredging. They used a dye to see how the currents would flow, and that determined that Arvida-Bird Key would not be deleterious to the bay. Except for the bottom grasses and fish and everything. In San Francisco, the engineering... what do you call it? The department that regulates dredging and stuff have built a huge warehouse with a huge, exact replica of San Francisco Bay, and they do the same thing there. You can go in and see the currents go. And I guess this was probably before... Is that the Charles Ringling mansion? Or the John Ringling?

E. Lovett: Charles Ringling.

F. Epes: When I was in Atlanta, I was moonlighting for a metropolitan insurance company. At night, rich people who didn't want to be bothered to come to the doctor's, I'd go to the house and evaluate them for insurance. And so I'd been here for just a short while and somehow or another they tracked me down and said, "We want you to make a house-call to this address." And I said, "I'll do this one, but I'm busy now and I won't be able to do it anymore." And so the address was the Charles Ringling mansion. And I pressed a button and a fellow came down on a motor scooter to open the gate; the whole house was deserted except for one room in the back where this person was.

E. Lovett: That's so funny! And it's the same one? This is College Hall now, our administration... there are some offices and classrooms too. I can't imagine one person trying to live there.

F. Epes: You have classrooms in the mansion?

E. Lovett: Yeah and one of my professors has their office in here. It's strange... there are a couple of classrooms, lots of offices and then they kept the music room though.

F. Epes: Okay... what do we need to do next?

E. Lovett: That's it!