

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

Interviewee: Reverend Jerome Dupree

Date of Interview: October 11, 2012

Interviewer: Jessica Wopinski

Dupree: Good morning, how're you doing, my name is Jerome Dupree.

Wopinski: Thank you. So I guess I'd just like to start out by asking how long, or you said you've been in Sarasota for how many years?

Dupree: 73 years.

Wopinski: Where did you live before you came here?

Dupree: I lived in central Florida. I lived near Orlando, closer to Leesburg, Florida, in a little place called Yalaha.

Wopinski: What was your reason for coming to Sarasota?

Dupree: I was living with my grandmother, and my grandmother passed so my mother came from Sarasota and picked us up and brought us here.

Wopinski: Oh wow. What do you remember about Sarasota from your childhood?

Dupree: From my childhood, I remember that when we came here we were living right there on 12th street, which later became 6th street, which later became Boulevard of the Arts. So we lived on that street, right in front of the icehouse. And this was the icehouse down near Lemon Avenue. It is now Lemon Avenue that dead ends right at ABC 40. And so we lived there in a two-story building, and at that time the Seaboard Airline train was coming through. It was coming right down the side where our house was located. So the first night, we didn't get very much sleep, and the second night we got a little more, and it got to the point that we didn't even hear the train. And it came by every night, but we didn't even hear the train because we had learned to kind of turn ourselves off to that. But the Seaboard Airline went right down through the middle of town, right down through the middle of town; of course we had Atlantic Coastline out near where the bowling lanes are right now, right out on Fruitville Road and Lime Avenue.

Wopinski: So would you say that it's been interesting to see Sarasota develop? Because really, you've almost been here since the beginning.

Dupree: It's been awesome, awesome. Not just interesting, it's been awesome to watch Sarasota develop. And it's been awesome to see how many places we have now that we didn't have when

I came here. A lot of people lived from the waters, lived from fishing, catching fish. We were one of those families that went down and we would go under the old Ringling Bridge and we would wade out there, and we would catch crabs, and we would catch scallops, and we would take them and clean them.

And, are you getting me?

Wopinski: I just realized that I forgot to start the video, but it's fine, you can continue.

Dupree: Okay, but we relied heavily on where Bird Key is now. That was water we waded out into, because they had to pump that water out when they were building Bird Key. So we went regularly fishing, and we would catch fish, we would get clams and oysters. We got all those things, and we made meals of those. When I was very young, I guess I might have been twelve years old, they didn't have but about one place on what is now St. Armand's Circle. Because St. Armand's Circle was not a circle, it was a sand bed. There was no paved area there, and I worked in a barber shop out there keeping the floor clean after the owner cut the hair of people. I worked out there, and I think they had one hotel out there at the time. I was trying to think of the name of it, but they had one hotel out there at that time. Now it's Lido and whatnot and it's just covered; all of that is covered with houses. We used to go out to Longboat Key; we would go out past Longboat Key Bridge. We would go way out, and we would go out there to swim because there was a lot of brush and bushes. We had to go through the bushes, and often the sandburs got on our clothing and sometimes they got on our ankles too. But we had to go through that sandbur patch in order to get out to the water. And so we did that for quite a long time.

Wopinski: Do you still visit some of these places that you used to go fishing?

Dupree: Oh yes, yes indeed. I do visit, sometimes I just take a ride and I go out and look. I look along Longboat Key and what used to be a lot of brush and whatnot on either side, now its wall-to-wall housing, wall-to-wall condominiums, wall-to-wall motels, there on Longboat Key. We used to go out there, and there was hardly anything out there. We'd go, and we would swim, and have a good time.

Wopinski: I read that you were a part of the Coastal Recovery; do you think that maybe the reasoning for that was because you maybe miss some of these areas? Or, what was your inspiration to join that effort?

Dupree: To join Coastal Recovery? My motivation for joining Coastal Recovery is that I had just retired from the school system, and I was counting on the retirement plan to be able to keep me in good shape. But when I looked at having to take care of my own life insurance, driving and car insurance, oh I guess I had about four kinds of insurance that I had to pay. I looked at it and I said, "I can't make it on this money that I'm going to have coming in," because it was about half as much as I had been getting when I was still in the school system. I said, "I've got to

do something.” So I knew the guy that was in charge of that, and one day I went to him and I said, “I need a job.” He said, “You’re joking.” I said, “No, I’m serious. I need a job.” He said, “Well, the only thing I have is a community outreach job where you would go out and you would show people different film and whatnot, showing them how to avoid becoming AIDS infected and that kind of thing. You would do that and of course you would work in the office.” The office was right there on Central Avenue, right there near 5th street. You would work in the office because Coastal Recovery and First Step was working together on that. So some of the staff in that office were from First Step, and the other staff was from Coastal Recovery. But we worked that, and we went all the way out Clark Road. Well actually, just about as far as the International Cemetery, I don’t know if you’ve ever been out there, but we’d go out there. They had a boys’ home out there. We would go out there and we would show them those pictures and whatnot, I mean show them those movies that we had so that they could have a good concept of how they could protect themselves. And so I enjoyed that, I worked that I guess, I worked at Coastal Recovery for two or three years, I think. After Coastal Recovery I started working... what did I do? After Coastal Recovery I sought to get back into the school system. I couldn’t get back into the school system at that time, so what I did, I just went ahead and did some substituting, working one-on-one, doing that kind of thing. Then the time came after I had been with Coastal Recovery, and the time came when I said, “You know, I think I’ll run for public office.” A young man, Reverend Eckles, that was at the church where he is now, Reverend Eckles had been here a pretty long time, and he was working on getting that place right over there that they tore down and building again right on Maple and Dr. Martin Luther King Way. He was working on getting that set up in such a way for retired people and that kind of thing. Just at that time, one of the two of us was going to run for office, and the Bishop called Reverend Eckles. I guess you know who had to take that up, and go ahead and follow through with it. So I did run for office. I thought they, since the one... Let me give you the background, the one who had served in that office was Delores Dry. She had worked for thirty-some years with HRS, no... Housing and Urban Development, HUD. She had worked thirty years in that capacity, and if you go over there on 17th street near where the United Postal Service is, you can go and look at one of the buildings and see her name on it. But she was only six months in office, and she died. So Reverend Eckles and I had worked with her, and since we had worked with her, we agreed that one of us would run for that seat. So when the Bishop called him to move, that left it to me. So I ran for the seat and I won. I won the race with 73% of the votes. I had said to God, “You know, I’ll run for this office, but I’ll tell ya, if I don’t get at least half of the votes, I’m not going to accept it.” So I got 73% of the votes, and I stayed in office until 1999. When I left office, I left as the mayor of the city. And being the mayor of the city was an exciting thing to me, because when I became a commissioner, I went to all of the departments within the city and asked the heads of those departments how they felt about the city of Sarasota, and how could we improve things, and that kind of thing. I got permission to talk with the heads of the department, and their employees and they told me how they felt. All that information was confidential, and it was for my use later on.

So getting all that information, I put down about 89 things that I wanted to accomplish before I left office, and I think I accomplished all of them except about three.

Wopinski: Was there any particular one that you still wished that you could have gotten to?

Dupree: There was a lot of flooding over around Children First, where Children First is located right there on Orange Avenue. There was a lot of flooding, so I told them they had to find out what was causing that flooding, and they did. They went and looked at some of those culverts in ditches, and they were just clogged with a bunch of junk and whatnot. They cleaned all that out, and they cleaned those ditches out, and the water could flow, and it really cut down. 'Cause people would try to go through water right there between Orange Avenue and 19th Street, and Orange Avenue and 12th Street, and that water rose high. They had to go very slowly, that water rose high. And if you had a low car, it would come into the car. So that was one of the things. Another thing was there on 18th Street where J.H. Floyd Nursing facility is, they had one of those culverts there, and they had no sidewalks. And yet, there was a store, Orange Avenue Grocery Store, where they had people in wheelchairs and in these little things they drive. Well, they always had to come down, but they would be along the side of the road and then there's a ditch right here. So I got the city to go ahead to put culverts in there, to cover that up, to put sidewalks there, and they did all of that. I had seven neighborhoods in District 1; I had seven different communities that I had to work with. I worked with all of them, and communities outside of the Newtown community as far as Land's End, which is the end of Longboat Key. I worked with those people out there, just working all over the city. I focused mainly with, we had a good deal of crime then, so I focused mainly on getting the city and the county of Sarasota to work together to get the problems of lighting dealt with. Because they were complaining about a lot of stores broken into and things of that sort. I said, "The reason they break into them is because you don't have any light there." At that time the city manager was Mr. Sollenberger, and I told him, "Let's go out in the evening. I just want you to see what it looks like." And he went out several times, and he said, "Man, it's dark out here!" I said, "Yes, is it that way in your neighborhood?" He said, "No, we've got lights in our neighborhood." I said, "Okay, that's my point exactly." So we worked on that, and we had lighting, a lot of lighting. But I looked at the lights the other night, and I said, "It looks like they've reduced the amount of lighting around the area." And yet, they complain about the activity that goes on, the drug dealing and things of that sort. But if they had more lighting, I sincerely believe that there would not have been crime, as much crime then, and I believe that is true now.

Wopinski: Why do you think that they've been maybe reducing their efforts in those areas?

Dupree: Well it's expensive I guess to live here, very expensive for them to do it. But it's more expensive when you don't do it, because there are persons who own stores and whatnot, and they have to close their stores early for fear that somebody's going to try to come in and rob them. And even when they close them, they have not enough policemen to patrol the areas. So if they

had the area lighted, people are very hesitant about going into lighted places. So it would cost a little more for them to keep the lights on. I know some of them during that time, they took a flood light and they put it on the outside. They had the flood light shine, right on the building there, but all of those things were very important there at that time. That's something that I worked on basically as a city commissioner, vice mayor, and mayor. I worked on making communities, developing friendship among the communities. All of the neighborhoods in the communities, all of the communities in the city or county, we worked on making them look at things together instead of looking at things separately. Looking at what their needs were as well as looking at what pluses that they had in terms of the things that they needed. The communities are still working together, and they're still coming together.

Wopinski: Would you say that you were instrumental in kind of, helping create the culture and sense of community in Sarasota?

Dupree: I was helpful in creating the kind of culture that we have in Sarasota. But with the communities working together, that made it safer for a lot of people.

Because, I had some cards, I thought I was going through, and I thought I put them in my pocket.

But there were times that some people would do things wrong, but when we took a look at it, we found out that it was maybe five or ten percent of the same people committing crimes over and over again. So when I got into another group, and he's been in that group too, this Captain Doctor right here (motions to Pastor Dr. John Walker Jr.), he was in that other group when I got in the group known as S.U.R.E., Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity. We took a look at it and we worked with the police department by agreeing to work with them, and if we saw anything that looked like crime, we'd call it in, and that kind of thing. So we worked with the police department, we worked with the school system; we're still working with the school system, the police department. We work with a bus group, because we wanted to have not only buses running during the day, but we wanted to have buses running and to make them available to second and third shift workers who had to go out on the beaches, or had to go to someplace that operated until late at night. We worked on getting that, and we were successful in doing that. We've worked on so many areas here in Sarasota; it would take quite a while to let you know. But what I think what is significant is when people are willing to come together, when we are willing to work with each other regardless of race, creed, color, or anything else then we find out we get more done. We're more successful in making this community a community with which God would be pleased. And so that's what we are still working on now, to make this community just that.

Wopinski: Are you still involved in some of these organizations, like the Sarasota government or S.U.R.E.?

Dupree: I still talk with the government officials. The mayors that have been mayors still come together to discuss things that they feel we need to recommend to the present administration, and the present city council or county council. So we're still active, yes.

Wopinski: Do you think that people in office now are still listening?

Dupree: Sometimes I do. (Laughs) Sometimes I do. There are other times I know they listen but they don't hear. (Laughs) But I think sometimes they are listening and if enough of us say it, they'll do it. But they still focus on that vote, and they know if they don't get the job done that needs to get done, then we'll be looking for somebody else next time it comes up for them to be re-elected.

Wopinski: Was there any project that you worked on while you were in office that you were exceptionally proud of, or you can still see its effects today?

Dupree: There are a lot of projects. I worked in areas from which I got satisfaction, things that were not... well I think satisfaction. If I didn't like a thing I was working on, whether it was volunteer work or whether it was work for which I was being paid, I worked with those groups. 'Cause I've been on about fifteen different boards. I've reduced them to two. (Laughs) But I'm still working two, I'm working with S.U.R.E. and I'm working with the Second Chance Last Opportunity homeless shelters and what not. And I'm working with other groups too, but I'm serving as a pastor of a church, and I'm in my thirtieth year, actually I finished my thirtieth year, I'm in my thirty-first year. It takes a great deal of time, a great deal of planning, a great deal of effort in order to keep things going. So I'm still working with the ministers' group in Newtown when I can get there, sometimes I can't get there, but I'm still working with them, and if I can get there they still keep me up on what is going on.

Wopinski: Were you always involved in the church, or was there something that kind of called you to it?

Dupree: I've always been involved in the church, I was teaching Sunday school class when I was in the seventh grade. I was teaching it to the juniors, to the junior classes in church. Then I taught the intermediates, and I taught the seniors, then I taught the adult women, and then I taught the adult men. Then after I taught them I became a trustee and served as a trustee and then became a deacon and became chairman of the deacon board. Then after that I served as the clerk of the church, I served in that capacity, and I figured that later on, I wasn't even thinking about being a preacher. I wasn't thinking about being a pastor, but I think later on that it was God that set me up. I had served in just about every department of the church and when I went to school to college and FAMU, Florida A&M University, I went there, and I was going to church right down the hill to Bethel Baptist Church and Reverend C. K. Steele was there at that time. He worked very close, he worked closely with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. While we were on the campus, we had a boycott, and we wouldn't ride the buses because they had mistreated someone on the

buses. So we had a boycott and Dr. King and one of the people that traveled with him who was Congressman Diggs, he owned a big funeral home in Chicago, and Congressman Diggs always introduced Dr. Martin Luther King. So he introduced him at that time, and the times that he came to Tallahassee. Congressman Diggs always had a kind of sense of humor, he said, "I'm Congressman Diggs," he's a big husky guy, he said, "I own the House of Diggs, which is a mortuary. And I hold on to that mortuary because I help people bury some of their problems." (Laughs) So then he goes on to introduce Dr. King. And Dr. King was some speaker, I tell ya, he was powerful. He was powerful. People had to stand outside every time he came. They would get one of the biggest churches they could find, but they weren't big enough. But all of those were good times, interesting times. I worked a lot with John Rivers. John Rivers served as the president of the NAACP on four different times. He has served more than now, but now he's suffering from a kind of dementia, but he's still interested in the community, still interested in helping whoever he can.

But when we came here, it was more of a little sea town. You wouldn't believe that City Hall was right down there at the end of Main Street, right down where Marina Jack's is now. City Hall was down there, and it had a big ramp running out from the back of City Hall, and all of us had to go down there when we got ready to go back to school. We had to go down there and get our tetanus shots, and make sure that we were in good health before we went back in school. City Hall, that building was serving for City Hall, it was serving for the health department. It was serving, oh gracious, three or four different capacities. I watched all of that get done away with, and they just kept building and building. Most of these subdivisions that we have now, and we have a lot of subdivisions, but most of those, the Meadows, Bird Key, and all of the others, those subdivisions were not here. This looked more like a seaport than anything else. We worked and we did what we could to be sure that we were helpful, that we were making some progress. I remember, I think shortly after I got off the city commission, I believe I was on the committee, and we were celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the city of Sarasota. I know they have some information on that even now, because Sarasota's just a little over a hundred years old.

Wopinski: How do you think being alive during a lot of the civil rights movements, and getting to see Dr. King; how do you think that has affected your activism in Sarasota?

Dupree: Oh it has enhanced my activities in Sarasota tremendously. And not only mine, but many of the people with whom I have been in touch. Many of our students that I taught when I was in school, and many of them that I served as principle over, they are out there now. They are out there, busy trying to help keep the community a place that is safe to live in, and keep it as a place that, it will be challenging. 'Cause we hate to see that every time that our young people, and I meet young people all over the county of Sarasota, we hate to see that they leave, and they don't come back. Many of them don't come back after they have been able to get their extended education, or after they've been able to go into an area that will be financially gainful for them. They don't come back to Sarasota. They come back to visit, but they don't come back to stay.

And we want to get more of our young people to, when they leave, when they get their training, come back here. We've seen a lot of young people to go through our churches; a lot of young people who are now working, and some others playing national football, others are working in gainful areas. I know a number of them who are doctors, and I mean different kinds of doctors, psychologists, and pedicurists, and ones that deal with children, what do you call them?

Wopinski: Pediatricians?

Dupree: Pediatricians, yeah. And they have an array of things that they have been able to do, but the thing that bothers me is that they didn't choose to come back to Sarasota, because all of those things are needed here too.

Wopinski: What do you think keeps them from coming back?

Dupree: I think that, I think where they go to school, and I think the things that they are able to see, I think that it's a great deal more exciting than it is here in Sarasota.

Wopinski: Do you think that it would be important to build up the secondary schools, or higher education... sorry, I'm losing my words. Do you think it would be helpful if you know, schools like New College, and USF, and Ringling that are in Sarasota, to kind of build those up? Do you think that would keep people here more or do you think it's other factors like maybe having more things to do as far as entertainment or something like that?

Dupree: I think that has a lot to do with it, having entertainment. Entertainment is one of the things, I think, that they might choose to take part in, some of them, there. But the entertainment of being able to go more places, and to do more things, there are cities that are larger than ours, that are more active than ours in entertainment.

Wopinski: It's interesting; I think that because there are so many beautiful places in Sarasota, the beaches, and the different Keys. I wonder if maybe the increase of tourism and the buildup in those areas stops people maybe from enjoying them as much, because you have to go farther away to get out of that.

Dupree: Many of the people do enjoy them, but what I'm focusing on is that I don't see many of the young people who graduate from the schools of Sarasota, any of the schools of Sarasota, I don't see them returning home to try to get a job at home. I don't see them doing that, and I just wonder if it may not be that they just don't want to feel like somebody's looking over their shoulders to see if they are doing the best thing or the right thing all the time. They want to have some freedom, and of course, many of them are doing marvelous jobs in the career that they have selected to take on. I just think a number of things kind of come together to keep them from returning to Sarasota. Now if they're outside of Sarasota and they are looking for a job, and they don't get the job, but they see some of their friends, and their friends say, "Where are you

working?” And they say, “Well, I haven’t been able to get a job yet.” They’re going to want to know why you haven’t been able to get a job; you finished school and whatnot. They say, “This is your home, have you checked it?” “Yeah, I’ve checked here, I’ve checked there...” So all of those things come into the picture.

Wopinski: So what keeps you in Sarasota?

Dupree: What keeps me in Sarasota? How many reasons you want?

Wopinski: As many as you think are important.

Dupree: Well, first of all I love Sarasota as a city and a county. Secondly, most of my family is right here in Sarasota. Thirdly, I’ve enjoyed being a part of the development of Sarasota. Fourthly, I think Sarasota hasn’t reached its peak yet, but it’s still moving to its peak. When I go down, sometimes we go a very short distance to Naples, and we see Naples still building. Naples is constantly building, and I think Naples is about the same size as Sarasota, but Naples, the people are building there, they are active, you see a lot of them out on the streets, and things of that sort. You see, it used to be that you could walk down Main Street during the day, the sidewalks would be crowded, but they’re not anymore. They used to have places; when I came here they used to have shoe stores, five-and-dime stores, like Kress and McCrory’s, and then more shoe stores, and Cinderella Bootery, which was a store for ladies. I mean they just had a large group all the way from Five Points there, where 5th/3rd Bank is located now, all the way down they had stores, and they had two banks on Main Street. Bank of America is still there, but there was a state bank, but it had moved further south. It moved up on Main Street. As a matter of fact, one time Main Street died. ‘Cause so many stores were closed or moving to another location, and it died. Then some businessmen got together, and they resurrected it. They resurrected Main Street. (Laughs)

Wopinski: When was that?

Dupree: Oh that was, that was even before I went to college, so that was back in, I would say, the early 50s. Because I went to college in ’53 and I finished in ’57, then started teaching. So that was that time, there was hardly anything happening on Main Street, but they gradually brought it back to life. More during the night than during the day (Laughs).

Wopinski: Did you enjoy some of the nightlife in Sarasota then?

Dupree: Oh yes, I enjoyed the nightlife in Sarasota. Sometimes I would go down there, but not much. Not much, but they came before the city commission a number of times and said the noise was too loud at night. Some of the people that lived in the condominiums down there, they said the noise. Because there was one place, there on Lemon Avenue near State Street, they had a building that had some kind of, it had a kind of roof that they could let down and open up the

whole thing up there. And so the music then traveled at night, I could hear it where I was, and I was quite a ways from it. That was something we had to deal with too, the sound. People would tell you how much sound, like if you had too much sound, they'd close you down. So it was interesting.

Wopinski: It's interesting that they're still having that issue now...

Dupree: They're still having it!

Wopinski: There's some sort of noise ordinance going through.

Dupree: That's right, that's right. That's what we were dealing with, the noise ordinance. Yes, now when I went away for school, matter of fact, there was a time that we would travel to Vermont. To Sunberry, Vermont over on Whitehall pretty far away from Burlington and Rutland and whatnot, but we would go up there and work. And we would work up there, and we would come back home. We asked some of the guys hanging around on the corner, "Where can I find a job?" "Man, there are no jobs here, there are no jobs here." And usually we were here about two or three days, and we had a job working. I actually worked, when I got out of school, I worked at the Ringling Museum. I worked at the Ringling Museum because they had a man, an architect who had been in the class of 1901 or something from Cornell. But he was to draw up a, [whatcha call it], a plan of the whole Ringling Estate. He used to draw up a plan, and so my friend and I that graduated from school together, [D. C. Bird], who is now deceased, but D. C. Bird and I got a job out at the school doing measurements and what not. Measuring the buildings and bringing the measurements back to the Dean, that's what his name was. And that man, he was a smoker. He had a cigarette, he would have a cigarette this long, the ash on the cigarette is from here to here, he's got that little cigarette, and he'd hold that cigarette in his mouth, and he'd be working, and I'd be looking for that ash to drop off. (Laughs) It wouldn't drop; I said, "My goodness," I said, "Mr. Dean, you need to get rid of your ash." "Hmm?" (Laughs) Then you'd put an ashtray in front of him and he'd put that little cigarette, and the ash falls in the tray... (Laughs) Oh boy. Yeah we've had some interesting times. I worked at a place called Smacks. It was right there where Sun, what is it... Sun Bank? Right there on Main Street and Osprey. What do you call that Sun? Sun Trust, yeah. It was right there over further from the road. Smacks, it was a place where people went to eat and whatnot, and when I first got out, I went there and the only job I could get was from five in the evening until twelve o'clock at night. I had to wash all the big pans, and pots, and all that stuff. I did that for a couple of weeks, and when the third week came I gave him my notice. (Laughs) I said, "This is my last week working," They said, "Yeah? Where are you going?" I said, "I don't know."

Wopinski: Anywhere but here?

Dupree: Yeah. And so before that week was up, my friend D. C. Bird and his uncle said they had some work available for us out in Ringling. And so we went out to Ringling and got that job

with the architect. It was easy, we could go at seven in the morning and we were off by three o'clock during the day, and we didn't have to work on Saturdays and Sundays. That was a peach of a job. (Laughs)

Wopinski: Do you still go and visit the museum?

Dupree: The museum? Yeah, I still go and visit at the museum. I like the museum; it's quite an attraction.

Wopinski: I have heard stories about a long time ago, still while the Ringlings were here, but for a while afterwards, that there were a lot of circus people around Sarasota.

Dupree: Circus people were around Sarasota when I first came here. We could see the circus coming in because they used the train. We'd see them coming in and we'd stand by the railroad, waiving at them. But yeah, circus people were here and we used to caddy also at the Bobby Jones Golf Course and their camp there, their circus camp where they stayed was out near Bobby Jones Golf Course. So we got a chance to see a lot of the circus and whatnot. Then later on the circus moved on in Venice, I mean their home camp moved out to Venice. But we had a lot of fun at the circus, we had gone to the circus and that was most enjoyable, that was one of the highlights of our years.

Wopinski: I can imagine that being amazing as a little kid growing up here, and there was, someone was saying, they used to have elephants walking down Main Street.

Dupree: Yeah, yeah. And some of the circus people lived with us when they came. Some of them lived with us because they didn't have anywhere to stay when they came in town. So they lived with us, and we can find out a lot more about the circus there. They did a film here in Sarasota and they used the circus quarters and whatnot to do the film. I'm trying to think of the person who played in it... Cornel Wilde, Cornel Wilde was the one who played the main role in the circus film that they did here. That turned out to be a good one, too. But I've seen so many things here, I've seen them say that we would stay away from buildings a certain height and now they have already built those buildings that they said they would stay away from. They're getting higher and higher. (Laughs) So they didn't want a metropolitan area, they wanted a city with all of the safety and conveniences, with urban amenities, but now they've pushed that aside. I never thought they would build buildings that was right out to the road side almost. You had a little bit of sidewalk to walk on, and all these buildings here, when you stop, you have to look around a building to see if there's another car coming, but they've allowed it to happen.

Wopinski: What do you think has changed in the mindset of city planners?

Dupree: I think city planners have found that as a metropolis, as a metropolitan area, they are going to keep up with other places, and attract the tourists to come to Sarasota. They are going to

have to do some things that are going, that will make Sarasota attractive to the people who come and stay for sometimes three and four months out of the year. So I think they have done some things, they had to make some changes in order to bring in new things, but there's one thing that I think they have stuck by, they said they would not bring in anything like an automobile, people who make automobiles, no factory stuff, you know, where there's a bunch of smoke that pollutes the air, and that kind of thing. They said they won't bring that in.

Wopinski: That's good, we've got to keep Sarasota cleaner.

Dupree: Yeah, that's what they want. They want a place with clean air, so they said they wouldn't bring that in. The two big things that we have now, sometimes I speak to the students in the elementary schools and whatnot, I've spoken a number of times in Bay Haven, and Booker, and some of the others, but the main thing that we need is to be as creative as we possibly can be in our building. We can be imaginative and yet we have to have some sound reasons for the kind of buildings that we provide, the kind of education that we give, that thing we've got to have some good imaginations, yet some solid sound mindedness.

BREAK

Dupree: (Speaking on racism in Sarasota) Yeah, well I think we still have some of that going on now, and I notice also that when they had that when after seven o'clock people from the Newtown community or any part of the black...

Sorry what?

(John Walker asked if the tape was recording & I answered yes)

Wopinski: Okay so sorry, after seven o'clock?

Dupree: After seven o'clock people from the Newtown community and the Overtown community were not allowed to be on the south side, go across, go past 3rd Street, which is Fruitville Road, at night. And if you did go south of Fruitville Road at night, you had to have some kind of credentials showing that you were supposed to be in that area during that time. And the police were always stationed at Five Points there. They're stationed at Five Points and they could see whether or not you were going. So when we started working at the bowling alleys, we set up pins at the bowling alley, that was before they got the automatic set-up. So when we worked there, we had to go to the little police station, it might have been half as big as this room here, but we went to the little police station that was on State Street; it was right next to a hardware store known as Adams and Houser Hardware Store, but we had to go there and get a permit. Am I talking loud enough?

Wopinski: Oh no it's fine; I was just making sure the music wasn't too loud.

Dupree: Okay, we had to go to that little police station and get a permit to be out until twelve o'clock, twelve-thirty at night because we set up pins from five in the evening until twelve at night. And so we were allowed to do that, but I got so I could go anywhere I wanted to go. Sometimes I was in the homes of white friends, we were holding a meeting or something of that sort in their homes well into the night. I think the policemen just made that a requirement to I guess, with the mindset, they had the mindset that when they see a black person then he was in that area and to steal something, or to do some kind of wrong, and we weren't. A lot of times that people have gone into stores and they have taken things, and it wasn't us. We were not the ones who did it, but they were watching us all the time, and several of them would come to you and say, "May I help ya? May I help ya?" as soon as you walk in, "May I help ya?" "I don't know, I have to see what you've got in here first." (Laughs) We went through that period of time, but I think some of that lingers on. I don't think there's any law on the books that says you can't be in a certain area, but in these subdivisions they probably have a sign saying, "Occupants Only," or something of that sort. But even there, even there is a problem; you know the boy that got killed by a security officer...

-Oh, in Orlando?

-Yeah. I think that was a subdivision, wasn't it, that he was in? Well his parents lived there; see that's the thing about it. I have a daughter who's out on Sawyer Road, it's a gated city, a gated area out there, and she lived there for two or three years, and some others were living there as well. But I think many times, I know many times people would come down here from the north; they don't even show them Newtown. They show them out Fruitville Road somewhere, and they show them the subdivisions, they don't show them Newtown. So many of the ones that have come in say, "We didn't even know there was a Newtown. They didn't bother to show us Newtown." Some people came, they were retired doctors or retired attorneys and various things of that sort, and I met them because I had been a part of several fraternities and whatnot. So I know that they come down and they take them, and they say, "They didn't even show us this area." And some of them try to compensate for not knowing about the area, they come down and want to work in the groups that we are working in to help improve Newtown. They want to have some input. They come and get their haircuts and the women come and allow their beauticians to do for them. But when they came in they say, "They never told us about Newtown. They never showed us anything."

Wopinski: Do you think that it's welcomed, their patronage and that kind of thing, or is it resented, like, now that you've found out about this, it's kind of a pity thing?

Dupree: No, I don't think it's a pity thing. They found out about it because many of them who wanted to do something in Newtown, they come there and work with the groups anyway. Some of the people that did come that they didn't show them or tell them anything about Newtown, they were regretful that they didn't know about Newtown because they looked around and they

said, “we can find some houses in or close by Newtown, and such as the house that we want to have,” But they take them out Fruitville Road, out University Parkway, and other places like that.

Wopinski: Do you think that that is maybe a reason why young African Americans aren’t drawn to Sarasota or don’t choose to stay here?

Dupree: That can be part of the problem. I don’t think it’s the total problem. But that can be part of the problem, but some of these young men in their twenties and early thirties and whatnot, when they come and they want to stay here, they stay anyway because the old saying used to be, “You know, I’m going to be here for a long time and if I’m alive and nothing happens, you’ll see,” that’s what some of the older people used to say. But the young people, if they come, they’re going to make something happen. Something will be happening all the time. They’re going to just walk right in and try to instigate, but not instigate for bad, but instigate for good. They’re going to try to make some good things happen that are not already happening and that’s good.

Wopinski: Would you say that you have been trying to do that?

Dupree: Yeah. I’m still trying to do it. That’s why, when they’re holding their meetings and whatnot, I try to get to as many of them as I can. I don’t say much, I just sit and listen to them and then if I can give any kind of counsel I’ll do that, but I’m still trying to help Sarasota continually be one of the best places that you can live in. Where are you from?

Wopinski: Well, I was born in Illinois, I grew up in Wisconsin, but I went to high school in Bradenton, and then I am going to New College now.

Dupree: Now what part of Illinois were you born in?

Wopinski: In Hinsdale. Then we lived in Joliet and Naperville. My dad’s is from downtown Chicago, in Cicero.

Dupree: Yeah, my dad lived in Chicago for forty-some years.

Wopinski: Do you ever go and visit?

Dupree: Well, we went to visit a lot of times. But you see, I didn’t know my dad until after we graduated from college. I was raised by a step-dad. And so I didn’t know my dad until we graduated from college, and when we graduated from college he came looking for us. And I was bitter. I was resentful. I was bitter when he came looking for us after we’d gone through all of those years. He said he had looked for us before. I said, “No. No, you didn’t look for us, because you had known where we were. You know that we was still in Yalaha.” I said, “You could have sent something, so don’t tell me that you’ve been looking for us and you couldn’t find us because

anybody in Yalaha,” it was a small town, “anybody in Yalaha could tell him how to find us, could tell him where we moved to.” And just like he found us in Sarasota after we graduated from college, he could have found us before if he had looked for us, he would have found us before. And I was very bitter, and I got it out of my system. And we would drive all the way to Chicago and back at least twice a year just to visit him. And then when he got ready to come, I am the one who flew up there and helped him to get all of his things, all of his pensions and whatnot transferred to Sarasota, and to get all of those things taken care of, help him get whatever monies he had in banks, and that kind of thing, and help him to get his clothes and whatnot together that he was going to take with him. Then he and I got a taxi to take us to the airport and we flew back to Sarasota. But he had been in Chicago for forty, I think it was forty-two years. And... What am I trying to think about? He stayed with my brother who lived in Palmetto, he stayed with him for a while and then he got so my brother and his wife couldn't take care of him. So they put him in a nursing home right close to where they lived. So when my brother died in 1998, January the 10th, and I was taking care of my dad then, I was checking in at the nurse's home and seeing that he had the things that he needed and whatnot; but when my brother died on January 10th 1998, and then a year later my dad died. I think my brother was about 66 years old when he died. When my dad died, one year and two days later, January the 12th 1999 he died, then that left me, and who else? The grandchildren, all the others were grandchildren, grand nieces or grand nephews. My brother was a preacher too. My brother pastored down in Laurel, Johnson Chapel Church, and he was a teacher as well. He taught in Manatee County, I taught in Sarasota County. He was a principle in Manatee County; I was a principle in Sarasota County. He was a preacher, and a long time before I became a preacher, he was a preacher way ahead of me, but finally I became a preacher in 1979, and I've been preaching ever since. So this would make about my thirty-third year preaching, and my thirtieth year pastoring.

Wopinski: Do you think you tried to follow in his footsteps or did you come to that calling on your own?

Dupree: We were kind of walking in the same direction during the same period of time. I had no idea of following in his footsteps and he had none of following mine. What both of us did, and what we had learned how to do, and did it as effectively as we could do it.

Wopinski: Was that something that you sort of grew up with, from maybe your mother, being very religious and involved in the church?

Dupree: My grandmother was very religious. My grandmother, every time the church door opened, she was there. She would invite ministers to dinner on Sundays and whatnot. My grandmother was very steeped in worshiping God. My mother wasn't as much that way, but she was a strong woman. She was a woman who, if she said do this or do that, you knew to do this or do that, and no lip, no talking back like some of the kids do today. No lip whatsoever. She tells

you to go and do this, you do it right according to the way she said it. So she died in 1976, and she was 64 years old when she died. So I guess I'm shooting for 120. No seriously, I told the Lord, I said, "I want to see if I can go 120. If I get sick now, call me home, but otherwise..." I just took care of two of those forty years; I'm in the third forty year now. I'm heading toward 81, so I'm in the third fortieth year. And I feel good, thanks be to God. I feel good. But anyway, my brother was well known. He had his home in Palmetto, Florida, and he and his family were well known there, but me and my family were well known in Sarasota. A lot of people knew my brother in Sarasota, the ones that when he stayed in Sarasota, but when he started teaching in Manatee, then he built a home in Manatee. Anything else?

Wopinski: Do you think that there is a lot that you see, being a pastor, that other community leaders don't see that kind of affects how you view policy or what needs to be done in Sarasota?

Dupree: Yes. Now state it again, restate that.

Wopinski: As a pastor, do you think that, or what do you see that would be different from other community leaders as far as what citizens need and what would be best for Sarasota as far as policy or things like that?

Dupree: As a pastor, I think that I see that we have more of needs of parents to start with their children earlier, and to train them, quote-unquote, in the way that they should go. To train them up starting early, because I notice that, as a pastor, I notice that there are many young people out on the street, carrying drugs from one place to another. Some of the young adults and teenagers would give it to a 10 year old or 12 year old, for them to take some dope or something to somebody else, and then pay them for taking it. And that's why I said that parents have to start early training their children in the right way, because once you train them in the right way, that dollar bill, that ten dollar bill, that twenty dollar bill, that fifty dollar bill can't get the attention of those young people, those 8, 10, 12 year old people. They send it by them because the police can't do anything to them at that age, you can't do anything to them. They can them and threaten to put them in a boy's home or something like that, but they can't get them for using it, they can get them for being in possession of it. It's a lot of that going on.

Wopinski: Have you seen that it's gotten worse, do you think, recently, or has it always been a problem?

Dupree: It might have gotten worse if we as an organization of S.U.R.E., Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity, if we hadn't started helping the police department and whatnot, identify places where it seemed like there was drug activity or anything. So if we hadn't started doing that I think it would be a lot worse than it is. But I still believe it is still going on, and it hurts me badly when I hear about adults propositioning 12, and 13, and 14-year-old girls and whatnot. That really hurts me, and I seek any way I can find to stop that kind of going on. 'Cause, to tell you the truth, when I was in the school system, I didn't hear any of that. But I

heard so much in the school system about people who were, about young girls being abused and whatnot. I just don't, I don't like to hear it, and I quickly try to figure out what we can do about it. The only thing I know to go about doing is to go from house to house, and talk with parents and have them use a little more vigilance on their children, and knowing where they are at all times, and knowing why they're there, and that kind of thing. When we were growing, when our children were growing up, we seldom let them go to somebody else's house and spend the night. We didn't do that because really we don't know the lifestyle of the home to which they are going, even though they said, "that's my friend's home." Friend covers a whole lot of territory. So we said no. And so they did good, and two of them are nurses and the other one is, our young man is a hair stylist. So we would do that. We have to watch all the time, yes we have to trust them, but if we start early with them, we know that we can trust them. But if we wait until they get to a certain age like 12 or in their puberty, in their adolescence, it's a little more difficult to try to get anything, because a lot of ideas have been developed by that time.

Wopinski: Why do you think it has become such a problem in more recent years?

Dupree: I think, I can't put it all on the schools, I think it might be a lack of getting the kind of training that they should have gotten at home, and be aware of this, or be careful about that, or be careful about the other, that kind of thing. I think it's a lack of getting that kind of training. The person who's in the best position to, whatcha call it, not just monitor, but be a mentor, be a mentor. I think its vastly important if there's a single parent and she knows a church or someone that she can get to, stop by and especially work with her young man or young lady, if she can get someone, especially a man to get someone to spend two hours or whatever with especially the male child. I think a lot of problems would be cut off. But the parents are out there trying to make a living, especially single parents, trying to make a living for themselves and for their children, and sometimes it just becomes overwhelming for them. I just believe that the idea of a village raising a child is still a good idea. It's still a good idea for parents to be open to being in touch with somebody that they know about and that they know have good behavior and whatnot, people that have good reputations and whatnot. I think it's good for them to reach out and try to get someone to work with their child, and kind of help replace that spot that the dad leaves when he is a AWOL dad. You know what AWOL means?

Wopinski: Yeah.

Dupree: (Laughs) Yeah.

Wopinski: You were saying that you like the idea of a village raising a child, but with the kind of development in Sarasota it's becoming a larger city. Do you think it's harder, or it helps because there are more opportunities to reach out to more people?

Dupree: It's going to have to be a community activity. When we get together and we say, now you know, we have this family there on my street, and I'll be willing to take my whole street, and

go from house to house, and sit down and have a talk with the parents and provide them with some information that they might not be aware of, and that kind of thing. And if we can get ten people to do that on the street where they live, and then we could get some others as we go to those homes who agree to do it on the streets where they live, and I think we could get the word out. But I think just one or two people can't do it, even the Ministerial Alliance, they can't do it because there's not enough for them who is willing to coming to a meeting and discuss doing something like that. They figure, if they take care of their congregation, they've taken care of enough, but I don't agree.

Wopinski: I can imagine that being difficult. I feel like there has been sort of a trend in the past maybe few decades to be more secular, and so do you know of or would you be involved in any programs that aren't necessarily just based out of the church, but meet these similar purposes?

Dupree: Oh yeah, I would be interested in a group that will undertake to try to mentor children, to let them know, but I always like to work through the parents. When I was in school, when I was a teacher in school, I would call one of my parents every evening. I would call them from the school after the kids were gone. I would call them from the school, and when I first started I would find out that some of those parents had had some bad experiences, because every time someone called them from the school it was bad news. So I made sure that when I called each one of those parents up of the students I had, I called them to give them good news. So when some of them asked, they'd say, "What now? What now?" I said, "What does that mean?" "What kind of problem is it now with him?" I said, "No problem, I called you to tell you that your son or daughter did a marvelous job today, and I would appreciate it if you would kind of speak to them about it, and kind of give them a pat on the back, buy them a cold drink or something like that." I said, "And I wanted to just let you know, I mean I wanted to check with you, to see if you would be willing for me to call, because I'm not going to call you unless there's a big problem, I'm not going to call you to tell you anything about how they're acting unless I feel it's a big problem." I said, "But I am going to tell you when they are stubborn and obstinate, and they don't want to do work that we have for them to do." I said, "I'll call you then too, but I don't think we're going to have many things like that, because when I call you to tell you the good that they're doing, they're going to try not to disappoint you." I know some of the students would come back and say, "You called my mother!" I said, "Yes I did." "Daddy told us that we could go out to lunch yesterday," I mean to dinner. I'd say, "That's great, that's great. So it pays to do a good job doesn't it?" "That's right, that's right." That's the system that I used when I was in the school system, and it worked very effectively. If it got to the point that I needed to keep a couple of children after school to do a couple of things that they had not done as well as I would have liked to see them do, I would call those parents and ask them if it would be alright if they pick them up at such and such a time, because I'm working to move them up to the level. And they'd say yes, and I did that, and they'd come and pick them up. And it was so effective that the State Commissioner of Education sent a letter, a congratulatory letter for moving those kids from being in the low grades so that they could go into a regular group of people. That's what I was

teaching then was chapter 1, and provided for not more than eleven people in a class. You got a chance to work with them more one-on-one than you would with thirty-some.

Wopinski: Do you still work with some of the schools or teachers?

Dupree: No, I've got my hands full working with my grandchildren. (Laughs) I've got five grandchildren, and one of them is graduating from high school. He's a great baseball player, but he's good in his academics too. So I have one, and the other one is a boy and he's trying to follow the path of the older one. Now my oldest, I've got an older grandson who is finishing college this year and going into law. So I just know that it works if you express some concern for the young people while they're young, and sometimes take them out and have ice cream, or take them to a place and have something to eat together. I think that those are all necessary things for any of us to do. I don't think a person gets too old to work with children. Children help keep you young. (Laughs) They do! They challenge you, so they help keep you young. That's what I feel. What else?

Wopinski: Do you think that you have maybe inspired any of them to follow your footsteps as far as being involved in the community or the county government?

Dupree: I'm going to have to think about that. There are those that have come to them and said, "I appreciate what you did when I was going through school," he said, "I was doing this, that, or the other," some of them have become doctors, and some of them have started their own businesses, and running their own businesses, and it's just one thing after another. I know it helps, I know it helps, and I know that one of the classes, I think the class of 1965 invited all of their teachers to come to a banquet that they had planned for them, and they wanted to say thank you for what you did in order to make our lives better. That gives you a great feeling; I mean just to hear some of them say that. They had some little awards that they wanted to pass out. So yes, it makes a distinct difference, it does. Definitely. Am I giving you any ideas? (Laughs)

Wopinski: I'm definitely thinking.

Dupree: So what area are you working in?

Wopinski: I'm studying Anthropology.

Dupree: Anthropology?

Wopinski: Yeah.

Dupree: That's a big area.

Wopinski: Yeah, it definitely is. I'm specifically thinking about doing cultural Anthro and then possibly specializing in visual anthropology. So that would be kind of making like documentaries and that sort of thing, or working on museum exhibits.

Dupree: Have you been to that creation museum? That Dr. Carl Baugh; he has a creation museum, and he has all kinds of fossils and things of that sort. He was on television the other day with Andrew Wommack. He's the founder and creator of the Charis Bible College, and he was over with Dr. Carl Baugh, I think it is, and Dr. Carl Baugh, he was once an atheist. He started working in checking out things and going into places, and digs that they went through to find fossils, remains and all of that. So he works in that area. Does that have anything to do with your area?

Wopinski: Kind of. That's more Archaeology, but it's in the discipline of Anthropology.

Dupree: Oh, you said Anthropology, okay, okay.

Wopinski: Yeah, I'm more interested in working with modern people. Maybe with the end goal of helping affect policies, and things like that.

Dupree: Anthropology is more closely related to Sociology?

Wopinski: Well it is a Social Science, but it's separate from Sociology. They're definitely related, but Anthropology is the study of humans, and specifically I'm doing Cultural Anthropology, so the study of cultures.

Dupree: Cultural...so how people relate to each other?

Wopinski: Yeah. I really enjoy it.

Dupree: I can tell. (Laughs)

Wopinski: So this kind of falls in the realm of that, you know talking to people; oral history is definitely a big part of Cultural Anthro.

Dupree: Okay, all right. So have you been working in that area long?

Wopinski: Well this is my second year of college, and I pretty much since I started knew that I wanted to do something with this.

Dupree: Okay, alright. Well, it's just a little after 12...

END INTERVIEW #1

INTERVIEW #2: November 17, 2012

Wopinski: In our last interview, you were telling me about fishing at the old Ringling Bridge; could you tell me a little bit more about that?

Dupree: Oh yeah. That was one of the joys of our lives, because it was not, fishing at the old Ringling Bridge was not only a hobby. It was not only a hobby, but it was a means of making a living.

Wopinski: So who would you go down there with, your family?

Dupree: Many times we would go with friends of ours. I had very close friends whose name was Walter Mays, Raymond Mays, and Daniel Mays. It was a big Mays family, and we used to hang out together a lot of times, especially when we wanted to go fishing. We were going fishing because we loved fishing, and we was going fishing because we were good at catching crabs, and scallops, and shrimp, and things of that sort. We were good at catching those because that was a meal. We got so many that it was a meal for us. So we just enjoyed going there even before Bird Key had been constructed. We would go there and just have a good time. We waded out in the water. We had to keep our eyes open though to make sure that those stingrays didn't get to us. So we would do that as well. But the thing about it is, when we came here in 1939, this was much, very much a fishing area, in 1939. Sarasota County's only, oh one hundred and some years old, and I've been here 73 of those hundred and some years. So it was more of a fishing area, and many people would do fishing, would go on Ringling Bridge and fish, and catch fish. Some of them would sell it, and others would eat it (laughs). So that's what we did during that time.

Wopinski: Would you see a lot of the same people fishing?

Dupree: Today, most of them are gone. Even our good friends, that big family, most of them are deceased. Walter, and Raymond, and Daniel, and Julius, and who else? They had about five or six sisters and all but about one or two of those are gone.

Wopinski: You said you would often go with the same group of people fishing; how would you describe the sense of community that the fishing brought?

Dupree: The fishing in the community?

Wopinski: Yeah, like you said that you would often go with the same family, and you would go to the same places; were the same people very often there making up this fishing community?

Dupree: We would get together and go down together, and we would see other people there fishing, yeah. A lot of people within our community depended on fishing for some of their meals. Food wasn't that expensive then. We could have, I would say, \$5 and go to the store, and buy enough stuff to feed the whole family. You can't do that anymore.

Wopinski: No, you can't buy a lunch for that.

Dupree: If you feed a family of three to five people, that's going to take \$50, not \$5.

Wopinski: So you were also talking about going out to Longboat Key to swim; could you tell me more about that?

Dupree: Yeah, Longboat Key, I mean, we had to go way out Longboat Key. Almost to what they now refer to as Land's End. Because, you go so far out on Longboat Key and there's a bridge, and when you cross that bridge you find yourself, even though you're going what looks like south, you find yourself winding up back into Manatee County. So how that happens I don't know, but you find yourself back in Manatee County. So we would go way out, about as far as you could go, and then we had to park our cars kind of off of the road, and walk through patches of sandburs or bushes. We had to walk through there and we just made us a little path to the water, so we could get to the water. But that's where we had to go in order to swim, but when they started building on Longboat Key, we couldn't go there anymore because they were building on all that property that we went out there and played on and swam in the water and whatnot. They started building on that property, and I don't know if you've been to Longboat Key, but I call it wall-to-wall buildings. From I mean everywhere along the water, everywhere. Just all kinds of buildings; businesses, and so on. But I haven't been out there in quite a while now.

Wopinski: Have you ever been to, this may be where you're talking about, it's on Longboat Key, almost underneath the bridge to Anna Maria where there's that kind of hook with all the dead trees?

Dupree: Right underneath the bridge to Anna Maria? Yeah.

Wopinski: It's on the Longboat Key side.

Dupree: Yeah, you come through St. Armand's, you come on and you cross a bridge, that bridge used to be a humpback bridge, but it's not a humpback anymore. So you cross one bridge and then you go down, and you go to your right as if you were going to Mote Marine, ya know where Mote is? And if you don't go to Mote Marine, you go again, look like you're going south across the bridge, yeah that's the bridge you're talking about? Or are you talking about one farther than that?

Wopinski: I was talking about the one farther than that, between Longboat Key and Anna Maria.

Dupree: Yeah, that's the one that I call Land's End. That's the bridge you cross, that ends the Longboat Key area, and they call that Land's End. I used to go out there to sell insurance when I was working for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. We haven't done any fishing out there, not that far.

Wopinski: Do you still fish around here?

Dupree: I haven't fished in a very long time. The only thing I fish with now is money (laughs).

Wopinski: At the grocery store?

Dupree: Yeah. I just bought some, whatcha call it? Lapia? Or...

Wopinski: Tilapia?

Dupree: Yeah I just bought some of that yesterday from Publix.

Wopinski: Do you like getting fish from the water or the store better?

Dupree: I like getting fish from the water better. There are some people who still come by selling fish, and we buy fish. Now, I have a cousin who lives in Port St. Lucy, and he has a boat and he goes fishing. And he catches big red fish, and other kinds of fish. Once he brought a cooler, and it was about as long, just about from that wall to where you were sitting on your right side (about 4 feet). But he brought that thing full of fish, and we shared it with our sister, and some other people in the community, and we took the rest of it and put it in the freezer. The thing about putting fish in the freezer, if you don't clean it before you put it in the freezer, you can let it stay there for a long period of time. And when you take it out and clean it, it's just as fresh as it was when you put it in. Did you know that?

Wopinski: No.

Dupree: Well it stays fresh... it stays fresh. Nobody in the house likes to clean fish but my wife, and she cleans it because she used to run a fishing market for her dad. And she knows all about how to clean fish, and how to cut it, and filet it, and whatnot. She has those skills, so she'll clean it, but nobody else wants to clean fish; I know I don't like to clean fish. (Laughs) I don't mind eating it.

Wopinski: Did she do that when she was younger?

Dupree: Yes. Yes, she was, I think, she was in her early teens when she worked in the fish market. Her daddy would have her, 'cause she could count; she was always able to count quickly. But her daddy would let her do all of the selling of the fish, because by the time the people finished picking out the fish that she had, she already had figured it up in her mind how much it costs. She has a good mind for figures, for counting and whatnot. So she enjoys cleaning the fish, she enjoys cooking the fish, and we enjoy eating the fish.

Wopinski: That's a nice trade off.

Dupree: Yes it is, isn't it?

Wopinski: Where was the fish market?

Dupree: The fish market was right there on the northeast corner of Central Avenue and 6th Street. It's not 6th Street anymore; it's called the Boulevard of the Arts. So it's a little building right on that corner there. I don't think anything is in it right now, but it's right on the northeast corner. So that was where they had their fish market.

Wopinski: Did you meet her when you were both teenagers living here?

Dupree: No, I didn't meet her until I was... let's see... I was grown when I met her. And she was, no she wasn't... I'm about ten years older than she is. But when I met her, she was nineteen and I was twenty-eight, so I'm nine years older than she is. And she swore to her Godmother that she would not marry me, 'cause she said, "marry that old man? Not me!" And she married that old man, and we're in our fifty-second year (laughs).

Wopinski: How did you convince her?

Dupree: I didn't have to. I didn't have to. I didn't try really. All I did was ask for her company, and her Godmother had known me a long time, 'cause she was living with her Godmother then. But she had known me a long time, and so she told me I could come and visit, and I'd visit them. I would take her riding; we would ride and I would sing cowboy songs to her. I enjoyed singing cowboy songs to her. I had bought a Nineteen-fifty-three Chevrolet, and I was driving that, and it had a good heater in it, especially during the wintertime. You'd put that heater on and it was warm, and I'd just drive along, and we'd talk and whatnot. I would sing songs to her... (Sighs). We were together for quite a while, about a year or so I guess. Then I asked her about marrying and she said, "I don't want to marry." I said, "Okay..." So I just kept picking her up, taking her to the movies, taking her to places to eat, not trying in any way to have any sexual affair with her, or anything, just enjoying each other, just having a good time together. And every so often I'd ask her, I'd say, "You ready to get married?" She said, "Nope." I said, "Okay." So then I went away to school. I went away to summer school, and I was gone all summer long. And when I came back, I didn't let her know I was coming. So when I went to the house, I knocked on the door and she opened the door. Her hair was all messed up, and she had on some raggedy looking garment. She said, "Hey, come in." And I came in, and I spoke to her Godmother and her Goddad, and they said, "Have a seat." I had a seat. I sat there for a while, and she said, "How've you been doing?" I said, "I've been doing good." And then I said to her, "I know you think I'm going to tell you that you ought to comb your hair..." She said, "No, you're not going to tell me that. If I had known you were coming I would have." (Laughs) I said, "Okay..." So what happened is, later on she told me, she said, "That time that you were away," she said, "that was so hard because I had been accustomed to you picking me up and taking me places..." And I wouldn't let her spend any money on me, I always was the spender, I would be the one that spent the money, but I wouldn't let her spend anything on me. But she convinced me after we got married that it wasn't fair for me to always want to pay the bill, and not let her spend anything. I said, "Okay, alright." So now I still pay all of the bills, she only spends something when I ask her

to. She might take care of some insurance or something of that sort, but other than that I buy all the meals, pay the mortgage, everything else that needs to be paid.

Wopinski: Do you still take her on rides?

Dupree: Yup. I still take her on rides. For a while I was taking her down to Marina Jack's. We would park in the evening, and we would just kind of talk, and watch the boats going in and whatnot. And feeling that breeze, you had the car window down, and that breeze just blowing through there. It was marvelous, but we had one problem. We had a tendency to go to sleep (laughs). We'd go to sleep and wake up about ten or eleven o'clock at night. So we stopped doing that. That's what we did when we used to go to the drive-in movie. We'd go to the drive-in movie, and we'd roll the windows up so that just enough air could be coming through, and we'd watch the movie. That's when we had the children and they were small. We'd watch the movie and all of us would fall asleep. The man would come knock on the window, and we'd wake up, and he'd say, "It's time to go home" (laughs).

Wopinski: That's hilarious.

Dupree: Yeah, that was interesting, I mean, it was enjoyable. Sometimes we'd go down to Marina Jacks, sometimes we'd go over and park by...the purple cow... what do you call it?

Wopinski: The Van Wezel?

Dupree: The Van Wezel, yeah. So sometimes we'd go over by Van Wezel and park out there, looking out onto the water. It's such a relaxing place, so that's what we would do. But anyway, we would do that kind of thing. And periodically we still do it, but we keep so busy with other things now, we don't get as much chance to just spend some by-ourselves time. There's one thing that we did do. Ever since we've been married, we never missed but one anniversary, not celebrating it. And I guess we celebrated even that one. That anniversary, we were so tired. We had one of those little two-person couches, and we were sitting there just talking and it was our anniversary. I said, "Where should we go?" She said, "I don't feel like going anywhere." I said, "I don't either." I said, "Happy Anniversary." And we leaned on each other and went to sleep. But all of the other anniversaries... one time we had that car take us all over. Another time we went to a Bomber Squadron off of 41. They used to have some restaurant out there that they called Bomber Squadron, but it's no longer there. But we'd go there and eat. Sometimes we'd go to Siesta Key, way out Siesta Key, and we would eat at one of the restaurants there. One time we went to the pizza place...No, no we didn't... We went to St. Armand's Circle, Columbia Restaurant, and we ate there. Then we came back home, and we picked up the children, and we took the children to a pizza place, and all of us ate pizza (laughs). We didn't eat any 'cause we had already eaten. But then one time we went and checked in at the Hyatt, and we told them then that it was our thirty-first wedding anniversary, and they put us in the Executive Suite. You had to have a key to get into the Executive Suite, so we went in to that Suite, and it was nice. We

came down when it was time for dinner, we ate, and someone asked us, "What state are you from?" We said, "Florida." They said, "What city?" We said, "Sarasota" (laughs). They said, "Sarasota?" I said, "Yes, we live in Sarasota." So that was interesting, that was a good experience. Then one time my close friend, when I was working with Lonnie Ward, he was president of the African American Chamber of Commerce; he paid for us, shortly after the Ritz-Carlton had been built, he paid for us to spend the night in the Ritz-Carlton on our anniversary. So, it was just different places we went every time our anniversary came up, and we still celebrate our anniversary. We're getting ready to celebrate one on the 18th of December. That'll be our fifty-second. So we've had a good life together, we enjoy one another. Sometimes we get into a few heated debates, but we are wise enough that when we get in heated debates, if our granddaughter is there, she'll say, "What are you all arguing about?" I say, "We're not arguing, we're just doing a kind of heated discussion." And we'll keep talking, and after a while one of us will say, "I'm not participating in this conversation anymore." And the other one will say, "Neither am I." Then we both laugh; it's all over. I just married a couple last Sunday, this past Sunday evening out at Lakewood Ranch Country Club. A young, energetic, full of laughter and joy, two young people. It was a pleasure for me to marry them, I had already counseled them, and it was a pleasure for me to marry them. They just had such joy, and the now wife asked me, she said, "Is there anything that I can do for you?" I said, "Yes. Keep that joy that you have now. Keep that joy." She said, "I will." She's kind of smaller than he is. His name is Nick Garcia, his name is Nicholas, but he's called Nick Garcia. Her name is Nina Bryant, but now her name is Mrs. Nick Garcia. Even the reception was fantastic. Prior to the reception, between the exchange of vows and whatnot, and the reception, I think they spent about an hour and fifteen minutes taking pictures. So they should have a whole bunch of pictures. But it was a beautiful wedding. A lot of people showed up, looked like about two hundred, two-hundred-and-fifty people showed up to it.

Wopinski: What was your wedding like?

Dupree: My wedding was a simple one, and yet it was a crowded one. We got married in our church, in Bethlehem Baptist Church. At that time it was located right on the corner of Central Avenue and 7th Street. 7th Street is just one street north of Boulevard of the Arts. So we got married in our church, Bethlehem Baptist Church, and we had a pretty simple wedding, but the church was packed. It was packed, I mean packed. People were standing up around the walls during the wedding ceremony. After the wedding ceremony we went down to the basement for the wedding reception. But it was good, it was very good. I was sweating though; I don't know why I was sweating so much. My best man had a handkerchief and he kept dabbing my face (laughs).

Wopinski: Were you nervous?

Dupree: Yeah, I was nervous (laughs). Yes I was.

Wopinski: Was she?

Dupree: I think she got nervous before the wedding, because before the wedding she was having cramps in her stomach. People were talking like, “Well she must be pregnant.” She wasn’t pregnant, she was nervous. So we just got some ginger ale, and she sipped the ginger ale, and all of that went away. Yeah, she was nervous prior to it, I was nervous during the wedding. Yeah, it was a good time, and the night of our wedding, we stayed in the home of a friend, because the next morning we were getting up, and heading on our honeymoon. We went to Miami Beach for our honeymoon. We had relatives that lived in Miami, and the wife of our uncle that lived in Miami was a caterer, so she kept a lot of food in her house. So when we got up the next morning and we drove to Miami, and we stayed at Uncle Clarence’s house, his wife had done some catering and she had a lot of food leftover. She told us when she got up that next morning, “Okay kids, there’s a lot of food there. You can take as much as you want, but eat all that you take.” In other words, don’t waste the food. That was a good experience, a very good experience. We had plans to go to the Bahamas, but we chose not to go to the Bahamas because we had a blowout on our way to Miami. The car just swerved right around and landed in the median, and so we had to get a new tire, and make sure that the rim was not bent or anything. So we chose not to go to the Bahamas. Later on we went a lot of times, but we chose not to go, we just stayed in Miami for our honeymoon.

Wopinski: That’s crazy to think of having a near death experience on your honeymoon.

Dupree: Yeah, yeah. I could tell you something that was worse than that though, there was something else that happened that was worse than that during our honeymoon. I bet you can guess what it was - it was woman-stuff that happened (laughs). I said, “Oh Lord...”

Wopinski: Well, at least you had the nice food.

Dupree: Yeah, yeah. It was still a good honeymoon. My wife and I were walking in the downtown area of Miami, and we saw a man driving a Rolls Royce. We were looking at it, and he came back, I guess he had gone inside, and went in to get some peanuts, and they did smell good. Some parched peanuts are good. And he said, “You like that car?” We said, “Yes sir, I like that one.” He said, “Well I’ll sell it to you if you want to buy it. I’m not quite ready to sell it yet, but I’ll let you know when I get ready to sell it.” I said, “Alright.” And then my wife said, “Sir, excuse me, can I have some of your peanuts?” (Laughs) He said, “Sure.” And he gave her some. I said, “You did what I wanted to do, but wouldn’t. I wouldn’t ask him.” Those peanuts smelled so good. Yeah, we had a lovely honeymoon. We’ve had many since then, many of them. When we go on our vacation, we ended up not going on one this summer, but when we’re going on vacation; we just go to the same place. We go down to Naples, we check into the hotel that we have been going to for years, and we just spend time with each other. We get up at ten or eleven in the morning, we get cleaned up, and we go out and do some shopping, and have some looking

around. But before we come back in, we eat our dinner, and then we stay in until the next day, because we came to rest, so that's what we plan to do. Except for the shopping around, we rest.

Wopinski: That's how vacations should be.

Dupree: Yup. And if we are to be there on a Sunday, there's one church that we attend, and that's a friend of ours, one of our minister friends. Reverend Maxwell who is now in Progress Village First Baptist Church up in Tampa, and he has a friend that has a Faith Unity Church that's there in Naples. So we attend that church each time we go there. We haven't gone this year because I was having trouble with my eyes, and plus I had a car bang-up, a wreck with the car. I kind of messed up the lights and whatnot. I didn't feel comfortable driving that distance, and it's kind of hard to go on a vacation if you're going to have somebody else drive you. And you don't want to catch a bus to go on a vacation (laughs). What else?

Wopinski: In our last interview, we talked a bit about watching Sarasota develop. How would you say that Sarasota has changed the most since you've been here?

Dupree: Sarasota has changed most in the educational area, I mean in terms of facilities where you can go in order to study for school. There are a number of facilities where you can go here in Sarasota to study. There are satellites, for instance, we didn't have a lot of the colleges. When I came there was no New College, there was no University of South Florida here. There was none of the colleges that they have here. So Sarasota has changed a great deal in its educational system. I think to a large extent, it has improved over the years. The other way that Sarasota has changed is in its building. More people now own homes in Sarasota than I have ever seen, especially in our neighborhood, in the Newtown area. More people own homes than have owned them before. For a long time we lived in homes that were rented or leased, but now many of the people own their own homes. They've already paid for them, they've raised their children in them, and so you find out that a lot of that has happened. The ones that have run into trouble in Sarasota, that have run into foreclosures and whatnot are those who wanted to get away from the hood, from the neighborhood. That's what I call it, the hood. They want to get away from it so they get one of these big expensive houses out University Parkway or someplace like that, and they get to the point where they can't afford it, and many wind up with a foreclosure. We've been in the same house, but not the same one that we started in. We started in a home right over on 12th Street, and 12th Street became 6th Street, and 6th Street became Boulevard of the Arts. So we started on 12th Street down near Lemon Avenue. There was a railroad track that came right through the middle of downtown. It was called the Seaboard Airline Road. The other one that was out near the bowling lanes, out near Lime Avenue, was called Atlantic Coastline. So you had two trains coming in and going out. So we lived right next to the railroad and for the first week, maybe three days, the train would come by at night and it would wake us up. After that, we didn't hear a thing. We stayed there until we moved up on the other end of 12th Street, by McCown Towers is. You know where McCown Towers is? Okay, that's up near Cocoanut. We

moved up between Coconut and Central. We stayed there for a while. We were renting all that time. But then when we got ready to build, we built our first house out at 2738 North Orange Avenue. Going north on Orange Avenue when you're going down Dr. Martin Luther King Way and you cross Dr. Martin Luther King Way, the first house, the first low house on the right is the house that we built at 2738. So Dr. Martin Luther King Way was first 33rd Street, then it became 27th Street, and now it's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way. And so we built a home there, and after we had lived there, it started flooding in that area. We built that home there in 1961, and in 1969 we moved out of that house and rented it. Because they had handled the flooding condition, but we rented out the house, and we moved to where we are now on 17th Street east of Central Avenue. So that's where we've been now since '69, how many years is that? About 43 years we've been living in the same place.

Wopinski: Do you know the neighborhood very well then?

Dupree: I know the neighborhoods of Sarasota very well. Many of the areas of Sarasota, I know them very well.

Wopinski: Do you spend a lot of time with your neighbors?

Dupree: Yeah, yeah we do.

Wopinski: Have they been there as long as you?

Dupree: Have they been where?

Wopinski: Like on your street or in your neighborhood.

Dupree: Oh yeah. They've been on the street, in our neighborhood, in our home; we've been in their homes. When my wife cooks sometimes, my wife is a neighborly person, but when she cooks sometimes she sends out fifteen different plates to people right in our neighborhood there. She'll send out fifteen different plates to ones on the same street where we are. To somebody on 18th Street, she'll send out plates. Sometimes we don't know what we're going to eat, and our son or someone will say, "What are we going to eat today?" We say, "We don't know." We sit there, and after a while, here comes a plate, here comes a couple of plates. They usually send three because they know there are three of us in the house there. So they usually send three plates. Sometimes we have enough food to eat for three days without even cooking anything. So that's the kind of relationship we have in our neighborhood.

Wopinski: Do you think that that kind of sense of community exists throughout Sarasota?

Dupree: No. No I don't think that. Not in some of the areas, like some of the gated cities. We have more gated areas than we ever had when we first came here, and through the years we didn't have any gated places where you have to have a password or a key or something to get

into that place. But we've lived in the hood, I call it the hood because I had a fellow who spent a lot of time on the street, he came and he joined our congregation. His name was Tony, and he needed to go home with me because there was something I wanted to give to him. When he got to the house, he kept looking at me funny, and I said, "Something wrong Tony?" He said, "Pastor, you live in the hood!" I said, "Yeah, I live in the hood." (Laughs) So I still live in the hood.

Wopinski: Was he surprised because you've been mayor, and all of these things?

Dupree: Yeah, because many of the other ministers, and many of the other people who had been successful had moved out of the hood, and they stay way out at Kensington Park or way out Fruitville Road, or somewhere in one of the more exclusive areas. And some of them have moved to the Meadows, and you know places like that. So we've been in the hood.

Wopinski: What's your reasoning for staying?

Dupree: We enjoy it. We enjoy it. And we have seen that some of them that have moved out of the hood, they moved out while the husband or wife was still living; I know several cases where the husband died, and now the wife doesn't feel comfortable not being around people that she has known for many years. So...

Wopinski: Do you think you'll always stay in that house then?

Dupree: Yeah, I think so.

Wopinski: It sounds like a pretty nice place to be.

Dupree: Yeah we think so. We enjoy it, we enjoy where we stay, and people feel free to come there. Sometimes the whole living room is full of people, and they just come there, and they just feel comfortable coming there. Yeah I think we'll be right in that same house unless the Lord blesses us to get another home, and we'll probably try to find a place in the hood to have it built. We're not looking forward to getting another home built.

Wopinski: I can't imagine staying in one place for so long, you must have become very attached.

Dupree: Yeah, we've become very attached. We're attached to our neighbors; we're not one of those people who can stay next door or across the street from a neighbor, and have them not know us, because if they are at all friendly, even if they are friendly or not, if we see them we say, "Good morning, how're you doing today?" "Oh, fine." I'll say, "Good, good." And one of our neighbors across the street, when she first came, she bought the property as an investment, but when she first came in, she didn't talk to hardly anybody on that street. She didn't talk to them. So one day, we came home from church, and she had a yard sale. We said, "Hey, how're

you doing with the yard sale?" She said, "Not good at all." I said, "What have you got there?" She said, "A number of nice things here, but I'm not doing good on it at all. I think I've sold one thing for a quarter." "You've only made a quarter?" She said, "That's all." We went over and we saw some tables that we liked, and I think we spent about \$25 or \$30. And ever since then, if she sees us, she'll say, "Hey!" Yeah, but we have a good relationship, but I think in the area of education, and in the area of home building, I think that has grown tremendously. I notice even the businesses like hotels and banks... One time when I was on the commission, when I was a member of the city commission, we said we wanted a city that had a country something with urban amenities. We didn't want a city that had buildings that were too tall, or buildings that were built too close to the road, so that when you're driving, you don't have to stick your neck out of your car so that you can see if there are cars coming on the intersecting road. We didn't want that, and I notice they have some of those now. And I notice also that we didn't want any kind of industry to come in that would smoke up the city. We didn't want anything like that, so we've been successful in keeping any kind of industry out that would cause the city to be all smoked up and whatnot. So we've been good at that, but Sarasota's grown to be a beautiful place, and a lot of people I've met that came here from other places said that they'd rather stay here than places that they were living. They just enjoy being here. We have some that belong to our congregation that go to Connecticut, matter of fact, they're up in Connecticut now, but this is about time for them to come back down here, because it's getting pretty cold up there.

Wopinski: How do you feel about the buildup of our coastlines, because it has brought a lot of economic benefits, but has had many environmental effects?

Dupree: Yes, it has brought a lot. I feel that it is good, but one of the things that I heard them debating is that we try to provide everything that we can for tourists who come into the area, but we neglect our own people. Say we try to cut taxes for tourists coming in, but we raise the taxes for those of us who live here. So I don't know about that, I think the city prospers on the basis of trying to have the kind of things that tourists enjoy when they come, and I think the city really has done a good job of that.

Wopinski: You were saying too that you aren't able to go out to a lot of the areas in Longboat Key, and the beaches that you used to because of the building of condos...

Dupree: Oh, we can go out to any of them, and we can go to the places where they have swimming and all of that, but one time we couldn't do that. When we were going way out to the end of Longboat Key, we were not allowed to swim at Lido Beach; we were not allowed to go to the Lido Beach Casino and all of that. That was years ago, but that's been changed for a long time now. That's been changed for a long time now, so we can go anywhere, but what I'm saying is that they put so many buildings and whatnot out there that now it's not just open property, it's private property. Much of it is private property, either hotels are there, or nightclubs are there, or homes are in that area, so there's no place out there unless you've got a

friend out there, or unless you go and check into one of the hotels, and then you can go and swim all you want at the beaches.

Wopinski: Do you think that is a benefit or a problem?

Dupree: I don't think it's a problem. Many people now don't bother to go to beaches at all, many people have their own pools, and they go swimming in their pools, they don't even worry about the beach so much. Some of them don't go to the beaches because of the experiences they've had with sharks coming close to the shore. A couple of people have been bitten by sharks, so some of them don't go to the beach, they'll go to the Y or something of that sort.

Wopinski: Do you still go out to the beaches?

Dupree: Once in a while. Not frequently, once in a while. Do you?

Wopinski: Oh yeah. (Laughs) Quite a lot. But I guess, I was wondering, how do you think, other than affecting where you were able to go out to the beaches, how do you think it affected you growing up here before the Civil Rights Act? Because I'm assuming that's why you weren't able to go out there.

Dupree: I think growing up here before the Civil Rights Act, the things that we were allowed or not allowed to do was a motivation. I think it was a motivation. I had a math teacher, and one of the public housing is named after her, they call it Janie's Garden, it used to be Janie Poe Drive, but they've built new buildings and they call it Janie's Garden. But Ms. Janie Jackson Poe was my math teacher, and she would always tell us, she said, "You know, in this day, it's not good enough to do your best, you've got to do better than your best." She said, "If you want to win a race, you gotta run as fast as the other person in order to keep up." She said, "But if you're behind, you gotta run twice as fast as the other person in order to catch up." And she said, "Once you catch up, you gotta run as fast again in order to get ahead." And so that's what she did. When we went to school when we came here, we would have one math textbook in a class. The teacher would put all of the work up on the board before we'd leave, and we'd copy it down, and we'd bring it back the next day. Then when we brought it back the next day, she would have some more up there for us to copy down. But she didn't allow that to stop her. She would let us come to her home, and she would teach us algebra, she would teach us geometry, she would teach us trigonometry. She taught us those things so that when we went on up in school, we were able to handle it, and when we got out of school, and went away to college, even though we came from a small school, we were still able to excel. We were still able to excel, and so I think the times that we were not allowed to use certain restrooms, and drink from certain water fountains, and things, I think all that stuff was motivation for us to be the best that we can be.

Wopinski: Do you think that Sarasota has, as a community, done a lot to make things more equal since then? Or would you say it's not on the books, but discrimination still happens?

Dupree: Sarasota has done a lot to make things more equal, but it had to go through some changes because there were those who were not as docile, not as easy as we are. There were some militants among us, who, if they had not started doing the walk-ins, and the sit-ins, and all of those kind of things, we may not have those privileges now, but we do have them. Then persons at the national level, like Dr. King, worked with presidents to try to get certain kinds of legislature passed and whatnot, and he and many of the others who were forerunners. And it wasn't just black people doing it, the black, the white, all of those who believed in equal rights, worked together, walked together, suffered injustices together. I think a great deal has been done in order to make this a place that you would want to be.

Wopinski: How do you think that you have contributed to this sort of leveling?

Dupree: Prior to even entering the school system, I always was a public speaker. I travelled a lot of places speaking. My wife met a friend that I met when we spoke in the I Speak For Democracy Contest many years ago, and she was so impressed by my ability to speak that she had memorized much of what I said. My wife told me about it, she went to a birthday party last Sunday while I was at the wedding. It was a birthday party of a friend of ours from Bird Key. She was 100 years old. I don't know, have you ever heard of Jan Snyder? Jan Snyder ran for public office, she ran for the Representative, that position that Vern Buchanan has now. Jan Snyder ran for that position, but she didn't get it. Who won it this time? Do you know?

Wopinski: I don't remember. I don't think I heard.

Dupree: 'Cause Keith ran for it... Keith... He's a professor. He ran against Buchanan, and I don't know if he won or if Buchanan won.

Wopinski: I didn't hear either. That's probably something that I should figure out.

Dupree: Yeah, but anyway, what happens is that we have, even when we were not allowed to go past 3rd Street, which is now Fruitville Road, not at night, because if you did the police would stop you and wonder why you were in that part of the town. We were going past that then, because we got jobs setting up bowling pins at the bowling alley down where Northern Trust is now. We set up pins down there, and we had to go at six and we couldn't get out of there until twelve o'clock at night. So we had to go past Five Points there, and they had police stationed out there. We had already gotten our cards; you had to get an I.D. card showing that you had permission to be out at that time of night. And so all of that was good for us to learn to do, and we did very well to grow up here and become involved in the city. I did public speaking, and after public speaking, I got a scholarship. I took a test and I got a scholarship to go to college. But the scholarship was not enough to pay all of my fees so because I was a straight A student in high school, then I got many of the people on the school staff, if we ran short of money, sometimes they would come across the campus, and they would check on us to see what we needed. Some of the teachers got together and they sent money to those that had gone, but even

more than that. When I got out of school I remembered all of those people. I was privileged to be a principal after four years of teaching. I was privileged to be a principal of just about every teacher who had taught me. I had a school called Amaryllis Park Primary School and that was grades K through three. It was a school that was a test to see if they could go into primary schools, and they did that for about seven or eight years. It was on the east part of the Booker campus. Amaryllis Park Primary School, and I served as principal there for four years, for four years, and I had every teacher just about that had taught me. I had my first grade teacher, Ms. Ethel Hayes; she had taught me in first grade. I had my second grade teacher, I had my third grade teacher, and then I had teachers that had taught me in fourth grade, fifth grade, sixth grade, let's see, who else... Ms. Ethel Hayes, Ms. Mamie Faulk, Ms. Annie Mackelroy. She was the mother of Dr. Ed James. Ms. Aletha Rogers, she was the wife of the principal of the high school Rollin Rogers, I had her on my staff. I had Ms. Eunice Roberts on my staff; she had been an elementary teacher for a long time. I had res. Bernice McGreen on my staff, I had Jacquelin Summers on my staff, her mother had been a teacher for a long time, and she was a kind of young teacher. But all of the people on my staff, I had about fourteen teachers, and all of them were teachers who had taught me at one time or another.

Wopinski: What was that like to be able to be in a position where you could give back to those teachers?

Dupree: It was marvelous. It was marvelous. They worked hard to make me look good, and I worked hard to make them look good. Yeah, it was marvelous. We had a glorious time there. And so when I left Amaryllis Park, I became principal of Booker High School. That's the school that my principal Roland Rogers was principal of, but then they moved him to be an assistant to the superintendent. So I became principal of Booker High School and I stayed principal of Booker High School for about, let's see... I started in '61, '62, '63, '64; I was in Amaryllis Park Elementary School, and then I went to Booker, and I was at Booker '65, '66, '67, and then they integrated. And in integrating, I took another job called the Director of Community School Programs. This was something that was funded by the Mott Foundation in Flint, Michigan. There was a Mott Foundation, and they provided monies to have a community school program. The basis of the community school program was, in order to educate all the children of all the people; you must educate all the people of all the children. So we had programs for families, or we had programs for adults to enroll in. Some of them were art programs, some of them were bicycle riding programs, so that families could learn how to bicycle ride with their kids, and they would go on bicycle rides. Some of them were programs in painting. Some of them were general education programs for people who didn't get the basic kind of education that they need. So we had some general education programs that would help them strengthen their skills. All of those programs were held at the school, and I was responsible for setting them up. I could set them up not just in the schools, I could set them up in churches, and there were churches that had people who wanted the programs set up in. We would make available the teacher that they needed in order to teach them the things that they needed. All of that was very good to us. So I served as

that, and I left the school system after ten years. I worked with Metropolitan Life Insurance. The reason I left the school system was that I took leave in order to become the Executive Director of Sarasota United Need, which was an OEO, Office of Economic Opportunity Agency. I spent three and a half years doing that. I didn't take but two years leave from the school system, so when I did come back to the school system, they had no openings. So I went and signed up at Metropolitan Life Insurance and I spent years there, about three or four years there, and I enjoyed it, and I made money (laughs). I made good money. Then when I started not being as effective with that, I went back to the school system and was able to get in at Fruitville Elementary School. Believe it or not, I spent from '72 to '87 at Fruitville Elementary School. Fifteen years as a teacher again, even after I had been principal. As a teacher I spent seventeen years as a teacher. When another job came up for someone to be principal of Booker Elementary For High Academic Achievement School, I applied for it, and I got it. So I was back in administration again, and I stayed in that administration as the principal of that until just about time for me to retire. They needed someone to be over a special program for kids who needed special training. So Chapter One, that's what they called it. I applied for that, and I got Chapter One. I was coordinating that for all of North Sarasota County. Chapter One programs; they did that for all of North Sarasota County, and someone else was coordinating it for all of South Sarasota County. So I did that, and I enjoyed doing that, and we made a lot of progress, and got commendations from the Commissioner of Education at the state level for the work that we did in working with kids, setting up classes with the kids who had fallen behind, and setting up classes and helping them get ready to move into larger classes. Then we had tutors; we got more tutors from New College than any other place. We had tutors, and they came and they worked with those kids one-on-one, and when the kids got to the point where they were able to move into a regular class, they came and they still worked with them if they had any problems in the regular classes. I came out here during registration at the beginning of the school year, and I set up in the place where they had to come to register. I had my stuff there and they stopped and asked me what I was doing and I told them, and many of them signed up, and I told them if they could give but three hours two times a week, or an hour, whatever they could give and commit themselves to, and if they couldn't make it, call me and either I would fill that space or I would have someone else to do it. And it worked beautifully. It worked beautifully.

Wopinski: Did that have any influence on your decision to join the New College Board?

Dupree: That had a great deal of influence on my decision to join the New College Board, because New College had demonstrated that they wanted to reach out in the community, they wanted to really do things, not just for the New College campus, but for the community around them as well. Then when Keith Fitzgerald, that's his name, when Keith Fitzgerald ran for public office, I think the first time he ran he got in, so I don't know if he got in this time or not, but I'm praying that he did. But anyway, all of that kind of tied together. New College has always been not afraid to go into our community, into the Newtown community. New College would come in

and they would work, and they would help out, and do whatever needed to be done. That was always very good.

Wopinski: Why is it important to you to be involved in all of these community outreach programs and educational programs?

Dupree: Number one, I praise God for what he has done in my life. Number two, I thank the community, because the community, when I was growing up, it was not just my family that raised me, it was the whole village, it was the whole town that helped to raise me. They helped in many different ways, and so I just felt obligated to do whatever I could do. I always felt that whatever anybody else could do, I could do it, if not better, I could do it just as well as they could do it. So I just worked in wherever I had skills. I was on fifteen different boards. I had to get a different case to keep the notes in for each one of those boards. But I was on fifteen different boards. I served on the Children First Board when it was Sarasota Day Nursery, and I spent about fifteen or sixteen years on that. I served on one board that paid us anything and that was First Union Board of Trustees, which later became Wachovia. But I served on that and they paid us \$150 every time we had a meeting, and I thought that was good. All the rest was volunteer time.

Wopinski: What is it like being sort of a spokesperson for Newtown and Overtown communities?

Dupree: I never considered myself a spokesperson for Newtown, but I consider myself a person who knows enough about Newtown to let people know what the people in Newtown desire, and what they want to do, and what they will support, and what they won't support. I can do that, but I try not to speak for Newtown. I try to do like I said about democracy, when I did that speech in the VFW Club about democracy. I started it off by saying, "I speak for democracy. Democracy speaks for itself. Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free the wretched refuse of your teaming shores. Send these, the homeless, tempest tossed to me. I lift my lamp, beside the golden door." (Laughs) So that's where I started off. I didn't speak for democracy. The Statue of Liberty spoke for democracy, that's what I just quoted, on the Statue of Liberty. That speaks for democracy. The preamble to the constitution speaks for democracy. The Lincoln Gettysburg Address speaks for democracy, and on and on down I went showing how different things spoke for democracy. Not me, but they spoke for democracy, democracy was speaking for itself by what it did and what it calls other people to want to do.

Wopinski: And how do you think that has impacted Sarasota?

Dupree: I think it has impacted Sarasota a great deal, because I have students who because they heard me during these speeches, they heard me and they watched me, I have trained many of them to be public speakers, and whatnot. I trained them, and I think all but one of them out of maybe fifteen or more, won first place in any contest that they took part in, because I wanted

them to be able to express what they believe, and so I still desire that. Let me tell you this: I enjoy being a role model. I enjoy being a mentor. When I see young people now, and they say, “Reverend Dupree, you still around?” I say, “Yes, I’m still around.” They say, “What are you doing?” I say, “I’m still trying to live a life that you would find worthy to follow, to emulate.” They say, “Well, we do.” I say, “Thank you.”

Wopinski: That’s wonderful. Do you think that you ever will, you know, just sit still, and kind of let other people you taught kind of take over?

Dupree: Oh, I try to get them to take over every day. I’m ready. I’ve been ready for them to take over. I’m glad to see young people step up to the plate, and go ahead. If they call for my assistance, I assist them in whatever way I can. But I’m glad to see younger people to do that, just step up to the plate. I got one right now, he’s one of my fraternity brothers, he just pledged, and he’s one of my fraternity brothers. He said, “You know, I think I want to run for public office.” I said, “Okay. If I can help you, let me know, ‘cause I know how to win, ‘cause I’ve won. I’ve run against others and I’ve won, so I know I can win.” He said, “Okay.” So there are so many of them in this community that look to me as being a source of information that they can get, and I give them what I have. If I don’t know, I tell them I don’t know. But seldom do I have to tell them that (laughs). So I just try to help them as best as I can.

Wopinski: What sort of issues do you think are important to be addressed today for these young people that are getting into office?

Dupree: Getting into public office?

Wopinski: Getting into public office, becoming involved in the community... What do you feel are the most pressing issues that we still need to work on?

Dupree: Most pressing issues that we need to work on today is to start as early as we can to work with our young people. We need people who are available for our young people as mentors. I mean start in the grade school, and work with those young people, and kind of guide them as they need guidance. Because today we have more people than ever, whether fathers have walked away from the homes, the mothers are raising children by themselves. Sometimes it’s the grandmothers, because sometimes the mothers, because the fathers have left, get involved in drugs or something, or get involved in something else, and they just turn them over to the grandmothers. We have so much of that going on now, and I’d just like to see people in the community who have raised their own children, and I’d like to see us come together, and be ready to assist anybody in the community when they have children, and they’re having a hard time, to be ready to assist them in as many ways as we possibly can. Because the young people that we raise now, I just want them to look at our lives and find them worthy to emulate.

Wopinski: How do you feel, living in a type of community like you described early where your neighborhood is very close, and your neighbors are very involved in each other's lives, and you're often seeing each other in each other's homes; how do you think that affects those issues when people are having problems?

Dupree: Yes, yes. I have a cousin; she lives in our neighborhood. Her mother died some years ago, not too long maybe four or five years ago. She has to raise her kids now. She has one that just went to Central Florida, and so she finds herself just almost overcome by the responsibilities that she has, because she's a single parent. She's done a marvelous job in raising a daughter that is in college now. She's done a marvelous job, and we've tried to help, because she works at the post office. She works at night, and she comes home in the morning, and when her daughter was still in high school, she couldn't go to sleep when she came home in the morning because her daughter was ready to go to school. But she had her daughter staying down with one of their church members while she was working the night shift and whatnot. But now she's still working, and sometimes she has to get in the car and drive down, and pick her daughter up, because I think she, her daughter, had trouble with her own car. So she drove down to pick her up, and put her car in the shop. Then she had to drive back, and be here time enough to go to work at night, and work all night, and go back up there the next morning. If she doesn't have to go down there then she gets a chance to go to sleep. But we try to help her out as much as we can. My wife sends food over there for her because she doesn't feel like cooking, and so she sends food over there for her to eat. And if she has shortness of money we'll help her out. We are cousins but we treat her like family, and we are family, but we're like real closely knit family. I think we need to do that, we need to have that family kind of relationship with people in our community, and not be strangers or aliens to people who live a door, or two or three doors, or five doors, or down at the other end of the street. We need to be available to them when they need help. I think that would be one of the greatest things we can do. When I ran for public office I ran on this: "Making neighborhoods neighborly." And I won (laughs). Making neighborhoods neighborly. And I think neighborhoods should be neighborly, because all of us have similar problems, all of us have similar things that we can agree on. And the things that we can't agree on, we can discuss them without becoming disagreeable.

Wopinski: Yeah, I feel like that's such a taboo thing in many places to talk about real problems and politics because people disagree so much. Do you think that having more of a sense of community sort of brings people together so that they do see problems from each other's eyes so that they have more invested in helping?

Dupree: You hit the nail right on the head, right on the head. It does. It brings people together. It helps people to look at things from behind more than just their own eyes. You look at them from what somebody else feels, how somebody else thinks, and you see how those things can come together. I think it does that. I think it makes people feel more comfortable in the presence of other people, because people are willing to sit down and discuss different things that might be

debatable but discuss them in a way without getting... It's alright to disagree without getting disagreeable on everything.

Wopinski: Has that inspired your own activism, would you say, in the community?

Dupree: Yes. That has inspired my activism within the community. And there's something else that I try to do. The people that I worked with as I was coming along, the president of the NAACP, there's one, John Rivers, has some kind of dementia now, he has some symptoms of Alzheimer's, but John Rivers has done more in this community than many people that I know. And he served as the president of the NAACP on several different occasions. We traveled together; we went to Tampa to district meetings, to Atlanta to regional meetings, and national meetings of the NAACP. And we've worked in this community to try to bring people together, to mobilize them, to help them to know. Even when I was on the commission, one guy got angry with me because I wouldn't let him speak beyond the time that was allowed. And he got angry with me, and he said, "That's what I hate about you politicians. You don't want to give people any chance." I said, "Sir, we've given everybody an opportunity to talk." I said, "We have fifty people waiting to talk," because we were dealing with that bridge then. We were building that bridge that goes across Ringling, we were dealing with that and we had fifty people waiting to talk. And he had talked, and then he wanted to show an overhead. I said, "No. I'm sorry, Sir, but your time is up." He said, "You politicians, you need to go back to your church." I said, "I'll go back to my church, but your time is up. And by the way, Sir, I am not a politician." I said, "In my church, I'm God's servant. At this table here, I'm a public servant." And he looked boy... and he got up and the people applauded (laughs). You need to be able to deal with people. I had a friend of mine on the board with me, his name was Dr. Gene Pillot. And we had known each other for many years. He was superintendent when I came back into the school system. He was superintendent then. But Gene was on the commission when I got on, and he said, "It's a good thing that was you. I would have gone up one side of him and come down the other." I said, "No, you don't accomplish anything that way, no." So I just... If I enjoy doing something, I put my everything into it. If I don't enjoy it, I won't do it.

Wopinski: That's a very good outlook on things.

Dupree: Yes, yeah.

Wopinski: So I guess if you had to say something to the citizens of Sarasota, maybe parting words, what is something that you would like to let the community know that you find is important?

Dupree: I would give them a summary of the kind of life I have lived, and I would say to them, "Now that I have given you this summary, let the works that I've done, speak for me."

Wopinski: I like that... (Laughs)

Dupree: That's what I would do. Let the works that I've done speak for me. If you find anything that's honest, anything that's pure, anything that's joyful, if you find anything like that, and you believe that it is worthwhile, use it. But let the works that I've done speak to me. Let the life that I've lived speak for me. And that's why I tell those young people when I come in contact with them, some of them aren't young anymore, some of them are sixty years old there, but they still say, "Reverend Dupree!" I say, "Hey, how old are ya?" They say, "Sixty-one." I say, "Boy, you're about to catch up with me." (Laughs) They say, "No, no I can't catch up with you." Then they want to know what I'm doing, and I say, "I'm still trying to set good examples for those of you who are coming on." And they thank me. Some of them I've had to discipline along the way, and they thank me for the discipline. They say it made their lives as good as they are today. I think that's a very good compliment that anyone could give is that your dealing with me has made my life better.

Wopinski: I bet that's a very good feeling.

Dupree: It is, it is.

Wopinski: I think that's important, too, to keep in mind that it's never too late to continue learning, and it's never too late to try to make an impact on the people around you.

Dupree: That's right, it's never too late. Look how late Colonial Sanders started. Look how late he started the Kentucky Chicken. I think he was eighty-some years old, when he started Kentucky Chicken, and it's all over the place. But he was about eighty-seven or something like that years old. I just met a friend of mine the other day, and she's eighty-seven. She said, "How're you doing?" I said, "I'm doing fine." I said, "You know, I'm middle-aged." She said, "You're middle-aged?" I said, "Yes." She said, "How do you say that?" I said, "I asked God for one hundred and twenty years. I've done the first forty, and I've done the middle forty. Now I'm on the last forty." She said, "I didn't think about it that way." I said, "Well that's the way I think about it." So when the young people ask me how I'm doing, I say, "I'm doing good for a middle-aged man, I'm doing fine." And they laugh about it, 'cause they consider me an older man, not middle-aged. But when you ask for one hundred and twenty years, and you've done two-thirds of them, you're a little more than half way. I've got one-third to go.

Wopinski: So do you have any plans for the last third?

Dupree: Yeah. I want to do as much as I can, but I want to do it from home. I want to spend time... I just started doing some writing the other day. I've been writing different things down, but I want to do something from home where I can just be alone with God and my thoughts, and just write little booklets. I don't want to write volumes; just little booklets that people can sit down, and get some guidance from. Now that's what I want to do. I'll write a series of them. Just write a series of booklets that they can take, and they can read it in a matter of an hour or so, and motivate some positive changes in their lives.

Wopinski: Yeah, that's good to have something like that for those who are very busy.

Dupree: So many times if you write these big books, if you have all of these books to carry around and whatnot. But I've read some small books that probably didn't have more than a hundred and fifty pages in it, and they had a great message in there; a great message for you to live by on a daily basis.

Wopinski: What are some of your favorite books?

Dupree: Some of my favorite books? One of my favorite books is a small book, and it's entitled, "In His Steps." It gives the story of a big church, one of the churches where you have a lot of sophisticated people. And that big church was located in a city, and they were accustomed to operating the way that they operate. They considered themselves above all of those people out there in the lower levels of living and whatnot. But then one day came a man into the church, one man. He was a printer by trade, but he had not been able to get work so he was traveling about to see if he could get work and take care of himself and his family. In doing so he had gone so long without food and whatnot until he came and he sat in the back of that church. And of course the people felt kind of uncomfortable because he was unshaven, and his hair was bushy, and his clothes were ragged, and he probably had an odor from traveling and not being able to bathe. So he came and he sat back there until the minister finished his message, and then he came to the front. When he got to the front, the minister said, "May I help you?" And he told him that he had been traveling, and he left his home, and he's been trying to find the kind of work that he was trained to do, or any kind of work, and he had been unsuccessful in finding it. While he was talking he was so worn out that he passed out right there in front of the congregation. The minister quickly told them, take him over to the parish, to the place where the minister stayed. They took him there and kept him there for days, and they worked on him, and fed him, and cleaned him up, and gave him clothes to wear. Then he told them his story. That minister, after he heard this man's story, he called his trustees and his deacons together. He said to them, "I want us to do something for a year, and see how it goes, and I'm going to tell you before I ask you to come to this meeting." He said, "I want to for a year, to get together and do something, and come in agreement that we will do nothing without asking first, WWJD? What would Jesus do? And if we feel that that's how Jesus would do, that's the way we will conduct ourselves." He expected maybe thirty people to come in, but instead with his deacons, his trustees, his heads of ministry, he had a hundred and fifty people that came. They said they came in because they're interested in not doing anything until they ask, "What would Jesus do?" and they try to do what they thought he would do. So some of them in there were business people who had businesses. Some of them were in charge of railroad companies. Some were in charge of other things. So in their businesses, some were in charge of newspapers, and in the newspapers they would, for instance, they would take a whole sheet of paper that dealt with certain kinds of whiskey and whatnot that was available, they got rid of those ads and all of that. They got rid of all of the ads that Jesus would not do. In the railroad station, they would work the workers and not give them

any place to take a break. They changed that; they met with the people who said they would like to have a break or time for them to rest a while, maybe eat a little something. They did that and they found out that they got more work out of the people than they ever did before. Whatever they were in, even the lady that had the most beautiful voice, she said that she thinks she wanted to go out and hold a tent meeting not far from the bar that was down the street, and the minister agreed to come and to preach under that tent. They did those kinds of things, and when they did those kinds of things, people came out of those bars, and they came under the tent. They heard the beautiful singing, and just one person would come after another. Whatever career they were in, that's the area they worked in and they always asked, "What would Jesus do?" I'd like to see that happen today. You see, I like that book, "In His Steps." And I read another one entitled, "God's Plan for your Life." It's about that thick (gestures to signify about an inch), and I read what his plan is for our lives. He has a purpose for each one of our lives, and I enjoyed reading that one. There are several of them that I read. I read some that were not considered religious books, but they had a lesson to be told, and I enjoyed reading those. If I could show you my library, even where I sit in my reclining chair, I've got books stacked that high (gestures to shoulder height). Bibles, and magazines, and whatnot, I have to move every so often to put them in another place. I just enjoy reading about people's lives, I enjoy watching television shows that show how people are going through hardships, and how they were able to come out of those hardships. I watch probably six or seven different television shows a day, just dealing with how people are handling their lives, how they are coming out of bad situations and going into very good situations.

Wopinski: That sounds like a nice way to pass the time.

Dupree: I don't get bored. I hear my granddaughter say, "I'm bored," and she's only fourteen years old. I say, "Why are you bored?" She says, "I just want to do something, but I don't know what." I say, "You don't know what? Just start doing something." She said, "What do you mean?" I said, "I used to not know what to do. So since I love poems, I would sit down and write poems, or I would study poems. I would memorize them." I said, "Later on I found out that when I could have settled for being bored, I studied poems. I said them over and over again until I had them in my system. Now sometimes when I get up to speak I say, 'isn't it strange that princes and kings, and clowns that caper in sawdust rings, and common-folk like you and me, are builders for eternity? To each is given a bag of tools, a shapeless mass and a Book of Rules; and each must make 'ere time has flown, a stumbling block or a stepping stone.'" (Laughs)

Wopinski: Do you think that's influenced your ability for public speaking?

Dupree: Yes, yes. Yes indeed, I think it does. And so many, I have gotten up and I have spoken, I have recited seven or eight poems to people, a whole medley of poems to people, one after the other. They say, "How do you do that?" I said, "I chose to do that instead of being bored."

Wopinski: Does she ever take your advice?

Dupree: Oh yes. She sat down and she learned every book in the Bible. She can go through the Bible just like that, tell you every book. I said, “Now you’ve got to know something out of every book. Know something, if it’s not one sentence or one verse, know something.” She’s a smart kid in school, and I haven’t heard her say lately that she was bored. My oldest grandson on my youngest daughter’s side, her son is graduating from high school this year. He’s writing some kind of essay to try to get a scholarship, and I keep telling him, “If you want me to proofread that essay for you, I’d be glad to do so.” But he hadn’t brought it yet. He came by last night but he didn’t bring the essays. He said he was not quite through them yet. He’s a baseball player. He and his brother are both great baseball players, but they also have good grades. They have good grades.

Wopinski: It’s good that they have that balance.

Dupree: Yes indeed. So “If I can help somebody as I go along,” said one writer, I don’t remember who it was, “then my living will not be in vain.”

Wopinski: Well, we don’t have too much more time, is there anything else that you would like to share? Any closing statements?

Dupree: You have something that can serve you for the rest of your life. I notice you have an easy smile. You smile easily. When I used to go into the banks and whatnot, to get something out of the account or to put something in, I’d come in and I’d say, “Hello! How’re you doing today?” They said, “Fine. Let me ask you something, why are you so happy all the time? Why do you smile so much?” I said, “Because a smile is the oil that takes the friction out of life.” And so many times when you come in contact with people, they have so much on their minds and when they see someone smiling, it helps to take the friction out of their lives. So that’s why you see me smiling, because I have friction in my life sometime, but if I can smile, I can take the friction out. I looked in the Book of Nehemiah, I think in the eighth chapter, sixth verse, it says, “the joy of the Lord is our strength.” So if we can keep joy, and we can keep the smile, we can accomplish whatever we want.

Wopinski: Well thank you so much, I really appreciate you doing this. It’s a great help to the project. You definitely have such amazing stories to share.