

Oral History Project

New College of Florida — Fall 2017

Interview with: Harriet Stieff

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Interviewer: Bianca Persechino

Harriet Stief was born on July 31st in 1922 to pioneer, Owen Burns. She spent her childhood in Sarasota, Florida. She attended the Out of Doors School then Goucher College where she majored in science. Later, Harriet spent 18 years teaching kindergarten in Montgomery County of Maryland. After she retired, she spent another 18 years volunteering for the Flower Guild at the National Cathedral as well as volunteered for several years at the Adams Morgan School. Currently, she spends her time supporting her own interests in the history of Sarasota and is a member of the Historical Society of Sarasota County.



Bianca: Can you speak for a second?

Harriet: Yes, do you first want me when you start to say my name, age whatever? How do you want to begin?

Bianca: It's recording and this... ready to start? Just go ahead and introduce yourself please.

Harriet: My name is Harriet Burns Stieff. I am the youngest member of my family. We were all raised here in Sarasota, just down the street. I was born in July 31st, 1922. I'll save you the arithmetic—that makes me 95. My father was Owen Burns, and he came to Sarasota in 1910.

And he bought a great deal of real estate. I don't know if you'd be interested in the story of how he came to Sarasota or whether you want to talk about that later.

Bianca: Well, we did talk about that the last time, I do have, um, everything I need for that but I think I'd just like to start off with like your childhood and mostly focus on you. So, do you think your parents raised you differently than other families?

Harriet: I've always felt privileged. I was the youngest, and my oldest sister was Lillian. She was 9 years older than I, and my older brother was... Lil was born in 1913, my older brother Owen Jr. (although we always called him Bud or Brother until he was grown and then we all started calling him Owen too) - was born in 1914. My next brother, Leonard, was born in 1915, and my sister was named after my mother Vernona but we always called her Sug for Sugar. She was known that throughout her life, but we all ended in Washington and she said I am now going to be called Nonie-- that's what my mother was called-- and so now we... it was hard for the family to change. And then I was born as I said previously in 1922. My brother Owen was born in the summertime and my father had a place up on the Hudson rRiver that he and his brother Walter had bought for their mother and their sister. Dad was - there were 10 children in that family. One died as an infant, and there were 8 boys and 1 girl that all lived to adulthood.

Bianca: Ok, so - and how did you - your parents- what was family life like for you when you were a kid?

Harriet: It was a very close-knit family. My - I always said I was brought up in sort of a Victorian family because my father was considerably older than my mother. He was 42 when he married my mother, who was then 18, and he came and brought her down here to Sarasota to live. Lil was born in Sarasota. My brother Owen was born when they went up north for the summer, but Dr. Joe Halton, the local doctor in Sarasota, was up in New York at the time and he was registered as having been born in Sarasota because Dr. Joe did not - was not registered in New York. I also - Leonard and Sug were born here in Sarasota. I too was born when mother and Dad were up - they called it Inwood on the Hudson in New York City, and I was the only one that was born in a hospital. The others were born at home. But I came down as a babe in arms, 6 weeks, to Sarasota, and we lived at the house that Dad had acquired when he first came down to Sarasota. I remember it as 310—my sister said it was another number but I am sure it was 310. Just as sure as she was that it was another number. But it could've changed just like the street numbers have changed.

Bianca: Right, can you tell me how you spell "Nonie"? Is it with-

Harriet: "N-O-N-I-E"

Bianca: Ok.

Harriet: Her real name was Vernona, and when Dad built his hotel he called it the El Vernona—which I have since learned in Spain that would not have been a correct way. Whether it should have been E-L-L-E, Elle Vernona or whatever, I don't remember.

Bianca: You mentioned the last time we spoke that you weren't allowed to use the “N” word in your family. What was that like?

Harriet: Well it just wasn't considered a respectful name. We were always taught to say “negro” which was considered the proper thing to say. And the negroes lived up in the Rosemary district. You have to understand times have changed, and at that time it was quite a segregated Sarasota and all the - what we refer to as negroes live in that area. As I was, as I became a teenager, Newtown at that time was just the - black Americans were moving out to Newtown. I'm sorry about that tapping in the - there's nothing I can do about that. I don't know if closing these doors or not would help.

Bianca: Can you say “hello”?

Harriet: Hello, hello.

Bianca: Oh, perfect! Okay.

Harriet: I asked a cousin of mine how she could remember all her uncles' names. *phone ringing in the background* Oh, sorry. This is a picture of my father's family. His - my father was the youngest member of the family and his father died two months before he was born. I had a cousin who was once asked how she could remember all her uncles' names and she said “well, it goes, - their first child died as an infant, and it goes and his name is - uh- oh I can't remember either - uhm, Ray Otway, Ottie, uncle - and by this time his oldest brother, Otway had died and this is Uncle Ray. It went Ottie, Rally, Uncle Eugene, Uncle Jerome, Uncle Charlie, Uncle Walter, Uncle Eddy, and Owen. Uncle Ed also lived in Sarasota. Uncle Ray lived off and on in Sarasota and he built the building - excuse me - next door to the Sarasota Opera now, oh, and this was the sister - her name was Lillian after whom my sister was named. They always passed her off as the youngest in the family but she actually was born in Fernandina, Florida and she was in the middle of the family. And my Uncle Ray takes - I have a note saying he remembered when she was born and his father coming down and saying you have a new sister, you have a little baby sister, an angel from heaven or some such thing and - but they always treated - my mother said she was quite a vain lady. But she must have been very spoiled with 4 brothers.
laughs

Bianca: Do you have any pictures from when you were a kid?

Harriet: I have - I used to make my mother very mad because when my sister Lillian was born, she had like 3 different baby books and boxes and boxes of baby pictures. I used to laugh and tell my mother that the picture I just showed you of the 5 of us together with my mother - that that's my baby picture because being the last of 5, by the time I came along there wasn't time for stopping and taking baby's picture all the time.

Bianca: What about pictures when you were with your friends, at school?

Harriet: I gave that book to the out-of-doors school and I was supposed to get it back, but I never have. So I don't have many of those pictures.

Bianca: Do you know of any –

Harriet: But of all the people in there have died. We all went to the Out-Of-Doors School and those tapes I was telling you about, I just found out the other day, I knew that the school had lost a lot of - the - it's now called the Outdoor Academy and, they have very few of the early records of the school. And then this tape I was listening to, my brother and sister were talking about it and they said that the founders of this school were Fanneil Harrison and Catherine Gavin. And they had worked on the - after the world - world war - First World War - they had gone to Europe and had worked with Dr. - oh, I can't remember his first name – Decroly, who is well known in the field of education. And they worked with the orphaned children after World War One, and when they came back they were both nurses. And they came back and they decided to start a school here. The Harrison family had property over on the Siesta Key which later became, a part of the property became the Out-Of-Doors School. And in this tape they said that some of those early - there'd been a big storm and there was a lot of water damage and Nena—that was Fanneil Harrison, that's what we called her and Catherine Gavin was called Gabby. But Nena and Gabby had somebody come in to clean up for the water damage and just gave the instructions to clean up, and all the records which had gotten dampened by the storm had got thrown out. I don't think the school - the academy knows that, so I want to talk to them and see if they'd be interested in that.

Bianca: Maybe I - is there someone I can call to ask about that book you gave them?

Harriet: I guess I could call and ask if you want it. I'm not sure it would be all that interesting- but I also gave my sister Lillian's book with a lot of the early students of this school, and they have that too. This is a - this picture is of Dad's only sister, and her second husband was Jess Root Grant who was the second son of Ulysses S. Grant, President.

Bianca: Wow. Ok.

Harriet: What is this?

Bianca: Can you show me - uhm - can I go to the ...

Harriet: This was Uncle Walter's daughter Ursula.

Bianca: Can you start again from the beginning?

Harriet: This was a picture taken in my brother's apartment in Washington, and this was my older sister Lillian, my brother Leonard, my sister Sug, and myself and this was when my cousin Ursula - she was the daughter of my Uncle Walter. Uncle Walter and Dad were in business together. That would have been taken - oh gosh- Probably around 1960. That's her daughter.

Bianca: Ok.

Harriet: That's my mother...

Bianca: (snapping to verify sound)

Harriet: Start over or just go from where we were?

Bianca: I'm just gonna make sure real quick that it's recording.

Bianca: We're on track number 8 . I want to make sure that this is recording too. ok . *clap* I do that so that I can match up the video. Alright, so we are not going to start at the beginning. Why don't you go ahead and tell me how many siblings you have.

Harriet: Well, I was the last and youngest obviously of 5 children. My older - the first child was Lillian Grant Burns. She was born in 1913, and in 1914 my brother Owen was born. He was always called "Brother" because there were just too many Owens around in the family. The next - the third child was Leonard Hill Burns named after mother's cousin's husband. They lived in New York. They were part of our family history. Three years after that (he was born in nineteen seven- no fourteen - fifteen – 1915) and Sug - Nona Burns was born in 1919, and I was born in 1922. I'm 95. And that's July 31st.

Bianca: And was it common to have a family of that size?

Harriet: I knew of no other families except some of the farming and ranching families, but my grandmother was Catholic and my father was raised Catholic. My mother was not. And sort of dropped out of the church and all 5 of us were baptized in the Sarasota Episcopal Church which then was located up on Orange Avenue.

Bianca: And what was it like to have four siblings?

Harriet: We were a very close knit family, and I liked it. I was the baby, and when I was about 3 or 4 I had a osteomyelitis in my left leg and I was kind of babied. My brother has been quoted as saying, "We're going to have a hard time unspoiling Harriet!" I was born, as I said, in '22. That was sort of the peak of the Florida boom at that time. My memory starts about that time. I don't remember much before my leg problem, and I don't know the exact date of that, but I do know that I had been attending Pre-K, what is now called Pre-K. At that time it was called the Out-Of-Door School Workshop and was located in the old McClellan Park clubhouse. And it went before the Out-Of-Door School bought it. They had the lower school, what now would be the lower school or the primary, and McClellan Park, and the Out-Of-Door School opened about that time. And it was run by Fanneil Harrison and Catherine Gavin. They had been a part of the post-war effort of World War One and were in Belgium working with the orphan children after WWI and they were both nurses and came back to Sarasota. They had worked with Dr. Decroly, I think his name is. He is a well-known progressive educator. The Out-Of-Door School started in the middle of the year in January, I think it was. And my brother Leonard having been sick in the fall had been - was one of the first students at the Out-Of-Door School. And the following year they - uh- they had hired Ms. Pierce, Josephine Pierce who ran the school that was located in the Selby Gardens parking lot of today, and it was a one-room schoolhouse. And most of my mother's and father's friends' children all went to that school, and most of them then went, followed Ms. Pierce to the Out-Of-Doors School.

My sister, Lillian, was then in the ninth grade and was the first graduate—and the ONLY graduate in her class at the Out-Of-Door School. As Pete Estes, the local collector of historic pictures in Sarasota once introduced her, "she graduated in the bottom of the class!" You could hear - I was there - and you could hear an audible ingathering of breath in Sarasota, and after a big smile. She also graduated at the top of her class.

But I started to tell you that my memory started about that - about that time. Because I was - I remembered being in nursery Pre-K, what it would be called today, and Catherine Gavin ran that part of the school. Some of the local children that I remember of going there that time were Priscilla Willard and Frank Willard and Mrs. Catherine Prew's two children and Neil Prew who grew up in Sarasota. Mrs. Prew eventually started a school of her own known as the Prew School. But the reason one of my earliest memories is being wrapped in a sheet. I was in the Halton Hospital, and the night before Dr. Joe Halton had operated on my leg because it was

tremendously swollen. After the operation, he told Dad that this was beyond his skills and that there was a doctor that had just located down in Venice. It was Dr. Fred Albee. And Dr. Joe told Dad that was - Joe Halton, he was known to us and throughout the city as Dr. Joe. He had a brother Jack Halton who has ran a sanitarium. That may come up later. Uh- but Dad called Dr. Albee and asked if he could come up and look at my leg, and he said oh, Mr. Burns I'd love to but I can't. I have - I have a previous engagement in New York, and I have to catch the train for New York. There's no way I can get out of that, and as you know the train only goes north once or twice - I guess it was every other day - twice a week! And Dad said, don't worry, and he arranged to have the train stopped. And he took Dr. Albee off the train and drove him up to the hospital, which was just around the corner. The doctor looked at it and says, "You operated in the wrong place, that needs to be immediately attended to," and they poured some chloroform on a gauze pad, wrapped me in a sheet and cupped it over my head. I can remember screaming, and I have had a touch of claustrophobia I think ever since if anybody gets me closed in. I can see my mother crying and my father behind her patting her on the back as I was rolled in, but he operated right then and there, and when it was over I never saw him. But when the operation was over, Dad drove him back up to the train, and they waved the train on. Can you imagine that ever happening? In this day and age?

Bianca: That's so sweet.

Harriet: I can't. I don't know how - I'm sure that at that time, that would have been about 1924 or 5, and I don't think there were too many people going north. I certainly would not have liked to have been a passenger on that train waiting at the station, but I am sure it was all done as quickly as possible.

Bianca: Ok .

Harriet: But that's perhaps one of my earliest memories. I do remember going to school about that time, and the teacher's name was Ms. Sunshine. We were first - when we would go into school in the morning we would go in and shake hands with her and curtsy and say "bonjour Madame Sunshine - Mademoiselle Sunshine." But then, of course, we always shook hands and curtsied and looked the adult in the eye when we were introduced.

Bianca: It's a lost art.

Harriet: Lost art.

Bianca: Yes, I don't think I have curtsied since I was 3 in ballet. I look adults in the eye, but you know - and I shake their hand but I don't think I have ever curtsied.

Harriet: Oh, Dad always insisted that you looked somebody square in the eye.

Bianca: Until what age did you go and attend the Out-of-Doors School?

Harriet: I went until Lil graduated. By that time the crash had hit Florida. The boom was over by 26, but it hit the in 25. I went into the public school for 2 years. I was raised, I'm going to say in a Victorian household. My father was born in - can you believe it – 1869, and he was considerably older than my mother. When they were born - I mean when they were married, they were married in 1912, and he was I believe 42 at the time and mother had - was not quite 18. So there was considerable gap. And it was sort of a male dominated world at that time. But Mother ran the house, the kids, and whatever went on at home, but Dad was the boss. I think I got sidetracked there, and I can't remember what I was going to start.

Bianca: I asked you at what age did you - until what age –

Harriet: Oh, I went two years into Central School.

Bianca: At what age?

Harriet: Oh, that would have been the third and fourth grades, beginning of the fifth.

Bianca: So, like, 8 years old?

Harriet: Yeah and Central School was located where the present day Post Office is. I think it was called Golf Street at that time, but I don't know. It's now Ringling Boulevard. It did not go through to the Bay at that point. After Lil graduated, she came back to the Out-Of-Door School and taught for several years, and I returned to the Out-Of-Door School. I guess that would have been in the -this isn't adding up right but in the fourth or fifth grade. Fourth grade I think, and had Ms. Carlotta, and Priscilla Willard was still in the class. I don't believe and *garbled* but this time we would be going on the campus out on Siesta Key. And I continued there until after - to the summer of, uh let's see what would that have been - through the 9th grade. And that summer, because the Out-Of-Doors School as I have mentioned, was a progressive school and it was very popular with the people who came down from the north because they - the kids could bring their books and they would be tutored so they kept up with their work. And that was a tremendous influence on Sarasota, that the people of means who could come down in the winter and have lovely homes down here, and not feel they were taking their kids out of the school. And it's kind of hard to imagine but there was a - a sort of feeling that if you had an independent income, if you went to work you were taking a job away from somebody who needed it because of the Depression. It really set in so. My older sister and my two brothers were sort of brought up - their early memories of when it was a very prosperous time for my father, but he lost

everything during the Depression. And so I vaguely remember that part, but I always say I grew up in the shell of - we had the large house and the prominent position, but we got along on very modest income.

And then, when I was at the end of the 9th grade, both Gaby, as we called Catherine Gavin, she had died several years before, and Harrison Rawl who was Neil Harrison's nephew took over the school and decided that the high school was not very profitable. They eliminated the high school, and my mother said because I had not had a - in her mind - a formal education where you parse sentences and learn parts of grammar as completely as she had learned them. I think my mother had remembered everything she ever learned in school. And so she suggested that I go to summer school and take a half course in English so I wouldn't be too far behind in English when I started there. So when it came time to sign up for courses, because we'd take - we took 5 majors and at the Out-Of-Doors School I signed up for 5 majors and they never knew - at the end of that year they didn't know which grade to put me in. And I realized if I took another half an English course and 5 more major courses I could graduate the following year, so I took - so I did my last 3 years in 2 and I graduated in 1939.

My father died in 1937, and in 1939, the war was beginning to rumble in Europe. Mother decided that she would move up one of my brothers. Owen had married by that time and was starting a family, worked for the Florida Power and Light company. And my brother Leonard was in the 3rd year at the University of Florida, and he dropped out of college to run the Tree Ripe Java Jolley business, which Dad had started after the crash. He had decided to go into the - trying to use some of the Florida products and starting a business all over again at the bottom in his middle 60s. And mother moved up to Baltimore because after a year or so, after Dad died, Lil had gone to New York to work. No, I guess she had gone up there before Dad died. Yes, because he being the Victorian man that he was, he didn't think women should work. I mean school teaching, that was acceptable. But my mother once again came to the floor, and said, no, she thought Lil should be able to go to New York. And Dad said, "Well, if she goes and lives with my brother and his wife in New York, that would be alright." But once she was there, and she got a job in the middle of the Depression rather quickly, and here again, just like he was against her going to college, but once she got there, he was - there was no man in town prouder. And he was always so proud, he would stop people in the street. Dad - I've been told that Dad always had one of us with him. You have to understand in those days they had no television or iphones or ipads or things and stuff. Anytime anybody was doing somethin', Dad would say, "Well, I'm going uptown." "Can I go?" "Go ask your mother." "Course I'd turn it around and say "Dad says I can go if you say so!" I guess all kids work their parents like that. Even to this day. And so, I was Dad's tag-a-long. And I can remember everybody would say "Well, how's Lillian doing?" Oh, he would be so proud and so pleased about whatever she was doing.

Bianca: Did you ever have a special activity that you guys liked to do together?

Harriet: Dad was always interested in what was going on - excuse me with my watery eyes - I'm sorry. Uh, Dad was always interested in what was going on around town and what - I don't know if I mentioned that he was one of the first large real estate developers in Sarasota. I'll be happy to tell you some of the history of that, but I don't know if that's what you... Dad's history in Sarasota, because of his photo interest in Sarasota. Of the three prominent people who all came to Sarasota in 1910, Bertha Palmer and Dad and Ringling, Dad was the one that made Sarasota his hometown. He moved here, got married, brought his wife here and raised his kids here and uhm, well we can go into that later if you want to. How he and Ringling got... but whenever Dad didn't have anything to do, he liked to get into the car and drive, and we'd - I'd sit there. He wouldn't talk necessarily. Every once in a while he'd ask a question or make a comment, and I just loved being with him. This became - I was just his tag along.

Bianca: That's very cute. So did you and your siblings have any fun games you'd play together, maybe hide and go seek or eye spy?

Harriet: Well, I used to joke with the three older siblings and say, "We were raised in different times and by different parents." As most parents will admit, I think my parents were more strict with them than they were with my sister Sug, as we called her, and I. The things that they were expected of them - the rules were - had been set - the family rules had been set by the time I came along. And, as I said being the baby, I figured if you just kept out of arguments and kept quiet or somebody started picking on you, as long as you didn't cry one of your siblings would stick up for you. My next older sister, she was more into what was going on around town and what her friends were doing. I never much cared what my close friends were doing, and in the part of town where we lived there weren't a great many children. And most of my mother's friends, there were only a couple of them that had children that were my age. So I always felt protected and looked after.

Bianca: But did you guys have any games?

Harriet: Oh! Well, we played - I'm sorry, I'm going to have to stop and get some water or something, you want to turn it off?

Bianca: Of course, let me go ahead and pause it.

Harriet: Well, you were asking about games we played as a family. Because of the wide age spread, we didn't play many games together except maybe baseball. And we played baseball out in the side yard and Dad would umpire. Dad would be the umpire and with his Victorian attitude girls were always safe. I never struck out, I always got balls. And finally, and they tried to convince me I didn't want to play anymore but as long as I was playing with them, my sister Sug

and I—we would always say she didn't like baseball as much as I did. I love baseball. And the games we played as a family because of the age spread I think as we became teenagers I think maybe we played, what do you call it, it will come to me in a minute. We used to play dominoes. And my sister told me that Dad was fascinated playing dominoes because - even at a young age - because I did not know arithmetic and how - how I was able to play it. But in my mind I could count to five and of course, every multiple of five, I'd stop at five and start over again. And so I always knew it had to - it had to match that way, plus the colors and how many were on there. But Dad used to say, "I can't understand it, I know she can't count." But, monopoly came along about that time, and that became very popular. But I don't remember ever playing it with my older brothers and sisters.

Bianca: Did you ever, you know, get into any mischief with your siblings?

Harriet: Well, I know that... you know how older kids pick on younger kids? And as I said a few minutes ago, they could pick on my sister, sister Sug and get her to cry. Of course, she cried, I'd cry. But then they'd turn to me "We didn't do anything to you, why are you crying?" but I learned early on as I said if you don't cry they'll leave you alone. It's only if they can make you cry that they keep picking on you. But, it was, it just wasn't a great deal of contention or family arguing. As we get older my brothers, "What are they arguing about? They don't know what they're talking about."

Bianca: Well not necessarily like, family arguments, but maybe you and your brother did something, you stole the cookie jar...

Harriet: Well, the thing, I loved to do anything involved with the water. The waterfront, that end of town was my playground. All of Golden Gate Point, there's nothing out on Golden Gate Point except the road and the bridge at the end. The bridge over in the isles was down at the end of the uh, near the south end of Golden Gate Point at that time. There's still a little section of that balustrade that led up to the bridge there now if you - you have to know where to look. Because it's all been filled in in the front. The water, the seawall.

Bianca: So you didn't steal from the cookie jar? You went fishing?

Harriet: Yeah. We didn't have to steal from the cookie jar. There was always - we had a cook. She'd started as a laundress and she became a cook. She rode her bicycle to work, and she was not the southern nanny type of woman but she adored my mother. And mother and Ruth got along fine. And Ruth would do the laundry three days a week. It took - because of course, they didn't have washing machines, it was all on a scrub board, and she considered she was lucky because we had two rainwater tanks. I started to say barrels but they were I think 300 gallon tanks at the end of the garage. There was a 3 car garage with a laundry room on the north side

and 2 rooms on the south side. There was a bathroom connected to the laundry. And Ruth would come out, and then she'd build a fire outside, had sort of a cauldron to heat the water. Because the water there wasn't... but she had rain water and of course, the rest, the city water, was very hard and you couldn't get soapy suds. Eventually there was a pipeline built in with the faucet on the back porch so you could have the rainwater to wash the dishes in.

Bianca: And why don't you tell me some of your favorite memories as a kid and a teenager.

Harriet: Well, I think my favorite toy was my teddy bear. And oddly enough it belonged to my mother, and it was a Steiff teddy bear. When she was in high school it was—I guess Teddy Roosevelt would have been president, and that's when teddy bears became very popular—and it was the craze for all the high school girls to have a teddy bear and carry it around. And mother had given it, I guess she hung onto it. And you remember going off to college, you may have taken your favorite teddy bear or puppy dog with you. She had hung onto her teddy bear, and she had given it to Lil and Lil had not been at all interested in dolls or stuffed animals. So she put it away and gave it to Sug when Sug came along, and Sug had a bigger bear that she liked. It was oh, maybe two and a half feet high. She had a picture taken with both bears, but it was the big bear that she liked and didn't play with it. My mother loved dolls, so every Christmas we were always given dolls. I didn't particularly take to the dolls. I only had one doll that I like, but I liked stuffed animals which I - because of my leg and being in bed for nine months, I had quite a few in my collection. But it was my teddy bear - her teddy bear that became the favorite.

Bianca: What did you name this teddy bear?

Harriet: Teddy, of course! And he could talk to me! He had a squawk box and he had a little Steiff tick in its ear. I still have it too!

Bianca: You'll have to show me after.

Harriet: Well, unfortunately, all that kind of stuff is up north. But, I was not allowed to skate as a child because they were afraid the skating—that I might hit my ankle. And having spent a fortune on my leg, I was not allowed to skate or jump. We played hopscotch a lot, but I could hop on my other leg. We played marbles a lot. But I think if you had to say what is - what was the dominant thing in your life, it was my bicycle. I had the first 20-inch bicycle in Sarasota. They didn't have the small bike. The smallest bicycle in those days was the 24-inch. And I had the first one. There was bicycle shop up close to Five Points that was run by Mr, Clark, Mr. Estes later on. Father of Pete Estes which I had mentioned earlier. He also had a bicycle shop there, but Mr. Clark was the one from the bicycle shop I remember. It was a red 20-inch bicycle, and when I'd go all the kids would say, "That's a funny bicycle." I didn't care. I would ride it all over town, except, we were taught as... oh, I don't know how to say this because it's so sad, but Sarasota

back in the 20s and 30s was a pretty segregated town. We were never allowed to use the “N” word. And we always were taught the proper thing to say was Negro and the Negroes lived in what is now the Rosemary District, which is out Central Avenue about five blocks from Five Points. The town of Sarasota, as you probably know, is laid out around five points. And, I was not - they said don't ride up to - in the quarters. That's their part of town, and they don't want you up there, and you don't drive up there.

But all of what is now North Trail, originally that had been called Banana Avenue. And when it got down to Palm, it took a dog leg and went down beside our house to Gulf Stream. That block remained Banana Avenue, but when Dad built the hotel he built it there on Banana Avenue. He built a lovely hotel. I have a newspaper clipping of the Jacksonville... when Dad built it, when it opened, the Jacksonville paper had a picture of it and named it the most elegant hotel south of Jacksonville. It was a very lovely Mediterranean-style house designed by Dwight Balm, who had been brought to town, his company, by John Ringling. He brought him down to design Ca D'Zan. Dad built Ca D'Zan, constructed Ca D'Zan.

And, I guess I didn't tell you, but Ringling, frankly, he never spent much time in Sarasota. He'd come down when he came down to Sarasota, he would bring his entourage with him. But because of his holdings and things, he needed somebody in Sarasota to manage things when he wasn't here, and Dad became a part of uhm, Ringling, what was it called, Ringling Isles or Ringling Realty Company. He was vice president and owned 25% of the Ringling Isles Development and did most of the construction, the dredging in. His first contract with the city of Sarasota was to build the seawall out around Cedar Point and down 25 feet from Gulfstream Avenue. He had... my sister tells me there's a record in the minutes, some of the early minutes of Sarasota, that Dad had gone in front and said this town will never mount to a hill of beans until we clean up the waterfront and have a seawall. And they gave him the contract. He also built for Ringling the first bridge over to Lido's or St Armand's, and they started building some spec houses over on the circle there, around there. Dad and a man by the name of Sam Gumpertz, who Ringling I guess talked into coming down. I don't know whether Ringling brought him down or he came down because of Ringling but Sam Gumpertz had several of the casinos on Coney Island or one, I don't know how many. But he came down, and he and Dad built, and John Ringling later became involved in, the first casino over on Lido Key. It was a wooden construction, and it had a sort of a boardwalk above the sand that went out, it was T-shaped. When it was built, it went out, and it was 3 or 4 feet deep at the end of the pier but halfway out, I don't know how many feet long the pier was but you had to be careful because if you went barefooted out on there, you didn't want to get splinters on your feet. And halfway out there was a place where you could... some stairs that went out into the sand, and if it was a high tide you could sit on the steps and wash your feet off and put your shoes on so they wouldn't be sandy when you went back up. They had wonderful little bathhouses, they called them. And imagine my surprise as a grown up when I went over to Venice, Italy, and out to the Lido Beach in Italy

there were the same kind of little 4-foot buildings, where they were changing, where you could change. And they were all painted as were the ones here in Sarasota in pinks and blues and greens and orange, and you could always have a great time running around playing catch and hide and seek around those when you went to the beach.

Bianca: At what age did you leave Sarasota?

Harriet: When Dad died, we stayed here and I graduated, as I said earlier from Sarasota High School in '39. At that time, as I said, there were rumblings. My mother went up to Baltimore to be close to her sister because the draft was coming. And both my brothers went into the service. Lil, who'd been working in New York, she said, "Mom why don't you move up to Baltimore and I'll come down, get a job in Baltimore." The boys were going in the service, and Sug came up and worked but she came down that same year after we were up there a while to work for the Bishops.

Bianca: So did you go?

Harriet: Yes. Lil said "And Harry can go to Goucher College there in Baltimore." And that's exactly what happened. I, we, went up there and the following year... oh, and my brother Leonard had been working, had gone up to live with mother's sister and her husband in Baltimore, so Leonard was already there. And we rented an apartment around the corner from where my aunt lived and were there. I was what they called in city girl at Goucher, which meant you commuted into Goucher. Goucher at that time was downtown Baltimore. My senior year they moved out to a campus. They didn't move, they built a dormitory out on some property they had in Towson, Maryland. The entire college is now out in Towson.

Bianca: So how old were you?

Harriet: 16. I graduated while I was still 16.

Bianca: Ok.

Harriet: Which of course, meant I graduated from college when I was 20. I met Lorin my summer of my junior year, and we decided we were going to get married. But he was, he had gone to join the Navy, and it was the V-12 program. And if you were in college, if you stayed in college, you could finish college then go directly to officer's training course. That's when colleges starting going year-round. Before that, you only did makeup work in the summertime. But then, during the war you started going year-round so that you would graduate sooner. And he went to officer's school. We decided we wouldn't get married until after the war. And of course, after he finished officer's training, he was shipped out to the Pacific. After oh, I guess about 18

months in the Pacific, he was sent to the post-graduate school in Annapolis for a year to become a meteorologist. Well that was just too tempting. We could have a whole year together. So he came back on a Monday, and we were married on Saturday. Ah, that's the way to do it! This year, taking a year to plan a wedding, I don't think is... So we got married and were stationed. We had our first child at Annapolis the following year. At that time he was, the war was nearly over and you accumulated points depending on how long you'd been in the Navy, and whether your service was overseas, and you were allowed to get out of the Navy on a point system. He had accumulated enough points by that time that they weren't going to spend money sending him back overseas. And he was stationed in Jacksonville, but he got to Jacksonville and they already had some meteorologists. He was sent down to the Banana River Naval Air Station outside of Melbourne, Florida, which you may know now as Kennedy Center. But it was then the Banana River Naval Air Station.

Bianca: So how do you spell his name?

Harriet: L-O-R-I-N.

Bianca: And you said the V-12? V as in Victory?

Harriet: V as in Victory.

Bianca: And can you give me some more details on how did you meet?

Harriet: Yes, we met... well, during the war, on the weekends the fellows that were training had off, and they were frequently in places that they'd never been before, had no friends or familiarity with. And they had USOs. And the churches in downtown Baltimore, because there was a couple of military installations around it, were encouraged to open on Sundays. If people didn't want to go to bars, they would go there, and the churches would have sandwiches and tea and cookies and cokes. The churches would ask the girls to come in and dance. They had jukeboxes and things like that. To dance and to meet people for several hours. Lorin's family at that time had a very early recording machine, and Lorin would take that down on a Sunday afternoon while he was going to college and make wax disc recordings that these soldiers - sailors and soldiers - could come in and make a recording and send home to their parents or their girlfriends. It was quite an unusual thing to do. And the suburban churches would be part of these things, each take different Sundays to supply the cookies and sandwiches and the girls. And I went down from our Episcopal church in Baltimore, down to the Episcopal church downtown where Lorin was making these recordings, and that's where we met. And I used to tease him and say he rushed me off my feet because he didn't—he didn't call me for about 6 weeks. And I thought I'd made a big impression on him. But once we started... we were both quite shy believe it or not, and it just developed from there, all during our - my - all during my

senior year and of course, he - in February, he graduated in February. I didn't graduate until June. And that June, by that time the boys went into the army and Lil went overseas with the Red Cross. She actually saw more action, oh, she and Lorin saw more action than they did.

And my sister Sug by that time had gotten married. Her husband was in the Air Force. And mother said, "Well, I'm going to go back to Sarasota," and she came back and bought a house there on Palm. Well, she rented the first year she came back and then bought the Perry house on Palm Avenue. They had a lovely big house on the corner of what was Mound Street, which is where 41 now turns the corner there at Selby Gardens. That part from there up to 301 was called Mound Street, and the Perry's had a lovely house. You have to understand, all along Gulf Stream were lovely old homes along here. It was just very beautiful. We, our house was at the other end of Gulf Stream Avenue, on the north—well if it, it curves. Right where I think it's the bank building now. I call it the "blue glass" building. When it was being built it was called the Pennard building. But it was right there, where 41 comes down and turns down along the bay. So when you make that corner, you're driving right over my sandbox because it was not cut through. 41 used to head out to 301 north of town, but during the Depression they brought it down to Palm Avenue and out through Main Street to 301 there by the courthouse, and hoped people would see our city or stop and have a coke or a sandwich or a meal on their way through town. Anything to promote business.

Bianca: So did Lorin ever send you recordings?

Harriet: No. No, it was his family's equipment and so it stayed in Baltimore. His father and brother ran the Stieff Piano business in Baltimore, Maryland.

Bianca: Can you tell me about some favorite memories of you and Lorin when you guys met?

Harriet: Well, of course, it was during the war and gas rationing, and I was living out on the campus so it was difficult. It was a lot of phone conversations because you couldn't, you didn't have a lot of gas. I guess his brother-in-law had given him an old roadster kind of car. Sometimes you couldn't get the door open very easily, but then sometimes he could talk his family into using their car. They had a place that was a favorite to go to in downtown Baltimore. It was called the Peabody Bookstore. It had been a speakeasy during prohibition. So you walk... the front of the building had been a legitimate bookstore, but in the back of the building it was a speakeasy. After prohibition ended, it was a very popular place. They had a piano in there and some of the students would come in and play—very popular with the college-age kids. It was a place where you'd go for dates and things there.

Bianca: So was Lorin your first love?

Harriet: Oh, absolutely. Love at first sight. We've been married 72 years now. That's a long time.

Bianca: That is a very long time. So going back a little but to when you were a kid, what kind of a student would you say you were?

Harriet: I had a reading problem as a child. I still do. I'm a very slow reader. I got through school, but I say one of my talents was sloggerly. I did fairly well. I was in high school, but the Out-Of-Doors School which was the high- yeah I'd say that - it was sort of the high point of my growing up. We went to school, the bus picked us up at 8 o'clock in the morning. And we went over, we always had breakfast, Dad was always at breakfast. Mother usually had her coffee and toast taken upstairs to her, but we had to meet inspection before we went down for breakfast. And we'd catch the bus at 8 o'clock and get over to school by 9. The daily schedule there was you sometimes would have an all-school assembly right as soon as you got off the bus. And if there were any announcements to make, you got off the bus and were sent up for the assembly. And Nena would make any announcements or things *garbled* just go right to your classroom. Each classroom was a separate little building, and it had screens from half-way up to the ceiling. You never got a report card. Your report cards were sent, were always written out report cards, were sent to your parents, and the parents were requested not to show it to you. See, this is part of the progressive education. Your education was individual, and as I mentioned earlier, a lot of the kids had different books because they were coming down from the north and schools up there and they were kind of tutored. Their classes were only oh, 6 or 8 kids, and they didn't call them class; they were groups.

Bianca: Very cool .

Harriet: And at ten o'clock I guess it was, you'd be there at 9 or it had to be later, 10:45, the bell would ring. There was just one bell outside the dining area. They'd ring it, you'd go out and you'd have milk and cookies or whatever, crackers usually, and you could run around and then you went back. The bell would ring again, and you went back to your cabin or call them classrooms. And at 12 or 12:30, I don't remember which, it would ring again, and you ran across over to the part of the school that was on the Pass. There was a bath house, and you'd change into your bathing suit and you'd have a swimming period for a half hour. And then you had a lunch. In about the 6th grade they started putting the lunch room on the water, over near the water. But prior to that, you went back to the main campus. And it was always a three course lunch. See, the Out-Of-Door School was based on a, I'm going to say health-oriented base. Everything: you're outside in the sun, eat well, exercise, study. But you had three courses. The first course was a salad, and the second course would be a meat, a side, or I should say sides. Two sides. You could request small helpings, but you had to eat everything on your plate. And then a dessert. You sat at small tables of 5 students and 1 upper classman. They were to monitor

them. The teachers all ate in the dining room, too, but they ate together. And after lunch you went back to your classroom and got a mat. And you'd take it outside and unroll it. You could either choose the sun or the shade, and the teacher would read to you for a half an hour. At 2 o'clock you went back for another hour of studies and then a period of... depending on the day of the week, it would be either arts and crafts or dance and tumbling or... And they had a wonderful thing, and I think every school should have it. On Friday afternoon, that period was a school service. And that period was devoted to either cleaning up different things or fixing things that needed fixing around school. In the primary grades, you sat on stools because they thought that made you sit up straighter and wouldn't slump in chairs. And you sat at tables, there were never desks. There were just tables and chairs, after about the third grade. But for school service, Friday afternoon you'd do something that helped the school or the community. I mean it could be anything, and you were assigned. You could polish some of the metal that needed polishing or you'd fix the stools or make stools or weed around the building. I think it's still a good idea... to make you feel a part of the whole school. And then you'd always had a 45 minute period of sports.

Bianca: So who was the class clown while you were at school?

Harriet: Well, I don't know. There were always some that were. You see, there was very little need for discipline in a small group. We never raised our hand to talk and, oh boy, was that an eye opener for me when I went into the public school. You sat at a desk, you had to raise your hand. I mean who ever heard of that?! And you did everything as a group. And then as I say I had a reading problem, and so I didn't take French. But in those days they didn't know much about what to do with people. I was good at arithmetic, and when I went to high school I was a member of the honor society. I struggled in college, but I... but sloggery got me through. I took to school; I loved to learn. And I don't think I'm dumb, but I just had a... I don't know whether it would be diagnosed as dyslexia. I imagine that's probably it, because I took, even in college I would take special reading classes. And I just don't think I perceive as quickly when I see something as other people to this day, and now I'm getting older it's getting..

Bianca: How do you spell sloggery?

Harriet: S-L-O- look! You're looking at the world's worst speller. I was a bad reader so I was a bad speller so...

Bianca: I just wanted to make sure.

Harriet: S-L-O-G-G-E-R-Y. I mean I just, I had to spend a lot of time, a long time studying and doing my homework. And just by sticking at it.

Bianca: Who was your friend - who was your best friend?

Harriet: Well, it depended on the season of the year because so many of my friends at the Out-Of-Door School left Sarasota in the summertime and went north. So the people my age... But my best friend was a girl by the name of Hope Willy, and she was a daughter of one of my mother's close friends. And they had a beach cottage over on Siesta, and we'd go over there a lot. Her mother eventually opened a knitting store down on Palm Avenue in the Miramar section. You learned in the summer it's pretty hot down here and you didn't spend too much time outside because of the mosquitoes. It was a time when my mother's friends never, they never worked, and so any house work was always attended to in the morning and in the afternoon you just did things that were quiet, and sit in front of the fan and things like that. But Hope had the second 20-inch bicycle. So we would do a lot of bicycling together. I loved my bicycle. I rode it all over town. Now that I'm older, I say I don't drive at night if it's out of my bicycle area, because I know all the streets.

Bianca: Where did you guys go? What did you do together?

Harriet: The movies were an important part of our life, and in my time the movie was in, it was called the Edwards Theater. You know it as the Opera House now. And it had, it changed movies three times a week. The good show of the week was on Friday, Saturday, and - no, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. And then Tuesday and Wednesday it was whatever, and then Thursday and Friday. By doing that you could hope to get people there on Friday and Saturday nights. But, we went to see every show that came to town because it only cost a nickel. And Sug and I would go up and we'd just - it was the coolest place in town. It was dark and they had a big fan that would scoot back and forth. Mother's good friend who lived down the street was a Mrs. Burket - Betty Burket.

Bianca: How do you spell that?

Harriet: B-U-R-K-E-T. She later wrote an article in the newspaper. Her husband was a lawyer in town. And her son was right in between. He was like a third brother as far as I was concerned because he spent a lot of time at our house because there were no other boys their age at that end of town. Jack Burket, he got his law degree at Yale, and he came back at practice with his father. And that company has gone through several generations, and it still a company here in town.

Bianca: Let me pause for a second so that - ok. Ok. Alright. So you and Lil used to go to the movies a lot. Did you guys ever have any other activities? Did you gossip? Did you go to the beach?

Harriet: Oh we'd go to the beach a lot - yes. And particularly with Hope because they had a cottage over on the beach, and so you could... oh it was fun. And it's still, although I can't do it anymore. One of my favorite times is beaches early morning. And doctor Joe Halton, they had a cottage just down the way from the Wooley's cottage. And we could go down to the beach and play any time we wanted, but we couldn't go into the water unless there was an adult on hand. Dr. Joe would get up in the summertime, they would move out there. Their house in town was located on Central and Fruitville. It's still there. It used to have a windmill in the back of the yard. I think they, for a long time they had a, it was sort of just an ornament in the front yard. Used to have a windmill. But anyway, back to Joe. He always liked to go in and take a dip before he went to work. He would go swim sort of laps up and down, and as long as he was there we could go down to the beach. So we would wake up, you know how kids wake up early, and we'd get in our bathing suit and watch for him. Poor man, must have driven him crazy! Because we'd watch him to go down for his morning swim, and then we'd go down to the beach and we'd play on the beach until we got hungry. Then we'd come up and have breakfast.

And he always had a Fourth of July party. And he and his brother were very good singers. And his brother was known as the singing doctor. He was not a medical doctor. I think he was more, I don't know... I want to say chiropractor, but I don't know what it was. Doctor Jack was his name, the singing doctor. But he, uh, they were both very respected. They were both very active in the Episcopal Church, and they sang in the choir. And Betty Burket played the organ in the Episcopal Church too. But they had these lovely parties, and you could sing and after it got dark, in those days you could - there was no ban on fireworks. We were only allowed to have the little fireworks, but they would go down on the beach and set off some fireworks. Roman Candles and all that, and then they had a big sort of gas balloon. Oh, I guess when it was inflated it would be 3 or 4 inches high, and they would hold it and light it and it would blow up the balloon. And then by that time of course, in the evening, the breeze had shifted and you always had the land breeze at night and they would let it go and you could see it drift out over the Gulf. Of course, little did we realize that that was not a very good thing to do as far as the fish were concerned, but you didn't know it in those days. You weren't particularly concerned about things. As a matter of fact, the sewer would be dumped into the Bay. In those days you'd ride along and see where it bubbled up, so you never swam in the Bay. You have to get out on the Pass. Of course, we're talking the town when I grew up was around 12,000 people, and that included the county.

Bianca: So a little bit back to when you were in school, I know your parents weren't supposed to show you the report card but did you -

Harriet: Oh, you'd look for it. You'd sneak - and it was a written. They didn't want you comparing yourself to anybody else, you were an individual.

Bianca: Did you get to see anything?

Harriet: Oh, you always sneaked and found them. You know.

Bianca: What did it say?

Harriet: I don't know, I don't remember. "Harriet has trouble reading. She's very good in math, always interested in the conversation." They were sort of like your kindergarten reports now. I taught Kindergarten for 18 years and, you know you'd try. They'd be very honest so that the parents got a pretty good... And it's funny, mother saved some of those report cards, and as an adult it was fun to read over them because the same characteristics that the teachers were pointing out, were the same characteristics, personalities that they had as an adult.

Bianca: That's sweet. What was your favorite subject in school?

Harriet: Oh, math and science. I mean I was... if they had had scuba when I was in high school, I would probably have been a drop out. Anything connected with the shoreline. I'd spend hours during some of the hurricanes or storms. The water would crash over the sea walls, and they would make - they'd crumble them in spots, particularly out along the Golden Gate Point. And they would make these sort of little gullies of broken rocks, and you could go out and you watch all of the... catch the crabs and I knew where all the sea anemones were and you knew where to... it was just part of your knowledge. You knew where to get what kind of shells. You knew if you wanted to get the little coffee shells, you could get those right there on Sunset Point—best place in town. And you could find them on part of Siesta, but if you wanted the calico shells or the cocinas or the angel wings, Sarasota Beach was the place for those. But oddly, Lido was the place to get the Panamas. But you just grew up knowing those things. It just became a part of you because you were just there watching.

Bianca: When you would go down to Five Points during the storms, did you ever go with anyone?

Harriet: Oh, yes. The hangout kind of place was called Badger's Pharmacy. And Badger's Pharmacy was right there on Five Points on the corner of Main and Pineapple, on the water side of Pineapple. And Mr. Boylston was the druggist. He owned the store, and the parents always felt that that was a safe place to go. But, well at the Out-Of-Door School of course, you were there all day. You didn't get home until 5, and we ate dinner at 6 because with Dad being in his business, he had to get up early in the morning. And Mother said it was more thoughtful of the help that they would have dinner at 6 and get back up to their home by 7, 7:30. I mean, those were long days. They came at 7. And, what was I going to say? Oh, a lot of my parent's friends they brought their help down with them in the winter and provided living space for them. And so most of my friends didn't eat dinner until 7, which was a proper dinner hour considering, but we

always had dinner at 6. But we were ready for it because we'd had - we'd been swimming, we had 45 minutes of active sports, playing, whatever the season was. Baseball was my game. And as I said, Priscilla Willard and Margie Hodson—she was from Atlanta, her father was a doctor and Margie was the niece of, Nena, Fanneil Harrison. And there were a lot of students that came down from Atlanta because they knew her family in Atlanta. Margie was a boarder. The Out-Of-Door School, Nena and Gabby were in charge, was a boarding school and Margie was always a boarder. And Priscilla, her father did a comic strip by the name of Moon Mullins which used to be quite a popular. One of the characters was a small boy, it was call Kayl. K-A-Y-L. And Priscilla's brother, younger brother, was always called Kayl. They were later divorced but Priscilla and Margie and I would cross each other at different stages in life. Not that we kept... we always knew where we were but we never carried on a correspondence. Whenever Priscilla was in town, you'd know it because the mothers knew each other. And we'd get together. And they were very, very bright talented girls. So I always felt odd man out, but they were more in the artistic, creative. They're very talented. But oddly enough, I think I led the more... as life went on, I think I led the more normal, happier life than either of them.

Margie started - oh, I am going to go into a litany now of sad stories. Uh, Margie was going to go to medical school like her father, but she fell in love with a guy while at med school and they got married and she dropped out. I lost contact with Margie for years. We'd occasionally exchange Christmas cards until one day up in Washington... I should have said that after the war, when we were married we spent, we lived for 60 years outside of Washington D.C. Margie's daughter evidently lived there, and Margie developed cancer and she came up to spend her last months with their daughter, and we got - she called me and we got together. And I - we were laughing and reminiscing of course. I would say, "You know I always felt intellectually dominated by you and Priscilla because you all were so - you could draw, you could write poetry. Lovely poems and that's poetry. But artwork. You were just talented in so many different directions." And she would say, "Harriet you know you never understood that we would have given any of that to be able to hit a baseball like you did." Because I would be captain of the team and this sort of thing. I was more of the active, outside - whatever was going on outside it should be more than what you did inside.

Priscilla, she came back. Her mother and father got divorced and her mother remarried, and her mother stayed here in town. I would see her occasionally as I would grow up because I always came back to visit mother every year here in Sarasota. Priscilla became a writer, but she found she could turn out pulp magazine, and it gave her an income. I think she must've - Margie had told me that she had published about 26 books or something, and Margie and one of Priscilla's children became very good friends. I remember one time Priscilla and I went over to visit Nena, who had been retired and was quite arthritic at the time, and we went over, and I remember Nena turning to Priscilla and saying "Why did you ever marry that man?" And Priscilla just turned to Nena and said, "He seemed to need me." But she became an alcoholic. Priscilla did. And ended

in a tragic accident. She stepped off the curb in Tampa and was hit by a car and died. That's the first tragedy I'm telling you.

My friend Hopey, when her freshman year she went to University up in Elmira, New York. And her freshman year she caught polio. It was before the vaccine, and she spent many years in an iron lung and eventually the lungs improved. The last time I saw her was over... she and her mother lived in a cottage over on Siesta, very close to where her cottage had been, but it was a different cottage. She had a fiberglass sort of thing. She could get out of the lung periodically. I remember one time it was after I was married, mother wrote me that Hope had been sent to the children's hospital in Baltimore, and one Christmas I thought oh, I got to go over and see her. And I remember driving over, and I hadn't seen her in a long time before that because she and her mother lived over in Winter Park for a while, and then came back to Sarasota. But I walked in. She had beautiful brown eyes. And you know in an iron lung they had a mirror like this so they could look around and see what's in back and see what's going on around them. And I guess I didn't know what to expect because I had never seen an iron lung. And I - they - the hospital directed me there, and I walked in and there were several of them lined up. And I could see those brown eyes. And it was just - I had to turn around and walk out and compose myself before I could go in. We had a nice chat. I didn't see her again until the last time, when she just had a fiberglass lung, which must have been 15 years later.

Bianca: How old were you when you saw her in the iron lung?

Harriet: Uh, well Rick was about 4 at the time so in my late 20s. Mid 20s, late 20s.

Bianca: So, Priscilla is P-R-I-S-C-

Harriet: C-I-L-L-A

Bianca: And her last name?

Harriet: Willard. W-I-L-L-A-R-D. Her father was Frank Willard.

Bianca: And Margie is M-A-R-

Harriet: Margaret. M-A-R-G-R-E-T. Hodson. H-O-D-S-O-N. Her older brother was a friend of my sister Lil.

Bianca: And Nena?

Harriet: N-E-N-A.

Bianca: And you said it was Nena something Fernandez?

Harriet: No Nena Harrison, and her nephew was Harrison Rawl.

Bianca: Ok. So uhm, -

Harriet: Everybody who ever went to the Out of Doors School during that period loved it. I mean everybody had a feeling towards it. You rarely see that. And you know, as Lil used to say, if you were good all week they let you come back and play with the boarders on Saturday because those were your good friends. So we always wanted to go to school on Saturdays.

Bianca: Uh, for - you said you were the captain of the baseball team?

Harriet: Yeah, well, the school was divided into two teams, it was the green team and the white team. I think they've changed their colors now. Now it's the Out-Of-Door Academy as you probably know, and it went through several gyrations in that it had a hard time. Harrison's father was in the celery business. And Harrison was a good friend of my sister Lil, and he sold the school. I think he sold it to a parent's group. It went through several different gyrations before it became the Sarasota Academy— I mean the Out-Of-Door Academy. And I think that it's on a very good... I'm very impressed with the, I guess he calls himself the headmaster and his wife now. In fact, I'd just came across something that I wanted to give to them. Some material because they were, a lot of the records had been lost and they don't know what happened to them. I'd given them the old school book of the photograph book that I had had of my childhood. Because they had no - they wanted everything they could find out about the early beginnings of the school. I'd just found some new stuff that I think they'll be interested in. I've got to call her about it this week. And these two tapes that I've found recently.

Bianca: S, I know it seems like I'm going back a lot but –

Harriet: Oh, yeah, no, please do.

Bianca: When you used to go down to Five Points during these storms, did your parents ever –

Harriet: Well we went down daily. It wasn't necessarily during storms.

Bianca: But did they tell you not to go during storms?

Harriet: Oh, no because our house was built with some cinder blocks. People came to our house. But of course I don't remember the early... there were two big hurricanes in the early 20s. '22 and when was it, '24. But I can remember coming down. I slept through it. And you can imagine my

parents weren't going to wake me up... keep her quiet, this is great! But coming down the stairs and all the neighbors were there and the rugs were rolled up and pushed against the doors.

Bianca: So you slept through both of those??

Harriet: Well, one I was an infant.

Bianca: That's cool and we're just about to finish up now I think. I just wanted to ask with either Hope or Priscilla, Margie, did you guys ever have any like fun adventures that you think would be fun to tell?

Harriet: Oh, one - one night - you know the word teenager was not around when we were, we were teenagers. And we had concocted that we were going to... well I guess it started with the boys. The boys had sneaked out of the dorm one night, and they'd gone out and walked around and came back. And of course they'd told us about it, and we decided, hey, we want to do that. So we concocted that Margie would invite Priscilla and me and our friends there and the boys. We were all going to get up in the middle of the night and sneak out. Which we did. And we decided well, we'll go over and, you know all the doors, oh, everything is open and free. And we snuck over to the bath house and got our bathing suits on and walked along the Pass to go swimming. We didn't want to go in the pool because we would - the Rawl family lived there and I think this was after Gabby had died but we knew Gabby lived there, the Rawls lived there so we didn't want to ... oh and the teachers, they all lived in a cabin there. And the older high school gals. So we didn't want to wake them up. So we decided to walk down and there weren't many seawalls along the Pass at that point. We got down to the point there at Crescent Beach and said let's go right here, and I said "no, we can't swim in here because there's a riptide." Well, having grown up here, I was the only one who really grown up here, "no there's a riptide there and that's dangerous. We've got to walk on down." So, we went down, went swimming, everything all innocent as could be. We came back, got our clothes back on, went back over to the school. By this time we're wide awake, so we decided to go out and around the Out-Of-Door School. We had a ditch that went all the way around it, to help with the drainage. But it was a place that marked the edge of school. We went out, and particularly that ditch, that was at the far end, was always dry there. And we were out there and just sat and talked and laughed and giggled forgetting that one of the teachers lived in a trailer close by. And so all of a sudden we saw the lights go in the trailer. So we ran around. We all got back in bed, and we'd thought we'd gotten away with it. And all of a sudden somebody walks in with a flashlight counting for everybody. Course, nothing had happened. We just you know, alarmed. Well it caused quite a problem and of course, all the adults were afraid that we had done something terrible or it was a sex orgy or something. It wasn't at all. It was as innocent as just getting up in the middle of the night, just sneaking out and coming back in. And so it finally resolved itself. And of course the school's way of handling things, well it must be a need for sort of some adventure as they get older. And

there was a teacher at that point named Dick Night. So he said, "Well ok, any time you all want to get up and walk around I'll go with you. Just let us know and we'll do it." And course, that's no fun. So I think they did one time get up and say yeah, let's go take a walk and they'd take a walk. Just like down, they didn't walk into town, that I know. But it wasn't the same group.

Bianca: Did you guys end up having to confess?

Harriet: Oh yeah - that was one thing about the way the school ran. You never got in trouble as long... if you broke something just go tell them and you were never punished or anything like that. They'd make maybe your school service next Friday to fix it, with some supervision of course. That's something you had to get across to any newcomer at school. You fess up and you tell it straight and you won't get into trouble. And so, because nobody was hurt, nobody stubbed their toe or anything you know, their only concern was.. And I can remember, I think I must have been much more innocent than, I know I was, much more innocent than Priscilla. And Mrs. Carlotta, she was our favorite teacher and we'd had her for several years. She'd called us all in and said "I may have been late coming in... did you all do anything last night that you shouldn't have done?" and I said "Yeah we went out." "Tell me about it." So she went to each one. I was thanked for not letting them go in right at the Point but going down because to this day I think there's still a riptide there at certain times of the year. But of course, what they were after was if we ... physically... had done anything that we shouldn't have been doing. And I didn't - I didn't construe it that way, it was just, yes we did something that we shouldn't have done. We got up and sneaked out. We shouldn't have sneaked out. And Priscilla just *goffed*. And she's - "no Mrs Carlotta we didn't do anything we shouldn't have done." It was just that age where you're becoming really aware of the differences between girls and boys. But we were all very proper. We'd gotten dressed and undressed where we should have.

Bianca: So you say that Priscilla - that you were a little more innocent than Priscilla...

Harriet: Naive, I guess that would be.

Bianca: Alrighty then - I think...

Harriet: You see my home life was more on the Victorian level. Hers was of the new - newer generation.

Bianca: Right, when you say Sug... that's short of sugar?

Harriet: Yeah and that was the nickname of my next older sister. She was 3 years older. She was the cute vivacious one the family.

Bianca: Alright, well I think that's it for today's interview, do you have anything else you would like to add?

Harriet: I can't think of it, but just saying that Sarasota was a wonderful place to grow up. You knew everybody in town and they knew you and you knew perfectly well if you did something, you better jolly well get home and tell your parents because you didn't want the neighbors calling and saying "did you know Harriet did such and such?" As long as they knew, they'd speak to you about it, but they didn't want to hear it from somebody else.

Bianca: My family was the same.

Harriet: And you know the doors were never locked. We never locked our door except when we'd all leave in the summer. We'd call Mr. Estes to come down and give us a lock and key and lock it up, and Dad would always lose the key during the summer time. Have to call him up and said "Mr, Estes come down and open the house up, would you please? We're coming home."

I remember one time, in the middle of the night... there was a big sleeping porch across the front of the house on the second floor and there was a noise down on the porch down below. It was enough so that it woke us up. And we'd went in, told Mother and Dad "there's a noise down there" and Mother came out and she heard. She got Dad up. Dad goes down and he wanted to go down and he says no don't go down, *garbled* Go down on the porch "hey who's down there?" No answer. "Who is it? What do you want? Is there something I can help you with?" No answer. About that time you could see somebody jump off the end of the porch and go around through the vacant lot next door and head towards Mrs. Johnson's, the lady with the bamboo, house. And mother was concerned and said "You better call the police because he may be going into Mrs. Johnson's house." So Dad called the police and says "you might want to look into this. I don't know what the problem is. They didn't do anything that I know of but you just, he headed that direction." And they went over. Well the next day I was following Dad around town, down on Main Street, and this young man walked up to Dad, and he says "Oh, Mr. Burns, I want to apologize" Dad says "what for?" "I understand I disturbed you all last night on your front porch." And Dad says, "Oh was that you?". When the guy told us his dad's name, he knew his father, Dad said "well why didn't you tell me the name? I never would have called the police." "Well Mr. Burns, if I had been - I was drunk. If I had sense enough to tell you my name, I'd have sense enough not to be there." And Dad said "well, guess you learned your lesson kid."

I'd love to tell you the story my aunt told me about meeting my father. My mother's father, well two things that I think are very important in my life and had long term effect on my life are that I never knew any of my grandparents. The last grandparent died when I was 2, so of course I don't remember. But Dad's father died 2 months before Dad was born, so he never had a father. My mother's father died when she was a young girl. I don't know, if I looked it up I could figure it

out the age. And he died of diphtheria back in the late 1890s, there was a big diphtheria epidemic. I guess my mother caught it and was sick, and I guess her father caught it from her. I remember one time my mother telling me that her mother once said that she felt a little guilty about my grandfather's dying, that she hadn't have been able to take as good care of him as maybe she should've because she was so busy taking care of my mother. And maybe one of the other kids had it. So they both grew up without a father when you think about it. And so I think they both went out of their way to be very caring, loving parents. Strict but caring.

But anyway, my grandfather's sister had a daughter named Hattie. Not Harriet, but Hattie, and she was named after their grandmother who was Harriet Packard Freedman. We always called her aunt Hattie, but she was my mother's aunt and was the same age as my grandmother. Aunt Hattie never had any children, and she married Leonard Hill. And she had asked permission of her sister-in-law, they evidently were very close friends and I don't know whether it's because she felt sorry for her, having to raise these - she had four children, my grandmother had four children and her husband had died. And mother was next to the oldest. And she actually had asked to name her, and I think she must've helped financially because I don't know what my grandmother lived on. She eventually got a small pension for the service that her husband had paid. But anyway, she had named my mother, and she would come up and visit them frequently and bring up all kinds of things. My aunt told me she always would come up at Easter time and bring them new Easter bonnets and outfits. So I think she kept in close contact there. And when mother graduated from high school, Aunt Hattie had married a successful businessman in New York and asked if mother could come and live with her. And that she would take care of her and give her a coming out party in New York. In the meantime Dad had come down here and bought this big house and brought his mother and sister down from New York to live with them. And his sister had been friends with Aunt Hattie up in New York and had invited Aunt Hattie to come down to visit. This would have been 1912. And as Aunt Hattie was a romanticist, she had told me this story. And somehow maybe not quite with the fancy details but the main part of the story has got to be pretty correct. But she arrived and, of course, in those days they arrived with trunks and great other things. And she arrived with mother and her maid. And she said, Dad met them at the train station, same train station, and helped her down off the train. He said "Now you drive with my sister in that car," and turned and saw my mother. He helped my mother down, off the train and said "You will drive with me," and then turned to the brother and said "Eddy, you bring the luggage" and drove off. And six weeks later when they left, they went back up to the station, and Dad had fallen in love with my mother and I guess vice versa. As the train is pulling out of the station, Dad decides... they wave, everybody is waving goodbye... and Dad decides, there's the love of his life leaving, and runs and jumps on the train and goes to New York and proposes to her. And another six weeks they were married in New York at my Aunt Hattie's apartment. I had a lovely description of the wedding from The New York Times. They went for a three-month honeymoon in Europe and came back. I have another article from the Sarasota paper that described how Dad and mother were greeted at the station with a new uniformed Sarasota Band.

They marched them down where they were received at the home with decorated with crepe paper and punch and cookies. And as I say, she was a romanticist, but it stuck.

Bianca: I love that story of your parents.

Harriet: I do too.

Bianca: It's so cute, so sweet. I'm a romanticist.

Harriet: Oh, I think everybody is underneath.

Bianca: Definitely but, alright, it's - gonna stop this.

Harriet: And I hope we haven't run over your time.

Bianca: No, we are on time.

Harriet: Oh, good.