



**SARASOTA COUNTY WATER ATLAS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
NEW COLLEGE OF FLORIDA —
FALL 2011**

Interviewee: Lorraine Rife
Date of Interview: October 16, 2011
Place of Interview: Lorraine Rife's home in
North Port, FL
Subject: Growing up on Anna Maria
Island during the Great Depression and
World War II.
Interviewer/Transcriber: Crystal Kersey

Kersey: Could you please introduce yourself?

Rife: My name is Lorraine Rife. It used to be Schamber, S-C-H-A-M-B-E-R. That's like "chamber," only with an S on the front.

Kersey: When and where were you born?

Rife: I was born in Buffalo, New York in 1922 and I came to Anna Maria in 1924.

Kersey: Why did your family first move here?

Rife: My aunt lived here in Anna Maria. Let's see, her name was Crandall. Her last name was Crandall and her first name was Carrie. She was Herman Crandall's wife. He was something to Anna Maria, whether it was the sheriff's department or whether it was... I don't know what Uncle Herman did. His name was Herman.

Kersey: Why did they move here?

Rife: I really don't know. Oh, yes I do know. My grandmother, her name was Schamber, and she started the first hotel—or boarding house, I should say—in Manatee County. In Old Manatee, I think the building is still standing. She started that; that's where she took in boarders and things. She came from Michigan, her husband had died. My grandfather had died. She came to Florida because of the weather, I suppose.

Kersey: So, what did your family do for a living?

Rife: My daddy just did about anything he could find. In those days, work wasn't too good. He was more or less in construction. He just did whatever he needed to do to make a living. Like, he built houses. He built about three houses, three or four houses on Anna Maria. I know three that are still standing.

Kersey: How would you describe your experience growing up on Anna Maria?

Rife: Oh, I thought it was wonderful. Anna Maria was like heaven. There were only about ten children on the whole island. We had to have ten to start the school. If we were up north, we used to go to north every summer; they would have to wait for us to get back to open the schools, because we didn't have enough students to qualify for a teacher. They would wait for us to come back. And if we didn't have ten by then we would borrow a student from Cortez.

Kersey: What would you do for fun as a kid?

Rife: As children?

Kersey: Yeah.

Rife: Oh, it was wonderful. We had the run of the whole island. There was only, like I said, about ten houses when I first came there, and all these dirt roads. We children were just like one big family. No one ever worried about where we were, because there was always some adult around or close.

By the time we got to be about ten or eleven years old, nobody worried about us because we could pretty well take care of ourselves. There wasn't much mischief to get into. We didn't think about doing anything that was bad. We'd go down fishing or we'd go down clamming or we would go scalloping or we would go down the road and just look at the fiddlers [crabs]. On one of the roads the whole road would look like it was red because all the fiddlers were in the road. There were so many fiddlers that we would walk through and they would just go “ccccchhhh” and open a path for you down the line. Fiddlers were very interesting creatures. We used to sit out on the beach, on the bayside, and look at them and watch them go down their hole. One would come out and make a signal and somebody else would go down and run in that hole and then they'd come back out. They

really were, they were interesting creatures. We watched them all the time. And of course then we hated to stick a hook in them and go fishing with them 'cause it would hurt. We didn't want to hurt the fiddlers.

We had a baseball team on Anna Maria way back in those days. Of course, boys and girls participated in that. That was down by what we called Fiddlers Fields or Fiddlers Flats. That's down by the Bayside across from... they have a restaurant down there now. I can't think of how to tell you where it was, but it's at the end of the road before you go down to the bayou area on that side of the road. We used to play baseball in there. Oh, it was fun. I remember Dorothy Raymond and the kids, most of them were a little bit older than I was by a year or so and that was a lot in those days. We would play baseball and it was fun.

Kersey: What was the beach like then?

Rife: The beach was so beautiful. The Gulf side was just gorgeous. Like I told you before, you could stand down by the sandbar and look all the way down to Bradenton Beach. You could see all the way down the beach and great big wide, sandy beautiful beaches. Not a thing on there. You can see a dog walking on the beach, anything walking on the beach. A human being walking on the beach, you could see that too. All the way down to Bradenton Beach. It was just clear. And oh, it was so great to go swimming. We spent a lot of time in that Gulf. I know that I used to swim from my house which is—was—up by the grocery store. That rock house that my dad built there. From that, straight back was the beach, there wasn't anything there except land and then sea oats were on the beach side. I used to swim from there down to the sandbar for exercise every day, if the tide was going that way. If the tide was going the other way, I walked. I forgot what you asked me.

Kersey: I asked you what the beach was like then.

Rife: Oh yeah, the beaches were gorgeous. You want to know about the sand? The shifting sands on Anna Maria. About every twenty years, you have to live there long time to notice this, I noticed that the pass at the north end of the island by Egmont Key would get smaller and we'd have a great big beautiful beach there before the vegetation line. Then, twenty years later it would be so swift up there and short there was no beach and it was all vegetation and the sand would be down on the south end. It would nearly close up that end between Longboat Key and Anna Maria.

Longboat Key used to be part of Manatee County, I don't know whether it is today or not. When we carried the mail we had to make a boat to take the mail across the south end of Bradenton Beach to Longboat Key because that was part of the mail delivery

route. The system hadn't been set up where it came from Sarasota side. I don't know whether it is yet.

Kersey: And when you say we, who was we?

Rife: My mother had the mail route then. She had I think either one of the first '32 Fords or '34, somewhere in there. The Ford company made the first station wagon and it was wood, actual wood. It wasn't metal that looked like wood, it was actual wood. It had an endgate on it, and that was so interesting because she would let down the endgate on Saturday night and take all of the children around the area to the movies. But you were asking about the beaches weren't you?

Kersey: That's okay, whatever you want to...

Rife: Yeah. I wanted to tell you about her taking the children the movies on Saturday night. Of course, it was hard to drive because we had only little dirt tracks. Everybody would go along and you were driving your car and met another car, so they would pull off to the side until you got by and then you'd stop and wait until they got back in the tracks. Because, if somebody got stuck then you'd have a couple people to help push them out. What you did actually, was you took some air out of your tires so you could get out of the sand easier if the tires were little flatter. If you had a lot of air it might be harder to get out.

We had so many sharp curves. I think there was fourteen or fifteen sharp curves and they'd just go like this. I guess they went around a different block. They go around the block and when they laid out the road it was rough.

Kersey: You told me before that your dad had a boat. What did he do with the boat?

Rife: Oh yes. It was a thirty-two footer. I can't remember the brand. I don't know whether it was a Chris Craft or not, but I do know that it had lapstrake sides. He took fishing parties out with him. He taught us boating too. He docked his boat, down in the bayou in Anna Maria. That's where his boat was docked. He'd take out fishing parties.

I know that when he lost his vessel, he had about fifteen people on board and he went out, about fifteen miles out in the Gulf. He went around the north point out into the Gulf about fifteen miles to go fishing. He had lost some caulking in the bottom of the boat, so there was water coming in. They were all bailing and singing "it ain't gonna rain no more, no more." Dad was down underneath, in the bilge area trying... he'd go down and dive down and tried to see where the water was coming in so he could re-caulk it and make it go on. After they'd bailed the water out... He flew the distress flag, which is upside down.

You put your flag upside down and that's the distress signal. This Cuban liner came along and saw the distress signal. They tried to help him and they drove in the side of our little ol' thirty-two footer. He wasn't going to get off, but they forced him off. They said that they would tow his vessel in to port, but it couldn't make it so his vessel sunk out there. They forced him to get off the vessel; he wasn't going to leave his ship. Wyatt Blasingame wrote a story about it, it was published in one of the magazines by Wyatt Blasingame. Wyatt Blasingame was a writer for Anna Maria. I believe his daughter is probably still there, she's married to one of the Huth boys.

Kersey: Do you remember riding on the boat? Or do you have any particularly fond memories...

Rife: Oh yes. I remember, that's where I learned to eat scallops—I mean to eat oysters—raw. My brother and I would sit up on the forward deck and he would hand the oysters through the porthole in the cabin to us and we would eat the oysters and then finally we just came down because they were so good we didn't care what they looked like. If I'd ever looked at one before I ate it I probably wouldn't have eaten it.

Kersey: How do you feel the Great Depression affected the area?

Rife: The Great Depression was terrible. I remember, I was seven years old in 1929 when we had the crash. I remember mom telling me that people were jumping out of windows and killing themselves because they'd lost all their money. We didn't have any food. There was weeks we didn't have any food except we had what we could find on the island which was mangoes, mulberries—let's see, we had seagrapes, we went clamming, or we'd go oystering, or we'd try to go fishing and use one of those poor little old fiddlers to catch a fish. What we did, we took a pin... we couldn't afford a penny for a hook, so we would take a pin and bend it and try to make a hook out of it and put a fiddler on it then go down. The only thing that would bite a fiddler was a sheepshead, so that's what we ate. Or if a Cortez fishermen came along they would pull a net up onto the beach. They would give us fish then because they knew that we were hungry. It was wonderful to get a good old mullet and we'd have fried mullet.

Dad couldn't find any work because there wasn't anything to do on Anna Maria. He had to walk to town so my brother and my mother and I and my uncle were here all by ourselves on Anna Maria.

Kersey: What were the schools like?

Rife: Oh, the school was great. We had one school and it was from the first grade, they didn't have kindergarten then, so they only had first grade through sixth grade on Anna

Maria. It was down midway on the island where I think... I don't know whether there's a school there now or not. It was just a little old school house and everybody was in one room. We had all grades in one room. No matter what grade you were in you were listening to all the other grades too. I skipped the fifth grade and went right into the sixth grade, which I'm not sure was a good thing, because I was making all A's until after that. Then I went to high school and high school was Manatee Junior. It was called, in those days, Manatee Junior High, that had seventh grade till I graduated out of high school in the same, Manatee.

Kersey: What year did you graduate?

Rife: 1940, I graduated from Manatee.

Kersey: What did you do after you graduated high school?

Rife: 1940... Well let's see. Well I didn't get married until 1942, so those years I was trying to find work. I did whatever I had to. I worked for Singer Sewing Machine Company, that was in Bradenton. I'd have to ride the bus to get to work because I didn't have a car in those days. I would ride the bus. Johnnie Mitchell used to drive the bus. He said if he ever drove a bus any place, Anna Maria was the most interesting place to go because you never knew what was going to happen next. Something always happened on Anna Maria. I remember one time everybody got in a dispute about something, I don't know what it was, but the mayor and everybody else was out fighting in the street talking to one another and he couldn't get the bus by.

Kersey: Did anybody in your family go to war during World War II?

Rife: Oh yes. Everybody was in the service. My mother was one of the first women in the WAAC the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps. She went to war, and my brother was in the Navy. My dad was a World War II veteran. He was too old, so I guess he couldn't go. I don't think he even tried to go.

Kersey: Do you mean a World War I veteran?

Rife: Yes, my dad was a World War I veteran. Of course his father was way back there in the Spanish-American, I guess. Dad was a World War I veteran. He was pronounced deaf because he was "shell-shocked" and what have you during World War I.

Kersey: You mentioned earlier watching for light from submarines. Could you talk about that?

Rife: Oh yes. Yes. During World War II, we set up a tower on the north end of the beach on the Gulf side. We watched for submarines and reported to... I think it was to St. Petersburg where I think the closest station was. We reported all airplanes, all activity, all boats. We looked for submarines, particularly submarines. That was a twenty-four hour watch. Not that we stood 24 hours, we had a regular shifts up there. We would sit in that tower, no lights were allowed on the island anything after dark. We didn't have any lights on Anna Maria because of the war. We were afraid that the light could be seen and we'd be invaded or something.

Then they had Fort Dade there. I don't know what activity was taking place during World War II, but I think it was the Spanish-American war that they built that Fort Dade. You know, they have all those cannons and underground tunnels, jails and what have you over there.

Kersey: How did you get involved with lifeguarding?

Rife: Oh yes. Well, I took lifesaving lessons. By the time I was ten years old I was qualified to be a lifeguard. They wouldn't give me a license until, I think I was eleven or twelve. They gave me my first license, a junior lifeguard. It was by the Red Cross in Bradenton. And we had a teacher, it was Betty Blackburn, her name wasn't Betty Blackburn at that time. That was Blackburn's wife; the school is named after Blackburn. They have a Blackburn school. He was a young man at Anna Maria when he met Betty. Her name was Betty Phelps. She and he got married... Hartley, I think his first name was.

Anyway, the Red Cross helped us set our first tower up. After we took all these life saving lessons, the Red Cross built us a tower. We set off a certain area, which is now Manatee County Beach, I think it was so many yards. We advertised in the newspaper that we would have a lifeguard out there if somebody wanted to go out to the beach and swim. We would be there in case they had an accident or needed help. So, we set that up in... I don't remember the year, but that's how Manatee County Beach started. I say we, there was only about four or five of us then, that were lifeguards. Bob Zubrod, who wrote the book for lifeguards for the Red Cross, came down and actually gave us lessons. So, we had the opportunity to take lessons from a first-class man. He really knew what he was doing.

Kersey: How long did you lifeguard?

Rife: Well, I've been a lifeguard all my life I guess. I never quit. I can still swim. If I couldn't do anything I could float. I could probably sleep on the water.

Which reminds me, if anybody gets in the north end or the south end of the beach in those channels, they're very dangerous. Even a good swimmer would have a problem. My advice if anybody ever gets out there in an accident or a boat goes down or something and they happened to be in that water, just float. Somebody will come looking for you. Don't fight it because it'll wear you out. Don't think you can make it across the channel swimming.

Kersey: Do you remember about what year the beach was officially designated?

Rife: Gee honey, I don't know. I can't remember what year that was, but I know I was a senior lifeguard by then. I must have been fourteen or fifteen so put that on top of 1922 and I think that would be about right. It might have been after I graduated too, but I don't think so. I think it was before I graduated from high school.

Kersey: The late 1930s or early 1940s?

Rife: I think so. You could probably check that out, you know with the officials or someplace. I don't know the year.

[pause in recording]

Rife: We used to go scalloping and clamming. But, boy when... Most of the scallops are in the bay, down by Cobb's Way—Cobb's Corner—which is about mid-Island in Holmes Beach. We'd go out there... They'd have this grass growing up. That's mostly where you would find the scallops, in that grassy area. You'd also find stingrays in that area and things, so you'd have to walk, drag your feet because if you drag your feet then you hit a stingray he'd just go away, but if you step on him he's gonna stick you with his tail. That's a no-no.

The scallops were wonderful. We'd go scalloping out there, and you'd pick those scallops up and those little things they would open their mouth to run, you know. If you pick one up, and you look at him, don't look at him because he's gonna squirt water in your face. Anyway, they were so good to eat. We'd go scalloping, we'd get all the scallops we wanted, and then we open them up and have scallops.

Another thing we used to get was coquinas. We'd go down on the Gulf side mostly. We'd build a little square with a screen on the bottom, and then we'd go down there and put a bunch of sand in it, and then wash the sand out in the water and it would go down below the screen, and then you'd have your shells and coquinas and whatever you've got in there. Sometimes the coquinas would be up against a ridge in the water there and you could just pick them up because there'd be just thousands of coquinas there.

And then, of course, the clams... Mostly in the bay side or down by the little lake on the end of the island, we used to have clams. We'd dig the clams up with our feet, we could feel them, then we'd dive down and get the clam. Clams are planted and they don't move around like a scallop does; scallops move back and forth, but clams don't go anywhere. So they were very interesting.

Kersey: Do you have any favorite memories from growing up on Anna Maria?

Rife: Well, the whole island was interesting. Memories just come all the time about different things. The whole island was a wonderful place to grow up. There wasn't any crime. There wasn't anything bad on the island and all the children were, compared to today's children, they were real good. They were real good children. We respected everybody. Adults were law. Oh yes, we had one colored man on Anna Maria at that time. If you wanted to know about that I'd be glad to tell you. His name was Henry, he was so nice. Henry used to take care of everybody's lawns, now we didn't have many colored people on the island. Contrary to everybody's opinion we were very respectful of Henry, just like we were any other adult. We had no prejudice against him because of his color. We didn't even know what prejudice was, I don't think. It was a nice place to grow up. It was wonderful, and the children were good. Everybody was good.

Kersey: How do you think it's changed over the years?

Rife: I loved it then, but I don't think I'd like to live out there now. It's too commercial, number one. People are not respectful of each other today. In those days, everybody respected everybody else. It didn't matter whether they were wealthy or whether they didn't have anything. It didn't matter. They just respected one another. And the children respected all the adults. I don't think they have the respect today that they had in those days. I'm sad to say that. I've met so many nice people. Don't misunderstand me... I have never met anybody, even here where I live today, that has been disagreeable to me. They've always been very helpful; they help me even today with all my problems, my medical problems.

Kersey: Do you see any positive changes that have happened over the years?

Rife: On the island?

Kersey: Yeah, or in the general area since you're familiar with more than Anna Maria.

Rife: I like the fact that we're able to communicate so easily with one another today. It's not as hard as it used to be to communicate and to see the people that you love. It's easier to get to them, or if you need something, it's easier than it used to be.

I don't disagree with this world today, but for me it's not as nice as it used to be. That might just be the normal older person's opinion too. I don't know. But education today... I like it where it wasn't so expensive for the people to get an education. It wasn't so expensive. Today, it's a shame that the children today have to go into debt to become educated. I think that that is something that should be free. I'm sorry, but I do believe that it should be free because of everybody's privilege to get an education. So why is it so expensive?

Kersey: I wish I knew, and I agree. I think I'm going to pause it for just a minute.

[pause in recording]

Rife: I think we have The Sandbar at Anna Maria, is there a place called The Sandbar?

Kersey: The restaurant?

Rife: Yes, right on the beach there. Well years ago, that used to be a very large building. It was just a great big square building and had living quarters in the back and a little bar area that didn't serve alcohol. It served beer, but in those days we children could go there. They had a ping-pong table, so we learned to play ping-pong. I love to play ping-pong.

They also had the biggest dance floor in all of the area. Everybody came to Anna Maria Island to dance on that floor. On the weekends, they would hire an orchestra or a band or whatever from town someplace. They would come out and play. People would come from St. Petersburg, they'd come from Bradenton, they'd come from Tampa, they'd come from all around just to dance on that floor 'cause it was so beautiful. Great big, and the whole building was dance floor, except the small place where they had the ping-pong table. It was a beautiful, beautiful spot and I've never seen a dance floor that's so pretty. I watched them, they used to sand that thing down. It was tongue and groove material. They would sand that thing down and then they would wax it and wax it. Oh, it was so shiny and slippery. It was a great place for dancing. They did serve beer there. After a while, I think they were allowed to bring their own bottle. Still, children were allowed to go there because the people that owned it, Margritte and Pete Vinew at that time, knew everybody and knew their ages. We weren't interested in drinking anyhow.

Kersey: Over the course of the time you lived on Anna Maria, how did you see it change?

Rife: How did I see it change?

Kersey: Yeah. You lived there from like the '20s the '70s, is that correct?

Rife: Yeah, I think I sold my last piece of property on Anna Maria in about '82. I owned the house at 2412 Avenue A. That was my house, I built that house. I loved that house. That's where I could see the Sunshine Skyway from. Oh, I loved that house.

Kersey: Do you want to talk about building that house?

Rife: Oh, building that house. Yeah. Well, very few women in that time were able to get a loan. I worked for the state, I'd been for the state for so long... The toll bridges. So I had a good reputation for paying my bills. Johnny Holmes was president of Manatee Federal at that time. So, I went to Johnny Holmes to see if he would give me a loan to help me build my first house. He knew that I paid my bills and was responsible. So he helped me get an FHA loan. That was something.

They didn't give women loans in those days. They didn't have the work experience that I had or the background that I had at that time. So you had to have a good bill-paying reputation. So I built that house on Anna Maria and it was wonderful.

That's where, when the Sunshine Skyway bridge fell in... When the boat hit the bridge that day, I was living in that house. I went out, I heard it on the radio. I was fixing breakfast and I heard it on the radio. I went out and I could see the Skyway span laying down in the water. Of course I heard on there what happened. I thought oh my goodness, because my husband was going to work in Tampa at that time. Sometimes he took 41 and sometimes he took the Skyway. I didn't know which route he was on, but he didn't go the Skyway bridge. That was a shock. But, that was my first house. I sold the house in the '80s, '82 I think or '83.

Kersey: When did you build it?

Rife: Let's see, I must have been... When did the Skyway fall? [1980] I don't know. It was just about a year or so before that, before the Skyway fell in. I'm not sure of the year. My mother had bought four lots there on the front of the bay. She bought four there and two up on Avenue B. She gave my brother and I one each on Avenue B. Then I bought from her the four on the bay side. [pause] I can't remember what we were talking about.

Kersey: Oh, I guess we could return to the question I asked you before. How did you see things change between the 1920s and the 1970s when you lived on Anna Maria?

Rife: The living?

Kersey: Just how did the island change? You know like anything, the climate or...

Rife: Oh, the climate. I didn't think the climate used to be so hot. You know, of course we didn't have air conditioning; as a matter of fact, we didn't even have lights when we first came there. We had sconces on the walls. I can't remember when the lights were put in. I mean I was so young. But, then I remember my dad either putting up light poles or telephone poles up. I know that he helped lay out the roads, paved roads and things.

Kersey: So how did the beach change over the time that you lived there?

Rife: Well, then they put out jetties and stuff. And then, people were allowed to build beyond the vegetation line. I think people should never be able to build beyond the vegetation line because that's public access. That's going on public land, that's not for private land, you know, on the beachside. I think jetties and things, I'm strictly against them. It's like my mom says when she remembered the beach, "there wasn't a rock on the beach," she said. And I agree with her... There wasn't a rock on the beach. It was beautiful.

Kersey: You told me last time we talked that you lived all over the country, so why have you always chosen to come back to this area?

Rife: Well, Anna Maria was my home and that's why I always came back to this area. The reason I don't own a house out there today is that I don't like it out there today. I'm sorry to tell you that. It's too busy and there's too much going on. It breaks my heart, because it was so beautiful.

I don't think Hawaii or any other beach has any prettier sand. I still think the sands on Anna Maria Island are the prettiest in the whole world that I have ever seen. Now I haven't done much traveling in the European area, but in the Far East I've done a lot of traveling, and all over the United States. I've been all over the United States and in the Far East. Anna Maria was the spot that I just adored. Of course, growing up there may be that the reason I feel that way, but it's close to my heart.

Kersey: Did you ever boat down any of the rivers in the area or anything like that? Like Manatee River...

Rife: I've been down the Manatee River of course. I have been down there in Manatee where the saltwater meets the freshwater. That's quite an experience, especially if you're on water skis. It makes a difference in the buoyancy. I thought I was a real good swimmer. When I went to visit my cousin in Wisconsin I said, "Oh sure, I'll just go out there in the water" you know, let's go. But I dove in that water and it's not buoyant, there's no salt. There's a great deal of difference in buoyancy.

Kersey: When did you move to North Port?

Rife: When did I come to North Port? I came to North Port... I owned a little villa in Bradenton right on 57th Avenue, right beside the school of tennis. There's a villa there and I can't remember the name of those villas, but I owned one of those villas. I had a few problems and they were going up on the maintenance fee and I just couldn't afford it. I don't have too much income, so I decided that I would come down and sell my villa and buy this house here. I did that about 2002 or 2003 somewhere in that area I bought this house then in North Port.

Kersey: What are some of the jobs you've had?

Rife: Oh, all right. When I first started out, I worked for Singer Sewing Machine Company. If I could be a waitress or something, I was a waitress. Just anything to make a living. It was mighty hard in those days. There wasn't too much work in Manatee County.

So I went to the post office on Anna Maria, I saw this brochure on the bulletin board that said they wanted civil service employees and clerk typists. So I went and applied and took the test and I became a civil service employee. I went to Washington DC. I really worked in Arlington at the enlisted coordinator's office for the United States Marine Corps.

From there, I decided one day, I heard about them taking people overseas so I went down and took the test, and two or three weeks later, believe it or not, I was on my way overseas to Yokohama, Japan. When I got on that ship in San Francisco I looked around and I said, "Oh boy Lorraine, you don't know a single solitary soul or nothing about this country. You're leaving this good old United States all by yourself." I took the ship. I went by ship, which was good, because they were paying me time and it took like two weeks I think to go by ship over to Yokohama. So, rather than fly over and stop in Hawaii and just have a two day trip I thought "Well I'll just get paid two weeks to be on the ship." So I went to Yokohama, Japan and spent two and a half years there. The reason I came home was I was so spoiled. When I went to Japan, I couldn't do my own laundry I couldn't do my own cooking, I couldn't do my own housekeeping. I lived in what they called officers quarters. My quarters were right beside the United States Embassy in Yokohama, Japan. We overlooked the whole harbor. At that time Japan—Yokohama—was the second major transportation port in the world. There was a lot of shipping activity going on there. It was most interesting to watch everything on that waterfront.

I left Japan two and a half years later and I came back to the United States into Seattle, Washington. Oh no, I came back the day after the Sunshine Skyway was opened. That

was 1954—yeah '54, the latter part of '54—when the Sunshine Skyway opened up, when the first traffic went across. Which reminds me, when the Skyway opened up, they gave a bunch of flowers that they cut to my mother because she was standing right there and they gave her the bouquet of flowers from the ribbon on the day the Skyway opened up. I couldn't be there that day because I didn't get home till the day after the Skyway...

From then, after I did a civil service, I went to work for the state road department. That's when I went to work for the toll bridges and we opened Manatee Avenue. I think that was '56—1956 that bridge was built, or '57—I'm not sure which date. Then there was toll bridges on Manatee Avenue and then they had a toll bridge on Cortez. So the Manatee Avenue bridge handled all the traffic for the Cortez bridge and the Manatee Avenue bridge. So we were in the office there and I went to work as a secretary there. I was with the state road department twelve years or twelve and a half years. I've had quite a bit of experience with the government.

After that, I decided I would get my own real estate license. In 1972, I became a real estate salesman. In 1974, two years later I got my broker's license. I had my broker's license until '97 or '98 so about twenty-seven years I was a real estate agent. I had my own office on Anna Maria, Anna Maria Island Real Estate. After that I gave up my license about '98. I could go back today and get my license if I wanted to, but it's just too hard now to be in real estate.

Of course, all these years, I've been a good seamstress, so I taught quilting, so now I'm a quilt teacher. I've been a quilt teacher for many years. I've just about given that up too, lately. Right now I'm doing nothing, but sitting.

Kersey: That's not true. You told me you're learning Greek right?

Rife: Oh, yes. I took... Last year, I took a course in Greek. This is just "baby Greek." To be able to read biblical Greek, the original biblical Greek, so I could study my Bible better and understand it. So this year I'm taking Hebrew, biblical Hebrew. I'm able to read a lot of the Hebrew. Oh, it is so thrilling to be able to decipher the Torah or whatever those scripts are that are rolled up, you know. I can decipher some of those words; of course, you have to know what the word meant. I'm about able to decipher what the word is. Like in my Greek book here I can figure out what means Bethlehem and what the word Jerusalem is and all that kind of thing. It's so much fun and I'm just enjoying that.

I'm doing that, because at my age I want to be sure that my son and his wife don't decide to put me in a nursing home because I'm incompetent. So I try not to be incompetent.

Kersey: What do you think people should remember about Anna Maria?

Rife: Oh yes; I think people should remember about Anna Maria because it was such a beautiful time in life. I don't know how it would ever get back to being that again. I would love it to be like that again. So simple, and such a beautiful life. It was a wonderful place to grow up. I just can't say enough about the island. I'm glad that I was reared on Anna Maria Island.

Kersey: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Rife: I can't think of anything, honey.

Kersey: Alright, thank you so much.

Rife: You're certainly welcome.

[end of interview]