

**SARASOTA COUNTY WATER ATLAS  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
NEW COLLEGE OF FLORIDA — FALL 2013**

**Interviewee:** Robert Richardson  
**Date of Interview:** October 30, 2013  
**Interviewer:** Anne McCabe

*Bob Richardson moved to Sarasota in 1962, and has since been an active participant in the Sarasota community. He has been on the board of the Chamber of Commerce, the Sierra Club, and Selby Gardens. He has been honored by SCOPE with the boundary crosser award. He is also the co-founder of Friends of Myakka.*



**Richardson:** I came here in '62. That's over 50 years ago. You wouldn't believe how old you get and how fast the time goes. (Laughs)

**McCabe:** (Laughs) Yeah.

**Richardson:** Okay, start socking it to me.

**McCabe:** Well, the first question I wanted to ask was, where were you born?

**Richardson:** I was born in Hamilton, Ohio, just north of Cincinnati.

**McCabe:** Okay. Can you tell me about some of your earliest memories there? Like about your parents or your siblings or the area?

**Richardson:** Well, I have five brothers and a sister. I grew up in an Appalachian slum and my earliest memories was being with all my brothers and sisters and us just having a survival instinct from the time I was born until the time I got out of high school. And my parents moved to Florida and I stayed in Ohio and I moved here in 1962 when I was 22 years old right after hurricane Donna and right before and during the Cuban missile crisis. So, it was a strange place to be during that period of time because hurricane Donna had blown everything away and because of the Cuban missile crisis there were army vehicles and stuff going up and down [U.S. Highway] 41 like you wouldn't believe and 41 was a little two-lane road. It was exciting, you know, maybe not good exciting, but you couldn't believe the amount of trucks and vehicles moving down 41. So, it was a scary time.

**McCabe:** Yeah. When you moved here did you buy a house or where did you live?

**Richardson:** No, I rented. I was just a kid. I was only 22 years old. So, I rented a beach cottage down on Siesta Beach with another guy for 75 dollars a month.

**McCabe:** That's pretty good, right on the beach.

**Richardson:** Right on the beach. I was involved with the Sarasota Jaycees and we used to run the Miss Sarasota pageant, also the Miss Florida pageant and really we had some wonderful parties. We used to have bonfires on the beach, when you were allowed to have bonfires on the beach, no problem. We used to swim out there, we used to skinny dip out there and nobody bothered us and we used to see the phosphorous bloom, you know, when you run your hand through it like that and just watch and it was really kind of romantic. We used to party after and drink beer, and we didn't do any damage, but that was the most potent thing we had in those days. So, the police didn't bother us much and we didn't bother them. You know, they were willing to leave us alone as long as we didn't cause any trouble.

**McCabe:** (Laughs) So, what made you move to Florida? Did your parents live around here?

**Richardson:** Have you ever been to Ohio in the wintertime?

**McCabe:** Yes. It's pretty horrible.

**Richardson:** I didn't like it. Also I was in a dead end job, and I was as far as I was going to go. I did not go to college. So, I had a good job, but I wasn't ever going to go any further than that. And, so, I moved here to get away from the weather. The weather up there was cloudy most of the time and damn depressing in the wintertime.

**McCabe:** So, when you moved down here did you find a job?

**Richardson:** Yes, um, it was difficult finding a job here. I worked for Littrell Concrete, and I made half the money I made up north and it took me five years before I got back up the same amount of money I made in the north. You got pay and then you got sunshine pay. So, it was hard to find a job here at that time.

**McCabe:** Why do you think that was? There just wasn't a lot of commerce or...?

**Richardson:** Well, there wasn't a whole lot of commerce here and there wasn't a lot to do here and we've grown tremendously since that period of time. And when I got here, one of the things they were doing, they were dredging in Bird Key, they were dredging in Country Club Shores, and they were doing rampant dredging on the bay. And it was just willy-nilly. And, you know, where Bird Key is used to be the biggest and most productive sea grass flat in Sarasota Bay and

they dredged it all in and destroyed the most magnificent grass flats in Sarasota Bay. There used to be a big castle out there on Bird Key at one time.

**McCabe:** A castle? Built by...?

**Richardson:** Well, it was a big two-story kind of a mansion. I would have to look up who built it. And during the '60s and '70s and '80s when the Sarasota Herald-Tribune was owned by the Lindsay family, we had the biggest environmental fight in Sarasota County you could ever imagine. Lindsay was a pilot, he used to fly over the phosphate pits and everything and print pictures of those in the newspaper all the time and fight them tooth and nail. And the Lindsay family fought for no-growth around here for twenty years and they used to run no-growth editorials like you wouldn't believe. And the business community fought them tooth and nail and they started—they had a newspaper that was backed by the business community that tried to fight the Sarasota Herald-Tribune for several years but it failed. And the Argus Foundation was started—and they won't say this out loud, but it was really started to fight the Herald-Tribune because they didn't think the Chamber of Commerce was doing an adequate job.

**McCabe:** What year was this?

**Richardson:** The Argus Foundation was founded in 1982. And shortly thereafter in 1984 they sold the Herald-Tribune to *The New York Times*, and *The New York Times* never ran a no-growth editorial again since that date. And all the business guys had a meeting with Alan Grubs—who was a publisher came in here—and somebody asked him, they said, "What is going to be your policy on growth?" And a quote of what he said was, "If you had just paid the highest price per subscriber of any newspaper sold in the United States of America, what would be your policy on growth?" It's pretty easy to surmise what they were going to do and they no longer wrote no-growth editorials, and today they don't do that.

**McCabe:** Wow. What did you feel about that?

**Richardson:** Well, the battle was a good battle, because it helped shape Sarasota. And, you know, Sarasota was founded as a real estate scam. It was founded by a Scottish company that bought the bay-front and they sold it to a bunch of Scots so that they would move over here, because moving to Sarasota Bay was a paradise. Well, they came here of course during the Christmas of some 150 years ago, and it snowed when they came here, I think, it was Christmas time, and it was cold and they landed out where Marina Jacks is now, it was a palmetto scrubland, and about 95% of them left. Just about 5% of them stayed here. It's a true story that Sarasota was started in a real estate scam. And after that, well it had such a location, that the location was so tremendous on the bay—and the bay was very productive, you know, you could eat out of the bay because you just had so many fish on the inlet and everything and it was just loaded with fish—and it was so attractive to be on the bay and everything it continued to attract wealthy people here. And the difference between Sarasota and Bradenton is, Sarasota was settled

by the Scots who were too dumb to move inland to get away from the hurricanes, and Bradenton was settled by people moving down from Georgia and Alabama who knew we had hurricanes so they settled way inland. And, so, what that meant was that wealthier people moved to Sarasota and it was less expensive to go to Bradenton and so that made it that Sarasota attracted wealth and wealthy people because of that one fact: that it was built on the bay. And Manatee County today, we just recently saw a big fight in Manatee County about Long Bar Pointe being developed out there and it's difficult to develop out there now because of the regulations, and insurance regulations, you have to build everything up which you didn't have to do before. So, in Sarasota as a result of being built on the bay, attracted the Palmer family here, and attracted the Ringling family here. And the Palmer family and the Ringling family gave Sarasota the cachet of being wealthy in arts and culture and it made the difference in the two communities. Those two families and their attraction to Sarasota and the settling of the bay being a real estate scam were probably the three most important factors in deciding Sarasota's future, and a real part of the reason why you're here today. New College was started by those wealthy people. And they started a liberal arts college, and you know, New College is an exemplary college in the United States and it was started by people who wanted a very fine liberal arts college in Sarasota, and they had the money to do so.

**McCabe:** That's true. So, um, I just wanted to go back and talk about when you first moved here and you were working in concrete, right?

**Richardson:** Right.

**McCabe:** So, after that, what did you do?

**Richardson:** Well, my work history is that then I started a company here in town putting all the automotive equipment. During the '60s and '70s all the automobile companies got out of downtown and moved to the suburbs, down on [U.S. Highway] 41 and Bee Ridge Road. And suddenly they did that all across America because the automobile companies made them do that. They had two choices: move or we're going to give the franchise to somebody else. So all the auto companies moved out to the suburbs and got new facilities, which they should have been doing anyway. So we sold them all that equipment. I did that for about five years. But my dad and I didn't get along and we struggled mightily with each other, arguing, and just didn't see eye to eye and everything. So, I worked for marine business and traveled to southeast United States for about five years. And then I worked for Murray Boat Trailers, Wellcraft Boats, and Stamas Boats, during that five-year period of time.

**McCabe:** Where exactly?

**Richardson:** I've traveled Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina, Kentucky and Tennessee.

**McCabe:** So, it was a traveling job?

**Richardson:** Yes, I was, I was going five days a week. Everybody and their brother wanted to sell boats and it was a romantic job and they would see us at boat shows with good-looking buxom women sitting on the boats and everything like that, it looks very romantic. But we were working 12 to 14 hours a day, and who these women were, we didn't have any idea who they were. We were too busy setting up the shows and taking down the shows.

**McCabe:** (Laughs) Not very romantic for you at all.

**Richardson:** No, it was a hard job because, you know, I'd leave on Monday and come back on Friday night, and I'd been entertaining customers for breakfast, lunch, and dinner sometimes and my wife at the time wanted to go out to dinner and I wanted a bologna sandwich and a cup of soup. (Laughs)

**McCabe:** Yeah, after working that much, who wouldn't? (Laughs)

**Richardson:** (Laughs) So, the last thing I wanted to do was go out and have another steak or another lobster. I'd done that all week!

**McCabe:** Were you still living on the beach by that time?

**Richardson:** No, I lived down on Oak Terrace, just south of Bee Ridge Road at that time.

**McCabe:** Ok. So, then, you did that, and did you eventually quit?

**Richardson:** Well, my dad and I stood toe-to-toe one day and he said, "Bob, why in the hell don't you go sell real estate?" And that's how I got in the real estate business. So, it was our inability to get along with each other. And I worked for Joe Lovingood and got involved around here for the first year and then started my own business, and I've been in business with varying degrees of success for the rest of the time.

**McCabe:** Yeah, how was it in 2008, were you still in real estate then?

**Richardson:** Um, we lived through the biggest fraud perpetrated by Wall Street on the world and they got away with it and the rest of the world suffered because of it. They were taking lousy mortgages and securitizing them and selling them to the world as investment grade bonds and they absolutely socked it to the world and why the world let us get by with it, I don't know. They allowed us to um... They almost took down the world government in a scam of those mortgage-back securities.

**McCabe:** How did it affect you personally?

**Richardson:** I lost everything I had.

**McCabe:** I'm sorry. That's pretty bad.

**Richardson:** Well, it wasn't fun, isn't fun. And it happened before 2008, it started happening in 2005. And we all knew that it was going to happen. There was nobody in the real estate business— 40 years or older—that didn't know it was going to happen. I knew that it was going to happen. I had three years of cash in the bank and three years of cash wasn't enough to go through that, because this recession has lasted longer than three years. And the only thing that kept this from being called a depression was politics. And if the politics had been a little bit different it would have been called a depression.

**McCabe:** Well, this time around it's a recession. But I am sorry that that happened.

**Richardson:** Yes, well that's the chances you take when you're in business. I've had years where I've made over a million dollars. Then I've had years where, you know, I've lost a million or more.

**McCabe:** I guess real estate is sort of risky business.

**Richardson:** It's always been a risky business. The business of real estate in Sarasota, Florida, well, I call it the business of skinning Yankees. So, because the Northerners come down here and they worked hard all their lives and they've made money up there and everything and they've got ten or twenty years left before they move on, they're willing to pay a higher price for some of the very prime real estate and that drives the real estate. The banks and the fast food industry have done the same thing because they want the prime corners and everything and they drive the price of commercial real estate.

**McCabe:** Oh, ok, that makes sense. So you worked with commercial real estate and homeowner real estate?

**Richardson:** No, I developed subdivisions, I developed Northgate Industrial Park, it's up close to New College, and it's on [U.S. Highway] 301.

**McCabe:** Yeah, I know where that is.

**Richardson:** I developed with partners, with Arthur Andersen. And I sold Arthur Andersen a big piece of property when they came to town, where the old Sam's was on old 301. Me and two partners bought and sold that property. I was involved in 150 acres from [Interstate Highway] I-75 today and I'm involved in 35 acres at [U.S. Highway] 41 and [Interstate Highway] 275 in Gillette repairs, so I'm still involved in those things.

**McCabe:** Was there ever a stretch of time while you were in the real estate business that was better than any other time?

**Richardson:** Well, from about 1987 or '88 to 2005, the whole country, the whole world went through the biggest sustained uptick in the economy that it has ever experienced, and the world was changed around during that period of time because more people moved out of poverty than ever before in the history of the world. So from about '87 or '88 to 2005 were boom years for the whole world.

**McCabe:** How was it for Sarasota, and you specifically?

**Richardson:** Well, business got better every year. When it started, it was just gradual, it didn't really get frantic until the last two years, until around 2002, '03, '04, '05 that things were getting out of hand and moving too fast.

**McCabe:** There were a lot of people moving down here?

**Richardson:** Yes. Sarasota's population has always grown by 6 [thousand] to 10,000 people a year, just practically every year, even during this recession. And the demographic of Sarasota changed in that period of time because it got wealthier during that period of time because people who had money could move down here. They came down and got tremendous bargains.

**McCabe:** Hm. So, you worked with the Sierra Club at one point, right?

**Richardson:** Right. I was on the board of Sierra Club for probably four or five or six years, I don't know for how long, but for quite some time. I was the Outing Leader for three years, and I was Chair for two years.

**McCabe:** What years?

**Richardson:** It was probably from '86 to about '91 or '92 was when I was active in the Sierra Club.

**McCabe:** You were Chairman of the Board of Commerce at this time, right?

**Richardson:** No, actually I was Chairman of the Board of Commerce in '84. During the year I was president we raised a million dollars.

**McCabe:** Wow. For Sarasota County?

**Richardson:** For the Chamber activities.

**McCabe:** What does the Chamber do?

**Richardson:** It promotes business interests. It's a business-lobbying group, is what it is.

**McCabe:** Hm. What does that mean exactly?

**Richardson:** It tries to get laws enacted and get the government orientated to where they encourage business.

**McCabe:** Oh, ok. You worked with local businesses then?

**Richardson:** Yes, well, it is the local Chamber of Commerce. There're probably a thousand to 1,200 members. We did a lot of things; we had voting registration drives and did a lot of things.

**McCabe:** Also, you worked a little bit in Myakka Park, right?

**Richardson:** Yes, there was a lady by the name of Mary Jelks, and a guy—a former senator—named Bob Johnson and myself started Friends of Myakka. I forget when we started—15 to 20 years ago, it was a long time ago. Friends of Myakka is a group that promotes the interests—it's a citizens' group—it promotes the interests of Myakka River State Park. I'm still involved out there. So, Sundays I, for the last six years, I've been out on the boardwalk out there telling the snowbirds and the tourists what the blue birds are.

**McCabe:** (Laughs) The blue birds?

**Richardson:** Well, there are all kinds of birds. I've got a scope and binoculars and everything, and I point out all the birds and wildlife and everything to the tourists and people visiting the park. And then on Sundays I lead a hike down to a sinkhole called Deep Hole. Deep Hole is a hundred forty-foot natural sinkhole and there in the wintertime there'll be three or four hundred alligators in there. And you come up onto it all of a sudden because you're walking down kind of a country lane that's a couple of miles down there, and it just looks like a country lane and you just turn a corner and all of a sudden you're on the sinkhole and two or three hundred alligators are in there, and it's like a National Geographic moment.

**McCabe:** That has to be really scary.

**Richardson:** No, the alligators are... You know if you leave the alligators alone, they'll leave you along, and they're scared of humans. The most dangerous alligators around are the alligators in golf courses and in community retention ponds. Alligators out there are not acclimated to people that much. So the most dangerous alligators in Myakka State Park are those that are at the bridge where everybody stops and looks at them, because they get more acclimated. But the ones in the wild, you know you can canoe down through there. I walked in amongst them, and they just scatter and get out of your way.

**McCabe:** How big are they?

**Richardson:** Probably they are six to ten feet.

**McCabe:** (Laughs nervously) That's really big.



**Richardson:** You got to have respect for them. You know you don't need to be going up and think you're going to ride one or something like that, so you need to be respectful of them.

**McCabe:** But they'll move out of the way if you go near them?

**Richardson:** Well, people go in that sinkhole, and you know it's probably ten thousand feet in diameter or something, and there's people in there standing up in the canoes who are cast-netting. But they stay away from you. And the reason the alligators are there are because the water temperature in Florida, I mean the underground water temperature in Florida is seventy-two degrees year-round. So, in the wintertime the water temperature in the Myakka River and the lake won't drop below seventy-two, so they congregate there for two reasons: food and warmth. And that's the reason they are there. In the summertime they're not there. And so I only hike down there from December through April.

**McCabe:** Oh, ok. How did you get involved with Myakka Park? What made you interested in working there and protecting it?

**Richardson:** I used to lead Sierra Club hikes out there. I spent the night in Myakka River State Park during a no name storm from the east coast of the United States that wreaked havoc on us, and we had sixty miles an hour winds and six inches of rain while we were out there one night. So I've hiked there, I've hiked all the trails out there, I've been involved for quite some time, and I was on the Friends of Myakka board. And what gets me involved in it is seeking a balance between business and nature, and it's difficult to seek that balance because this property has property rights that goes along with it, and by the same token we have got to work hard on not developing and paving over everything we got. And so, it's also... If you watch nature you realize that you and me are just part of a system. You know, we are no more important or less important than any other animal, and we are animals and people forget that we're animals. And we're no more and no less important than the rest of them, we just happen to have the tools and brainpower to control and overrule all the rest of them. So, we have a stewardship responsibility not to destroy our whole earth and you know greed drives us as humans to where we have a tendency to say, "to hell with everything else, get out of my way. That's what I'm doing." It's kind of like you're screwing up your own house, and it's just really not a good thing to be doing.

**McCabe:** So, as somebody who develops land, did that drive you more to want to protect parks and nature more?

**Richardson:** Well, it made me realize that practically the only way to preserve the earth is for governments to buy it, because we humans—if the government doesn't own it—we're going to lobby and pressure the government to allow us to develop it. So, I worked on the environmental sense of land campaign, and I contributed money to that. And you know, Sarasota County owns a third of the land in Sarasota County, and it's publicly owned. And you can't appreciate that; it really won't be appreciated to the maximum extent until fifty years from now. And there's going

to be the biggest damn battle you've ever seen over the next fifty years for us to encroach into that land and it's already starting in Sarasota County because the County commission is saying we need to sell the development rights off of this property and let the developers put it downtown and they want to sell the development rights at amazingly low prices and it's wrong for them to be doing that. And the government, where business is concerned, the governments in Sarasota County, statewide and nationwide have to have a policy, and that policy is buy high and sell low. It's just the opposite of what it should be, and Sarasota County is doing it at the present time. They bought all this land during the peak of the real estate boom and now they're thinking of selling some of it off, and some of it is on the market at the present time. It's a mistake.

**McCabe:** Hm. Yeah. That doesn't sound good. Do you remember the first time you went to Myakka Park?

**Richardson:** No, I don't. I camped out there—now I'm seventy-five years old—and I camped out there probably forty years ago, maybe thirty years ago. It was in my forties, my first time I remember camping out there, and I camped out on Bee Island and I went out there by myself and spent the night out there.

**McCabe:** Wow, you went by yourself?

**Richardson:** Yes. A lot of people do that. You could walk out there by yourself without any problems. There are women out there camping by themselves, so it's a safe place to be.

**McCabe:** That's good to know.

**Richardson:** A lot of kids go out there and camp.

**McCabe:** Yeah, I've been there with a group of people before, but never alone.

**Richardson:** Well, I went out there during a no-name storm, and we had six inches of rain and sixty mile an hour winds. I had a kid from New College with me.

**McCabe:** Oh wow. Were you in tents?

**Richardson:** Yes, we were.

**McCabe:** Were you just like getting soaked?

**Richardson:** Well, I had a group from the Sierra Club and I had three women with me and there were three guys, and one was a kid from New College. His name was Snyder; his father was an attorney down in Venice. And then I had a lady who was a Cub Scout leader from Venice. And then I had two female parole officers from the County government. And then I had another guy with me who was a certified Allies leader. It was an unusual situation because you usually put an

experienced guy or person, male or female guide to see if everything is okay. So he was experienced so I put him in the rear, and me and the three women and the New College kid—the New College kid was next to last—and me and the three women were up in front. We were camping and everything and about a half an hour here comes the New College kid, and I said, “Where’s Kirk?” And he said, “Kirk’s laying down back there about a mile back on the trail” (Laughs). And I go, “Oh brother, what’s happening to me now.” And I went back there and Kirk was exhausted, and the reason he was exhausted was that he was carrying about fifty pounds, and he had homemade bread, a couple bottles of wine, and he had so much weight he couldn’t get all the way in there (Laughs). So I carried his pack in and we got in, and then when we camped that night everything was clear, and then about 2’o’clock in the morning that storm came through and just devastated us. And Kirk and the New College kid got outta their tents and got soaked and with that wind blowing, you could die of hypothermia. In seventy-degree weather when you’ve got a strong wind, the wind keeps cooling you down and down and down. It wasn’t awfully cold, but it probably got down to sixty, and I got those guys in my tent and then it really made a difference. They were in trouble.

**McCabe:** Why did they go outside of the tent?

**Richardson:** The tent got wet from water. We were sleeping in that much water.

**McCabe:** Was your tent higher off the ground?

**Richardson:** I was okay. The girl who was the Cub Scout leader from Venice was the best prepared of all.

**McCabe:** Of course. That’s funny.

**Richardson:** It was an exciting time. Anytime you’re in a National Park, the National Park makes one assumption, and the assumption is—or any kind of a park—that you know what you’re doing out there. And they expect you to know what you’re doing out there. So, I figured they’d be out there looking for us the next day, but nobody came out looking for us. We walked in by ourselves.

**McCabe:** Like, you didn’t tell anybody you were going in?

**Richardson:** Oh, yeah, we told them we were going there and everything. So, they knew we were out there. You have to get a permit to go out there, so we had to sign in and everything, so they knew we were out there, but they didn’t come looking for us or rescue us.

**McCabe:** Oh boy.

**Richardson:** So, the assumption is we knew what we were doing, and that we could handle that.

**McCabe:** Well, you at least knew what you were doing.

**Richardson:** We were all right.

**McCabe:** That's a good story. (Laughs) I guess, I also wanted to ask about being on the board of Selby Gardens, which I believe you were on?

**Richardson:** Yes, I was on the board of Selby Gardens.

**McCabe:** What was that like? What got you interested in doing that?

**Richardson:** Well, I was always interested in being involved in Sarasota and making Sarasota a better place. I like being on boards, I've been on a lot of boards. I've been chairman of a lot of boards and I've always enjoyed doing that. And Selby Gardens is a magnificent asset for Sarasota that was given to us by the people from the Selby Foundation. The land was accumulated, so it's a fantastic asset, you know, being on the bay like that. That's part of the ambiance of Sarasota. Also, in my opinion, it has the ability to be a far better facility than what it is and a national or internationally known icon. But when I was there, there was a period of turmoil going on that had started before I got on the board, and they had fired Meg Lowman who was the director of it. In the process of doing that—it took a couple of years—it was probably the worst board I was ever on in my life, just because there was disagreement and conflict going on. So, the board members themselves couldn't agree on a good sense of direction. Do you know Meg Lowman?

**McCabe:** No, I don't.

**Richardson:** She taught at New College for a while, too. She's a wonderful scientist and she was a very good, charismatic leader. You know, you take a guy who is college president, most college presidents are faces for the college, and they're the public image for the college. And they usually have somebody else behind the scenes running it and doing all the details and everything because it's very seldom that you see that capability for details and being the façade of a big corporation or big college in the same human being. So, most of them have two very qualified people running the college: one the face and everything, raising money and shaking hands. And Meg Lowman was a wonderful façade. In my opinion they made a mistake in ever letting her go. Also, in my opinion, she was not a good administrator. It's no fault of hers, it's just that one human being doesn't usually have those two traits bound up in the same package. So, if they had never had that going, Selby Gardens would be miles ahead of where they are now. That set Selby Gardens back.

**McCabe:** In what way did it set them back?

**Richardson:** When you hire new directors—like they recently fired the County administrator—that may work out fairly well moving ahead, but it takes a year, or two to three years, for somebody else to get settled in and get things going with their program. Since they fired Meg Lowman they've gone through several programs and Selby Gardens has never lived up to its potential, in my opinion. It has far more potential than what it's at. At that time, I was involved with a lady by the name of Gerry Aaron, and Gerry Aaron's husband was a third partner of Comcast and Gerry Aaron had a bundle of money. She and I were on the board, and all the other people were on the board, and we were doing a fundraiser. We had raised or had commitments for \$800,000 for the first part of it. And then we were going to go ahead and do a \$15 million fundraiser to put up a scientific building that would go on to be something for the world to see, and name it after a guy by the name of Doctor Carl Luer. Doctor Carl Luer was a surgeon here in town, but he was also an internationally known orchid fancier. So, that whole thing fell apart and there was turmoil because they argued over money. There was people inside there talking surreptitiously to Meg after she got fired, just juvenile stuff going on.

**McCabe:** That's so silly.

**Richardson:** Well, it was. Selby Gardens by itself is priceless, you couldn't put a price on there that would adequately compensate the community for what it is, unless you had a rare example that could replace it that would be just as priceless for Sarasota.

**McCabe:** Do you have any memories of taking your kids out to Myakka Park or the beach or, you know, spending time with them at Selby Gardens?

**Richardson:** Well, my kids were gone by the time, grown and gone to college and out of college and out doing their careers, by the time I was on the Selby Gardens board. Mostly, you know, I took my kids to Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, the Galapagos, the Bahamas, Canada, Utah, and California... I took them all over the place, but mostly out of town.

**McCabe:** Yeah, that's fun though.

**Richardson:** It was fun. We had a great time!

**McCabe:** Yo, I've always wanted to go the Galapagos Islands.

**Richardson:** I took my whole family. I took my grandkids.

**McCabe:** That's really cool.

**Richardson:** They didn't appreciate it at the time, you know, kids won't appreciate it until they get a little older. But the Galapagos was such an awesome place to go. It started the theory of evolution.

**McCabe:** Yeah.

**Richardson:** And it's so isolated, you can see why. And of course, Australia and New Zealand are the same way. Because, you know, they have some species that are just strange to the rest of the world.

**McCabe:** Kangaroos?

**Richardson:** Right. Duckbilled platypus.

**McCabe:** Those are really cool, too. Have you been to New Zealand or Australia?

**Richardson:** No, I haven't. I've been to six continents, but I haven't been to New Zealand or Australia. That's the only one I've missed. I've been to Antarctica.

**McCabe:** Really? That's cool. What was that like?

**Richardson:** Antarctica is cool (Laughs).

**McCabe:** (Laughs)

**Richardson:** You just can't believe the vastness of the earth until you get into a place like Antarctica. I've stood in the middle of a million penguins.

**McCabe:** That's really cool. Was it loud?

**Richardson:** Loud and smelly.

**McCabe:** (Laughs) Well, thank you so much, I don't think I have any more questions that I can think of now. Thank you so much. Your stories have been really great.