

**Transcript of an oral history interview in the collection of the  
BREVARD COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
308 Forrest Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922**

Speaker 1: Robert Hudson, August 24, 1992. Location: The North Brevard Historical Museum, Titusville, Florida. Interviewed by Nancy Yasecko. Equipment: Camera, Sony BVP-50, Beta SP recorder, Sony BVW-35. Audio will be found on channels 2 and 4. Copyright Brevard County Historical Commission 1992.

Nancy: Okay, we'll start with your general origins, where and when you were born, when your family came to this place.

Robert: Well, I was born in, uh, 1920 in, uh, Des Moines, Iowa and moved here from, moved to Titusville from Cleveland, Ohio in 1925. My family was all from Iowa and my dad was in the newspaper business and he came down here and bought the newspaper in Titusville, The Star Advocate. And we came down a couple months later in the height of the (cough) mosquito season and we had a lot of mosquitoes and that was unusual for us from Cleveland, Ohio. But, uh, and I lived here ever since, since 1925. I went to school here and on up to the University of Florida and then in the navy and then back here in 1948. I've been here ever since.

Nancy: So, your father was involved in the newspaper business. What did he find when he came here?

Robert: Well, he, he was used to being, working with the Scripps Howard people in, uh, both Des Moines and Cleveland and he came down here and bought a little paper, a little once-a-week newspaper that uh... But he's always wanted to own his, always wanted to own his [00:02:00] own newspaper, and he heard about this. So, he came down and bought it and, and then I followed in his footsteps. I was the first newspaper delivery person and, and learned everything from how to set type and everything on up to... When I came back in 1948 I became editor and then publisher in 1972 after his death. So, uh, I spent a lot of time with this paper and in Titusville. It's been my love. Uh...

Nancy: How did y'all collect the news around here?

Robert: (Cough) Just going and talking to people and, and covering events and, uh, we didn't have many reporters, of course, in the early days, maybe one, maybe two. And we'd just go attend meetings and, uh, uh, interview people, uh, go to events, you know. There, there were a lot of, a lot, a different way of collecting news in those days than there were, than there is now, because, uh, we didn't have, uh, just strictly a local paper and we didn't have the National Wire Service or anything, didn't pay any attention to that. We let people take the daily, the big

daily papers for that. We just told the story of the folks of North Brevard, how they lived and where they, where they went and, you know, even a visit to Orlando was worth a little personal item in the, in the paper, and that's the way we did it.

Nancy: Okay. Um, what was transportation like when you came here?

Robert: Well, when we came here, of course, the roads weren't nearly as good as they are now. Uh, the railroad was the important transportation link. The railroads came into this area in, uh, 1885 when they connected the St. John's River with the Indian River. And that was the chief mode of transportation. And then in, uh, 1892, I think it was, Henry Flagler brought his railroad down the east coast, and that was a major accomplishment because then we had transportation for the orange, for the citrus, [00:04:00] uh, industry going north, transportation for the, uh, fishing industry going north, and, uh, tourist transportation.

Nancy: Okay, how would you...

Robert: Prior...

Nancy: Hang on just a second. I'm getting a blinky here. Is this how you turn it off? That was it. (laugh) Okay, we were talking about the roads.

Robert: Yeah, the roads were, were pretty poor at that day in age. Of course we, they called it the Dixie Highway long before it was US-1 through this area. That was a main connecting area north and south, and of course we had, uh, the road, uh, over to Orlando which, uh, was built in 1922, and, uh, then each of the counties built a road to the St. John's River and for a while they had a ferry go across, but then they eventually built the bridge. And another road of importance was the one from Mims west to Sanford. That was called the Orlando Highway, the Anderson Highway at one time. Uh, those were important east-west roads, but, uh, we were all connected by US-1 pretty much.

Prior to that, transportation had been by, uh, by boat up and down the Indian River, and the, then the, then the railroads, of course, came along. So, uh, transportation was, uh, was not the best when we came. Uh, most of the freight was brought by, uh, railroad, of course. Uh, we didn't have the big trucks we have today. But eventually they came along and four-laned US-1 and, of course, we've gotten I-95 and a lot of difference.

Nancy: I can only image. Were there a lot of automobiles here?

Robert: Well, when we got here there were a number, but, uh, not like this today, of course. But for the, for the population, I think there were, uh, a good, a good

percentage of the population had automobiles, uh, to be able to, to go where you wanted to go. We didn't have a lot of shopping facilities, [00:06:00] uh, back in, when we came here in 1925. So, some major shopping was done in Orlando, and, uh, maybe Daytona Beach also. So, it was necessary to have a car if you wanted to do any of that shopping.

Nancy: Did most people have boats?

Robert: Quite a number did, but those, those were mostly for pleasure by this time, by the time we came here in the 20s. Uh, very little transportation was necessary boat because it was so easy to jump in a car or, or get on the train. Train was very important. We had a lot of, uh, passenger service and it used to be quite a thing for, uh, for example, school children and elementary schools in Cocoa to get on a train and then, uh, their parents would meet them here and take them back, and, or Titusville students would ride to Cocoa. They had that experience of riding on a train. Uh, I did quite a bit of that back in those days because it was, uh, it was something to get on a train. (laugh)

Nancy: Yeah. Which, uh, early businesses do you recall?

Robert: Well, uh, let's talk a little bit about maybe the industry first. The citrus business was important to this area. This was the beginning of the, uh, famous Indian River citrus area, uh, we're at the north end of that. And, uh, Turnbull Hammock north of us was a, was a great place for citrus.

Uh, then the fishing industry was very important. The, there was a lot of fishing done in the Indian River, commercial fishing. And, uh, a lot of fish was shipped out of here.

Those were our two biggest industries and really the only industries until World War II came along and we had a boat-building industry that moved in, uh, in the latter, latter part of the, latter part of the 1930s and operated during World War II here, and then of course the, uh, Patrick Air Force Base, (cough) um, which was Banana River Naval Air Station, of course, [00:08:00] that came in, and uh, that brought some people here, not much effect. And of course, then after the missile business started, Titusville started booming, North Brevard started booming.

Uh, businesses, early businesses, uh, we had our share of grocery stores, uh, uh, A&P Store came in quite early and then Piggly Wiggly, which has since gone to become Winn-Dixie. Uh, they were here. We had local merchant stores, uh. Uh, you know, a few clothing stores, uh, that type of store. Uh, Denims Department Store was an early, early store here. A drug a store was, uh, established in, uh, probably one of the best ones was established in 1912 when Dr. Spell moved to

Titusville. He was a doctor and a pharmacist both and he, he also operated a drug store. If you can remember the little round tables with, uh, chairs that were made of, of iron, uh, or metal, little attractive little chairs, and the marble-top counter. We were, we used to have a lot of fun at the local drug store. Those were the main things.

We (cough) we, uh, had an early bank, uh, and the first bank was established in 1888 and then another bank was established in 1912. And we did have banks. Both of them failed during the depression, uh, in the early days of the depression, so we had no banking in North Brevard. The only bank in the county that was open was Cocoa, and so (cough) we did our banking in Cocoa. Uh, and that was sort of a trial to think about banking that far away.

Nancy: Um, oh, also on the topic of businesses, I understand there were a few saloons in ...

Robert: Oh yes, there were a few saloons. Uh, we had our share of saloons. It is said that, (cough) excuse me, way back in, uh, well, in the days before railroads came and so forth that, [00:10:00] uh, Titusville had seven saloons and no churches, and so, uh, Mrs. Titus was responsible for asking the captains of the steamboats, the paddlewheel steamboats that went up and down the Indian River, if they could put a basket for donations, asking donations. There was a little sign there saying that Titusville had seven saloons and no churches and wouldn't you help donate for church, and that's the way the money arrived for the first church that was built, St. Gabriel's Episcopal Church, and then to be followed by the First Presbyterian Church and some other churches.

But that was a, we did have a lot of saloons. It was sort of a wild town for a while, I think (laugh). It was a lot, it, it was a, that was a little bit before my time, but even in, during the 1920s and 30s we, uh, we had three or four saloons, or bars as they became known, uh, right in the one-block area of Washington Avenue right downtown.

Nancy: One of the businesses.

Robert: One of the businesses, that's true. That's where I learned to shoot pool in one of them, they had a pool hall right behind one, and all the kids in town... You know, they didn't have the regulations back then about you had to be, uh, 18 years old or 21 years old to enter the doors. You could enter the doors. They wouldn't serve you anything, but you could enter the doors to play pool, and that's where... There was usually always a pool, a few pool tables, uh, were accompanied, uh, in a bar most always.

Nancy: Uh, where did you and your family make most of your purchases?

Robert: Well, we tried to buy all we could in, in Titusville, uh, naturally. We were in the business of newspaper business and they were our advertisers and so we believed in trading at home as all we could. Uh, unfortunately there were a few things that you couldn't buy in Titusville. For example, just personally I have a very narrow foot and I couldn't buy shoes. I either had to order them or, or go to Orlando to buy shoes. It was just quite difficult. There were things like that that we didn't have in Titusville, [00:12:00] but generally you would buy most everything, your, most of your clothing and other things here.

Buy your cars in Titusville and, and, uh, so we, we shopped primarily in, in the Titusville area. I think most people did. Their specialty purchases had to be made out of town because we didn't have the stores that we have, uh, and we gained after the missile, uh, the space launch came to this area.

Nancy: Who were the early professionals that you recall?

Robert: Oh, I can recall, uh... Of course, the first doctor in this area was Dr. Holmes, but (cough) he was gone by the time we moved here. But, some of the early professionals, uh, Dr. Lichtenberger, who was a dentist. He was the only dentist we had in town for years and years. And he, he had, he had an office on the second floor of a building on Washington Avenue and you could sit in the chair and look down Washington Avenue, which was an interesting thing, a little bit like maybe having it overlooking the Indian River, but you could see all the traffic on Washington Avenue.

Dr. Adams was one of the early doctors here, and Dr. McLeod. Uh, we had Dr. McLeod was, and Dr. Ferguson were involved in trying to form a small hospital here, uh, in the early days, and they, they ran a hospital. It only had three or four beds, something like that, and it was very difficult because, uh, if you only had one or two doctors, it was, it was quite difficult to, to make sure that the hospital was, was properly run.

So, we had those health facilities early, and then, uh, didn't have any health facilities for many years, and then finally in the, in the 1950s we established a North Brevard District Hospital (cough) which has become Parrish Medical Center. But it's said that, uh, so many babies were born, uh, their birth was in either Cocoa or in Orlando primarily, even though [00:14:00] they were Brevard County residents, they were born there because that was where, where the doctors were and the hospital were. And there were a number of babies born in backseats of automobiles on their way to Orlando too over a period of year.

Nancy: I can imagine. Would you like a drink of water? You're doing a lot of talking.

Robert: Yeah, let me, let me get a sip of water and I'll put it...

Nancy: The other professionals that were here?

Robert: Okay, yeah. Other than doctors and, uh, and dentists, well, I think of other professionals being lawyers and judges. Of course, Titusville was the county seat of Brevard County, a 72-mile county, and the county seat way up here in the north end of it. So, we, we did, a lot of our life revolved around the courthouse, around politics, and the major trials were held here. There've been a lot very interesting people, professionals.

There was one, uh, named, uh, Circuit Judge Minor Jones who, uh, in the course of ... They had some problems about seasons for fishing for mullet and, uh, if you know the mullet is, is a fish that eats the, uh, the grasses. It is not a carnivorous fish. I think that's pronounced right, I'm not sure. But anyway, uh, it doesn't eat other sea life. And so, and it has a, has according to the, the regulations, it has a gizzard. So what, uh, Minor Jones did, because they were fishing, you know, there was some question and some fishermen were pulled up for fishing out of season. He made a decision that the mullet was not a fish, but it was a fowl because it had a gizzard. And so, this is still on the statute books today, this ruling that mullet is not a fish, it's a fowl, it has a gizzard, and that's where the name Indian River Chicken comes from. And so that, that just, he was a character, and we've had our other characters.

One strong judge that we had here for many [00:16:00] years was Judge Millard Smith. Of course these people are all dead now, but Judge Smith was a long-time circuit judge here, very well respected, very highly respected, presided... He was the only circuit judge we had, so he presided at all of the trials of any major consequence. And, we had one of the, the best defense lawyers in this area was from Cocoa, Colonel Noah Butt, and he, uh, he's very highly regarded. He probably defended most of the people who were involved with major crimes. Uh, he was, he was very colorful, always, uh, was dressed in a white suit and had a white hat most of the time, not in court, of course. And, uh, he, he did a very good job. He was very well respected. He also served in the legislature.

And then we had our, our number of colorful sheriffs. Sheriffs were thought to be the, the, the most dominant person in most counties in Florida at that day and age. Sheriffs were very powerful. And we had a number of sheriffs going way back to Sheriff Brown and Sheriff Doolittle and then later on, uh, Sheriff Roberts, Roy Roberts, who homesteaded on North Merritt Island. Uh, he was a sheriff here for a while and later was rep, was our state representative. And, uh, we come up to our present, uh, you know, Jake Miller as our sheriff. But we had a lot of strong sheriffs over the period of time.

We had a long, a lot of, uh, uh, strong county officials. Uh, Matt Simmons was a county clerk for many years and prior to him a man by the name of A. A. Stewart, and they were very, very well liked, very well respected, uh, in charge of all the records for the courts, uh, and it was very important that they be good people, and, and pay attention to their jobs. So, we had a lot of politicians.

More recent ones, uh, one of the more recent ones that I can think of is, uh, is the late Max Brewer. [00:18:00] He was a little younger than I am, but he died in an airplane crash, but he was, uh, our state representative for a while and, uh, then, uh, became very closely associated with former Governor Farris Bryant and was on the state road board. And it was, it was through Max Brewer's efforts that we, for example, had US-1, the four-laning of US-1 completed through the county. It was done partially and, uh, but he, he got it completed and it was during his term as a state road board member that we had I-95 laid out and then first construction was done along I-95. So, we owe a lot to people like that who were good leaders and, and we always thought that if Max Brewer had lived he probably would've run for governor someday.

Another very strong person was a man by the name of J. J. Parrish. Uh, very much associated with the Indian River Citrus and Parrish Groves. It's, it's quite a family, historic family, in, in the citrus industry. He was president of the senate at one time and was a very powerful political figure. Uh, his, one of his sons followed him as a, a state senator here, Barnard Parrish. And, uh, so that family contributed much to our community, as far as in the, in the area of being professional people.

Uh, beyond that we've had, uh, a number of, uh, very colorful, uh, lawyers and, uh, judges, and other office holders. But, um, they've been, been very important to Titusville and the North Brevard area because of the relationship to the courthouse being here. That was one of the biggest industries, if you want to say an industry, the, the courthouse was. And, uh, of course in recent years we've, we've lost some of that, but now they're redoing the courthouse here and we'll probably continue with, with more of this life.

Nancy: How many courthouse buildings have there been around?

Robert: (cough) Well, the original [00:20:00] courthouse was a two-story, uh, white, uh, wooden building, uh, that came in, in 18, uh, in the early 1880s. Uh, then it was followed... They, they, because it was a wooden building and they realized that it was, records would be subject, more subject to fire, they built a, a one-story just records building nearby. And then that courthouse was replaced in 1912 by a courthouse that's still standing. It's the, it's the one that's, uh, has tall pillars in front of it on Palm Avenue. That is still standing. It was added to several times, and then they built the new six-story steel, primary steel-constructed building,

uh, well that's the one that's being re, redone now, completely redone and people will be moving back into it within a year, you know. So, we've had really three courthouses, uh, that, that one of them is only, the, the two are still here. And the, the one built in 1912, this is a, is a historic building.

Nancy: Okay. Um, you know, what you're describing is a place that has developed a lot in a relatively short period of time.

Robert: Well, we're not, we don't have the history, the places in the, in the New England states or elsewhere in the north has, but, but we do have some history of, of, of families and people who were here back in those days, but the town didn't grow much. It was, uh, it, it stayed, uh, relatively the same for a number of years. However, you would never have believed that if you read some of proclamations that Colonel Henry Titus and some of the other people made back then that this was the grand and glorious, uh, place for tourism and, and it was.

It was a big tourist stop, uh, before the railroad came through and, and development went down the east coast. This was, uh, a much bigger tourist area [00:22:00] for a number of years before Miami, for example, was established, and there was no way to get Miami except by boat, of course. But here we did have the transportation, uh, by rail from the St. John's River over here. And then, of course, the railroad, uh, coming down this way was developed in stages, so that Titusville still maintained quite a tourist industry for a number of years. It's still a, a tourist stop, and of course that's because of the, the space center and, and the Kennedy Space Center and the visitor information center, that, uh, is quite a bit of tourism here at that time.

Nancy: People used to come down to go hunting and fishing.

Robert: Oh yes. North Merritt Island was, uh, it was just a great place to hunt and fish. Uh, fishing was big in the Indian River and the surf fishing was not as, as great in those days as it, as it is now. A lot of people surf fish, but they didn't do that too much, and we didn't have a lot of commercial fishing in the ocean. The commercial fishing was in the Indian River. But, uh, there was a lot of fishing.

And, uh, people came to hunt and fish, and then, uh, a lot of people were told, uh, maybe like in, in more recent years, they, they would go to Arizona for their sinuses or for respiratory problems. They were, asked to come south because of, to get away from influenza and other respiratory problems, and Titusville had quite a bit of tourism from that; the health reasons. I don't know if they came down here and were eaten up by mosquitoes in the summertime, but, but most tourists came in wintertime.

Nancy: I guess like they still do.

Robert: They still do, (laugh), that's right.

Nancy: Okay. We're getting near the end of this tape, so we'll stop and put another tape in.

Robert: Uh, we were, we were talking about tourism, and tourism resulted in a number of hotels being built in Titusville. Uh, the railroad, uh, terminated, [00:24:00] uh, at... After Flagler came in, the railroad, uh, station was at the west end of Julia Street, which was only about a five-block street. At the east end of Julia Street was the Titus House built by Colonel Titus, and that was subsequently replaced by the Indian River Hotel, and then later the Dixie Hotel. (Cough) In between those two, there were a number of small hotels. Uh, they probably would, we'd think of them today as rooming houses, rooming and boarding houses, but there were a number of small hotels, all of them offering food and, uh, you know, dining areas and so forth. But, uh, there was a lot, there were a lot of hotels in this area, nothing big and glamorous, but, but small ones.

And, uh, speaking of hotels let me say a little bit about when Flagler did bring the railroad in. Uh, I don't know, I can't vouch for this story, uh, in the 1890s, but he apparently wanted to purchase a large track of land which we now know as Sand Point in Titusville, and he had said that he wanted to put a hotel on it, but the man who owned it wouldn't sell it to him because he was afraid that it would become a, a freight yard, freight transfer yard, (cough) so he wouldn't sell. So, there was a story that, that, uh, Henry Flagler said, well, he'd make Titusville a whistle stop or a flag stop and, uh, but he didn't. He, he built a station, the stations here and everything, and we had the same service everybody else did. But, uh, the story is he took his hotels on down to the Palm Beach area, which he probably would've done anyway. But, uh, that's one of the little sideline stories of perhaps this might've been a little bit more of a tourist, uh, area if we'd had a Flagler hotel here, for example.

Nancy: There, there are a couple of restaurants I think of when I think of Titusville. I, I don't know how historical they are. What about the restaurants in this area?

Robert: Well, there were, there were some early restaurants, but nothing, [00:26:00] uh, they were, they were more pop, mom and pop-type restaurants. Uh, I think that the Dixie Hotel had a very good dining room, as an example, and, uh, Billiard Parlor along with it. Uh, most of the hotels had their own dining rooms. Uh, restaurants came in later on, I would say much later, uh, restaurants of significance. And of course, uh, today we have very good restaurants, I think, and particularly with the seafood, uh, and, and with views on the Indian River, that's an important thing.

Nancy: Yep. Uh, attractions. I mean, we talked about the, the health factors being an attraction. Were there other attractions?

Robert: I think the weather, uh, good, pretty good weather here, maybe not as good as we might find on down to Miami, not, not quite as warm a wintertime. But, uh, the weather was a big attraction, the fishing, uh, hunting, uh, and, and...

I will, uh, tell you about a hunting club that was here that might be interesting. Uh, it, it was even not in operation, but available, uh, after we came here. And this was founded by 10 graduates of, of Harvard University in 1890 and they hunted, uh, the country over, they said, for a good, uh, hunting lodge and they, they located, uh, and purchased 18,000 acres of land, uh, what, behind what is now the property owned by NASA for Kennedy Space Center, and they found a 20-room, uh, uh, hunting lodge, and these were very prominent names, people, Vanderbilt's and, and other people, uh, from the, from the east.

The, the, uh, hunting lodge was opened in, in about 1891 and operated until 1922 [00:28:00] and then was put on caretaker status. During that time, it is claimed that four presidents who were in office at the time visited there and hunted there. Now, when, uh, we came here, the clubhouse was still there and we were allowed, uh, through, with, with the caretaker, to see the clubhouse. In that day and age, of course, they, they did, their trophies were, were, uh, on the walls. They did the heads of all the animals that they, of many of the animals. And so they brought a taxidermist with them to do this. And so the, the main, uh, room of that, uh, 20-room building, uh, was just covered, the walls were covered with the heads of bears and, and deer, and so forth, all types of animals.

Nancy: Okay, let's cut.

Speaker 1: Interview with Robert Hudson, August 24, 1992, North Brevard Historical Museum, Titusville, Florida. [00:30:00] Interviewer: Nancy Yasecko. Equipment: Camera, Sony BVP-50, Beta SP recorder Sony BVW-35. Audio channels 2 and 4. Copyright Brevard County Historical Commission 1992.

Nancy: Okay, this is Robert Hudson, take two.

Robert: Yes, we were talking about the Canaveral Club and the Harvard graduates that came down here. Among the presidents that we know that visited, uh, the club and hunted there was Grover Cleveland. We have some pictures of, of his party. Uh, others that were, they've said, and this was before my time, was, uh, was Howard Taft and Theodore Roosevelt were among the ones, and I could believe that they were both outdoor people, so they both might well have come here, particularly with the, with the, uh, influential people who owned the club.

The club was, as I stated before, was in operation until 1922, uh, went on caretaker status, then, then, uh, uh, was sort of let go over a number of years and when NASA bought the property, the clubhouse had burned down, but there were still some outbuildings there. By the way, they had the first swimming pool in this section. They built a swimming pool. And all the transportation over to that area, which was near, uh, near the Atlantic Ocean, but on a little, uh, part of Banana Creek, all the transportation was by boat, so they had to take all their, their cement and all their supplies and everything over that way.

The, uh, the, the main clubhouse was, uh, was burned down, and then when NASA bought the property, uh, the rest of it was torn down, and this is about where Pad 39B is now, approximately in that area, not right over the area, but, uh, in that area. They did, had to pump up quite a bit of ground and so forth for the Pad 39B, [00:32:00] but that's where it was located, in that area.

So, so those were the most famous people, I guess, that we had visit here in the early days. Of course, later on, uh, Franklin Roosevelt, when he was president, he visited here. He came for Orlando by, by, uh, automobile and caught his special train here, and that was a, a big event. They had a parade while he was here and everything. That was in the 30s. Uh, so I guess those were the most important people that we might say that visited here or spent any time here as tourists. Uh...

Nancy: When they did the hunting, what kind of things did they hunt?

Robert: Well, uh, North Merritt Island was, uh, just had all kinds of wildlife. Bear, uh, deer, uh, panthers, wild cat, uh, a lot of deer were here at that time. And, uh, there were, there were all types of, uh, most types of animals that you would find in America, foxes, and uh, and the Florida panther was, was pretty prevalent in that, in those day and age on North Merritt Island. Of course today we don't have too many of those, but we have a lot of alligators. And of course, they had a lot of alligators in that day and age too. But, they came, uh, they came for that type of hunting.

Nancy: Okay. Um, oops, sorry. You went to school here. You started ...

Robert: I sure did. Yeah, I started here, uh, 19, uh, 25, really 26 I started here and graduated in 1938, uh, from Titusville High School. I saw the school grow. In fact, it was after we got here that they built a separate building for Titusville High. When we came, uh, I started school in a building that's where City Hall is now located. It was a three-story building and housed all 12 grades, uh, of the, of the high school, and uh, the gymnasium [00:34:00] was, strangely enough, was on the third floor. Uh, it was a big, it was a big, nice room, roomy rooms, uh, tall ceilings. You opened the windows and a breeze would flow through. We had no

air-conditioning in that day and age, of course. That's where I went my first six years of school. And then in 1927 and 28, uh, they built Titusville High School, which is down on the present site of Titusville High School. It was a Spanish-type building, and I went there six years.

And, uh, saw a lot of, uh, changes over a period of time from athletics to scholastic endeavors and the types of education. We didn't seem to worry too much about, uh, the lack of courses because we always, uh, had courses available that were sufficient that we could get into college. And, uh, we didn't have, uh, the type of tests they have now to get into college because colleges weren't as crowded in that day and age (cough). But ...

Nancy: What was a, a school day like for a schoolboy?

Robert: Well, uh, in elementary school, of course, you, you didn't go as early as they go nowadays. Uh, you went to school a little later in the day. We'd go about 8:00 and not be through school until 3 or 3:30. But, uh, if we remember that this time, uh, a great many of the students came from outlying areas by bus, and there was always a little bit of conflict between the city folks and the country folks, a little bit of, of that went on in elementary school in particular.

Uh, we had a cafeteria and, uh, very few people brought their lunches. They usually would buy lunch for about 15 cents in, in, in the early, in the early part of this. Those of us who lived in the, in town, many times just walked home and ate at, at noon because we'd have an hour, and we'd walk home and eat, eat lunch at home and then walk back, or maybe we'd, uh, if in later days [00:36:00] if someone had a car, we'd ride home and ride back.

Uh, but it was about the same as, as any other, anybody else went to school. We, we didn't have a, a one-room schoolhouse, of course. We had, uh, separate rooms for separate classes. And, uh, uh, today, uh, I can say that my first grade teacher is still alive and spends the winters here. Uh, my third grade teacher lives here and my fifth grade teacher lives here. So, I'm, I'm real proud of the fact that I went to school here. And then, uh, life was, was good. I went on to the University of Florida and graduated from there. Uh, but, uh, I'm, I'm a product of, uh, Brevard County education and I'm proud of it.

My interests in education continued through the years and I was on the Brevard School Board for 14 years and chairman for nine of those years. So, I've had a real interest in education in Brevard. In fact, I was on the school board during the heavy buildup of the space program when we were, uh, uh, finishing a classroom a week, uh, averaging that for many, for a number of years. And, uh, in fact, we had as many students when I got off the board as we have today, about 60,000. And, uh, and uh, and then of course with the fall back of the

Apollo program, you know, we lost a lot of people. And then these people who came in in the early buildup grew older and their children graduated from school, so we had a number of schools that were empty and were either sold or, or used for other purposes. Now it's building back up to the same number of students in that day and age.

But, uh, there's a lot of interest in education, and I've always had a lot of interest in it, and I've always been proud of our schools. Uh, some people say you can't get a proper education in the schools at Brevard, in particular the learning base. We never found that to be any different than it is today. It, it's [00:38:00] in the person. If they want the education, they can get it.

Nancy: Uh, it leads me to, to come to the, the notion of, uh, what it was like during the integration years here.

Robert: Well, we didn't have the problems of integration that many other, other areas had, uh, in many other states, perhaps. Florida had a, had a law, as a lot of others, and I was on the board at the time, the school board at the time, a law that you upheld the, the separate but equal philosophy for the black students and the white students. And, if you failed to do that, then you could be removed from office. Uh, that was part of the Constitution of the State of Florida. After the Brown decision in, in the 50s, then we gradually worked toward integration. Uh, we could not accomplish it until we went, until federal court ordered it. So, uh, I was on the board when the federal court, we were in court in Orlando, and federal court, uh, required us to, to, for integration, and it was at that time, then, that overturned the, the regulation in the Constitution of the State of Florida. And so then we could go proceed with, uh, with integration.

We had some few troubles, but not in the schools. We had, you know, there were maybe some kids would, would argue with one another, maybe get in a fight or two, but we never had anything like, uh, uh, you know, a big upheaval or anything like that. Integration, I think, in Brevard went rather smoothly, particularly in the schools. And, uh, I think it was because we, we, we had good teachers, good black and white teachers both who accepted it and moved forward with it, and good administrators that, that said, "This is the law. We're going to do it."

And, the philosophy was that we should make the equal education for everybody, because the separate but equal was really not separate but equal. [00:40:00] There was no way it was separate but equal. Facilities might have been separate but equal, but the, you, you had to, uh, put the money into the, into the schools. And I was so glad when we did away with black schools, we'll say, and, uh, and integrated. We, we did use some of the facilities in the black schools, uh, for, for integrated schools, but most of them were in the, in the other buildings, the, the

white buildings. I think it went pretty smooth, really, the whole problem of integration in Brevard.

Nancy: There was a black community here right from the beginning, right?

Robert: Oh yes. Oh yes, we've had a black community, and if you look back on it, we, we threw up our hands and just think, "Why, how could we treat people like that of not having equal facilities for, for schooling," but that was the way it was in those days. And, that, that's not making an excuse, it's just that was the way life was. Uh, we had separate, uh...

In fact, the building that was replaced in 1916 by the big concrete building where we, where City Hall is now, the old wooden building was moved, uh, and became one of the early schools for blacks in the community, and that was in 1916. But, prior to that, uh, most of the education for blacks was on an informal basis by, uh, those blacks who were determined that their children were going to get an education. In some instances they were educated in churches or educated in homes, maybe out underneath an oak tree. But, uh, they didn't have the facilities, and it wasn't until, uh, a few years before integration that the facilities began to, to, uh, be built for the blacks students. And we did have some good facilities for them, but they just couldn't get the same education.

They were so, so much fewer in number that, uh, you couldn't offer, uh, uh, higher, uh, forms of math, uh, geometry, [00:42:00] trigonometry, the students just, uh, were not there to offer it. But, uh, I, I think in generally, uh, the relationship between the blacks and whites in Brevard has, has been pretty smooth over a period of years, and continues to be, uh, a good strongpoint.

Nancy: Are there any prominent, uh, black folks that, uh, were involved with the city government, county government?

Robert: Well, uh, one of the early, earliest black residents was a man named, uh, Gibson, and uh, Mr. Gibson came here in the way back, uh, before Colonel Titus was here, he was here. And, uh, he was very dedicated to education for the young blacks. He also ran one of the early restaurants here. He was the first jailer, first county jailer here, and was a very prominent person, Andrew J. Gibson.

Another man was Henry Maxwell who, who, uh, was an early citrus grower (cough) and owned some groves and, uh, very prominent. Uh, those were some of the earlier prominent blacks.

We've, we've got others in more recent years and one that we have had for a number of years is Dr. Frank Williams who is now chairman of the board of, uh, trustees at Brevard Community College and, uh, worked with, with the Peace

Corps under President Kennedy. He did that overseas. Uh, he has been on staff of, uh, President Eisenhower and on the staff of, uh, working with President Nixon and other presidents over a period of time. We're very proud of Dr. Williams. (cough)

Nancy: Great. Can we cut for a second? We'll talk a little bit more about the relationship between black people and white people in those days.

Robert: Well, one, one thing, we were in, in, in Titusville, North Brevard, as, as with many places... We didn't have plantations. [00:44:00] We didn't have that holdover, for example, of the slave times, which I'm sure was a very difficult thing in the, in the Carolinas and in Georgia and across the south. We didn't have that type of thing here.

Many, but many of our young people were raised, practically raised by, uh, black women. Uh, there was no question about it. For example, in my own family, my two daughters, uh, we, we had a black woman that, uh, was there at the house with them, uh, when they were young and my wife was working. Uh, later of after they went to school, she was always there when they got home from school. Uh, we just demanded that she eat with them when she, she did the cooking for them and that she'd eat with them and then often times she'd bring her small daughter and they would sit together and eat. We never thought anything about it. That was just part of, of our life. Uh, there was no black and white. We didn't even think of that. It was, uh, friends. We were friends. And I think a lot of people in, in the North Brevard area felt the same way. There was no question about it.

They, the problem of the, of the blacks in the community there was the jobs. And, uh, they were pretty much in the earlier days, uh, relegated to citrus-picking and, and that type, janitorial work and so forth, and it wasn't until later on that we got the professional black that we have today. And, it's, it's real heartening to see that, that we, we, that they took advantage of their education. And that's what the advantage of integrated education.

Nancy: Okay. We'll roll onto the social life and entertainment.

Robert: Well, entertainment probably revolved mostly around the movie theater. The church was strong for, not, not entertainment exactly, except that you did have programs and plays and entertainment. Uh, the, the theater, uh, the Magnolia Theater, which is now the Emma Parrish Theater, was a very early theater and, [00:46:00] uh, had a lot of movies, of course. Uh, but there were, there were the, the number of dances. Uh, they would have dances and, uh, school programs, church programs. Of course, I think life revolved around the school and church

more in those days than it does now. But, uh, but that's where entertainment was primarily.

We made our own entertainment. We, uh, uh, when I was young, we didn't have any Little League, uh, or things like that, and we would, uh, find a vacant lot and go out and cut the weeds ourselves and maybe use stones for the bases and play baseball. And it was just, that was what you did. Uh, I can remember when, uh, I lived, uh, uh, just a block off of Indian River Avenue and the traffic was so light that we would, uh, uh, extend a tennis net across Indian River Avenue and play tennis and when a car came we'd take down one side of the net and then we'd go back to playing tennis. We didn't have any backdrops. If the, if the ball went by us, we had to chase it down the, down the street, which was paved at that time. But we did a lot of things like that, uh, you know. And then, of course, a lot of young men were, uh, enjoyed fishing and hunting in that day and age.

But entertainment revolved around, uh, around, as I said, the family and the school, and then we, we had a number of musical programs here. Uh, a woman by the name of Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. D. B. Pritchard, was very involved in the production of, oh, several, uh, musical programs and plays each year. And, uh, she would, she was very good about that and she was very dedicated to that. And she loved young people. And so we had an awful lot of, of that type of entertainment, plays, programs, and, and that type of thing that she would direct because she had such an interest in young people.

Nancy: I have a note here: Mayday picnics? Were there ...?

Robert: Oh, uh, well, that's right, entertainment. Well, we had, [00:48:00] we had Mayday here. As, as you might know, the, uh, uh, uh, Mayday was a big thing for the maypole dance and you always had that. Uh, that was primarily relegated to the, to the school students.

There was entertainment in the area of, during holiday celebrations. Those were, those were quite popular. And, uh, it, it appeared... There were only three centers, in those days, there were only three centers of population of any size. There was the Melbourne, uh, Eau Gallie area and the Cocoa Rockledge area, and Titusville area. And so, each of these three areas sponsored celebrations on holidays.

Titusville's time was on the Fourth of July. And, uh, people from throughout the county would come, either by car or they would bring their boats and they had boat races, and they had parades, and, uh, oh they had, uh, greased pig, uh, tried to catch the greased pig, or climb the greased pole, and they had, had... At one stage we had, uh, uh horse races. And these were just horserace horses, you

know, that farmers used, horse races, uh, over a small area of track, but most of it revolved around the Indian River. There were sailboat and powerboat races.

Uh, Melbourne, I think, uh, as I recall, was on the, on, uh, Labor Day. I, I'm not sure, and Cocoa's was on Memorial Day, and they might've been reversed. But, the people from the other two areas of the county always went together and they'd, uh, take their picnic lunches with them and they'd have, have picnics and they'd have boat races and they'd have foot races, and all types of things, big family entertainment. Uh, you always looked forward to those three events, which usually, of course, fell in the summertime, or the warmer months. But those were big.

Nancy: What would you do for the Fourth of July?

Robert: Fourth of July? Oh, you'd, uh, always work out some things to have some fireworks, uh, [00:50:00] personal fireworks. You never had any, any big, glamorous fireworks, you know, that type thing, but you, somebody would always have a few fireworks. We'd usually always have a parade and decorate up bicycles and in the older times decorate up buggies, horse and buggies, and there was a lot of decorating of buildings through use of bunting and that type of thing.

Uh, Fourth of July was a, was a big day and, uh, most of our activities, as I say, centered on the river and at Sand Point. Sand Point, we had, uh, uh, oh baseball games and, uh, there was a little horse track out there, and we had these kid's games, all the type of kid's games, and usually a big fish-fry. That, that was an important thing, a big fish-fry, and if you didn't bring your picnic lunch, well you ate, ate mullet. And, uh, so Fourth of July was a big day in Titusville.

Nancy: How many people do you think would come to these things?

Robert: Oh, you might have, uh, I don't know, 1,500 or 1,000-1,500, maybe as many as 2,000, just depending on the weather and, and, uh, the program that you were having. There used to be... They used to have some pretty good programs for the, for those type of things.

Nancy: Would there be speakers?

Robert: Uh, sometimes they'd have speakers. Uh, you know, every once in a while some attorney would, uh, uh, be, uh, be arranged to have him make a patriotic speech, or you might be able to have a, a visiting politician or something do that.

Nancy: Okay.

Robert: And then they usually had a town band that was something I didn't mention. The town bands would play a, a musical concert on, on the Fourth of July, and other times. We, uh, as far as entertainment goes, we had a band here, a town band for many years that played, uh, in a, a little band, uh, performing area, and, uh, played, uh, usually maybe once or twice a month on, on Sunday afternoons. So, that was a Sunday afternoon thing that people went to. [00:52:00] They were always free.

Nancy: It sounds like [crosstalk 00:52:02]

Robert: Life was simple. Life was a lot simpler. (laugh)

Nancy: That's for sure. Um, you mentioned, uh, a little while back about the, uh, depression times and, uh, and bank failures. What, what was it like here then?

Robert: Well, life in the depression was pretty touch, and uh, and I, I think about bank failure, I, I know my, my mother died, uh, a couple years ago at the age of 100, and uh, she lived through the depression. I know she always, uh, kept a little money around the house because she said when the banks failed, when the local banks failed, uh, she and my dad only had about \$12, uh, to their name, and she was never going to get caught like that again without, without any money because she never did trust banks too much after that. But a lot of people didn't.

And then, of course, in the depression, uh, there was not a lot of money floating around and, uh, we did some bartering. Uh, uh, we think of bartering maybe in a different aspect than this, but this was bartering, for example, we, uh, we were in the newspaper business and, uh, we would, uh, trade advertising for groceries and, uh, maybe, maybe trade advertising for other types of products. Uh, uh, if a fisherman, uh, wanted a subscription to the paper, we might take fish, for example, as a, and, and make a deal with, uh, him supplying us a certain amount of fish over a period of time. Farmers, we would, uh, take their products for, for subscriptions to the newspaper. And all other businesses did the same. There was just not a lot of cash money changed hands in those days, because there wasn't much cash.

And, uh, I remember talking with, uh, with a man, uh, in the 50s and we were talking about the, the price of bread and that, at that time it had gone up to like 40 or 50 [00:54:00] cents a loaf, and he said he could remember when a loaf of bread was only a nickel or a dime, but you didn't have the nickel or a dime, so, uh, everything's relative. But, life was pretty tough here during the depression days, and it wasn't until, uh, the later, latter part of the depression that, that this area seemed to come out of it.

One thing that we had during the depression that made an impact on Titusville was WPA, the Works Progress Administration. We, a lot of people can remember back and think those people didn't accomplish much, they, they were standing around leaning on their shovels and so forth. They didn't do that in Titusville and it was primarily because of the people in charge of the program. We have a lot of things today because of the WPA workers here. For example, the Titusville, uh, Marina was constructed in that day and age and the, the coquina rocks that line the walls of the marina there were brought in and placed there by work, WPA workers. That was one good result. We had a bench, uh, small bench shell that was constructed and several hundred park benches constructed during those days. Some of the benches that we find in Titusville in some areas might still be those benches.

Uh, not far from where we're talking today is the Babcock Furniture building which is just down a few, a few doors. That was, uh, originally a, the Van Croix Theater building which was built in 1928 and 29. The theater, uh, went broke and so the building was left vacant and, uh, the roof leaked and during the early part of the depression that was in pretty bad shape.

So, there was a project, uh, came along and the, the, uh, the building was purchased by local people and WPA, well, local government, [00:56:00] and WPA went in there and converted it, reconverted it (cough) into a, a basketball area. And so, if you go into Babcock Furniture now, the larger parts you can still, on the floor, on the wooden floor, see the stripes of the basketball court. (cough) That became quite a civic center and basketball area, playing area, and so that... We think of that as being a, a good thing to happen during those WPA days and the depression days. (cough)

Nancy: Well, just prior to that, I guess, in, in World War I, um, I don't know, you wouldn't necessarily have any personal memories of this...

Robert: No, I don't.

Nancy: But do you have any, uh, stories you can tell us of ...

Robert: (cough) Excuse me, I, I think I need ...

Speaker 1: Robert Hudson, August 24, 1992, North Brevard Historical Museum, Titusville, Florida. Interviewer: Nancy Yasecko. Equipment: Sony BVP-50 camera, that's the camera. The Beta SP recorder, Sony BVW-35. Audio [00:58:00] on channels 2 and 4. Copyright Brevard County Historical Commission 1992. This is tape 3.

Nancy: Okay, we'll talk about the wars here.

Robert: Well, we could go back many years, of course. Uh, this area had some, uh, uh, some events during the... We go way back to the Seminole Indian Wars, you know, the, the, uh, Seminole Indians, uh, uh, their last, one of their last stands was in this area, as an example, before they were, at that time, driven on south into the Everglades.

Uh, coming on up, we had, in the Civil War, there was some activity here, uh, or between the states or Civil War, however you want to term it. Uh, (cough) this was an area for salt production. And, uh they would take large, uh, metal pans and put, uh, put the, uh, pump the, uh, salt water from the Indian River in it, and then, uh, let the sun evaporate it and, and scrape the salt off of the bottom of the pan. And, uh, of course salt was very important for the, for keeping meat. Uh, this was also an area of some, some blockade running by the Confederate forces, uh, bringing supplies in this way and going north. There was never any fighting in this area.

Coming on up to the Spanish-American War, uh, there was some activity here in the, in the fact that, uh, the war was in Cuba, of course, and it was so relatively close to Florida that in a lot of communities they fought, uh, established guard groups and here they called it the Indian River Guards, uh, and they, they were ready to not go anywhere, but just to protect this area in case, uh, Spain made an attempt to, to invade Florida.

Uh, World War I, uh, activity here primarily was around, uh, uh, revolved around the coast guard station that was located, uh, just east of [01:00:00] us here, uh, along the, the Atlantic coastline. Uh, there were, of course, a lot of, uh, young men went into the service, but that's a primary activity during World War I, a lot of, uh, coast guard activity in the area.

World War II, of which I'm a little more familiar with, uh, since I served in World War II, but this area, uh, there were a lot of ships sunk off the shores of, uh, Brevard County. And, uh, that resulted in, uh, in people, uh, in, in us having guards along the, the beach, beaches area because they were, uh, there, there were some, uh, uh German submarines that had, uh, uh, discharged some people to come ashore up in the Jacksonville area, and there was fear that that might happen in this area, so you had, you had beach patrols with, uh, dogs and, and they had guard shacks, and then, uh, another check was on the, on the bridges coming from the island into, into town. They had, uh, uh, some guards in that area. That was the primary activity during World War II as far as personnel went.

We did have quite a boat-building industry here. The Correct Craft people came here and built a, a whole number of boats there in Central Florida over in the Pine Castle/Orlando area now. But they, they built a lot of assault boats for the

army and navy both. Uh, and then of course, Banana River Naval Air Station came in and we had some, uh, activity here. Uh, they had a USO, uh, unit here and, uh, they would invite the young men that were stationed at Banana River Naval Air Station to come up for entertainments here. And we had a number of local girls that married, uh, young men that served there, and then they usually came back and lived here. But, uh, that primarily the activity during any wars that we've had.

Nancy: I guess that there were quite a few [01:02:00] people who came here after, to Florida in general, but up and down the coast, who had been sort of stationed along here and ...

Robert: Yes. And that, I guess they get used to the, to the, uh, the better weather, maybe, than they have in the, in the northern areas, and so they usually come back and, and live here, many of them do.

Speaker 2: Did you say you served around here?

Robert: Uh, I, I was, uh, in the navy and, uh, the last 16 months of my service was at Banana River Naval Air Station, uh, just 30-some miles from home. I was fortunate in that, I guess. Although, uh, every, every month I put in for a transfer somewhere else because I'd like to have seen more of the world, but, uh, I was overseas in the Caribbean area in the, had a submarine patrol work, Caribbean and down South America. Uh, and then, uh, spent the last 16 months... Uh, I was in the navy, uh, nearly six years and I spent the last 16 months down here at, what was then Banana River Naval Air Station, now Patrick Air Force Base.

Nancy: Tell us a little bit about the submarine activity.

Robert: Well, they, the, uh, even before we got into World War II, there was quite a bit of German submarine activity against merchant ships along the east coast. And, uh, I think there were probably, uh, somewhere, I've heard this figure, over 80 ships were sunk along the Florida east coast because it's a natural, uh, uh, transportation route for merchant ships, and we had a number of them. We, we had, uh, uh, some stuff float ashore, and I can remember a local man who, who, uh, gathered, uh, many barrels of oil that had floated ashore, for example, here. And, uh, you, those people who were here at the time could see the, the fires of the ships burning.

Of course, another activity during the war was, uh, plane spotters. We had, uh, a civilian [01:04:00] plane-spotting, uh, operation on top of the courthouse. And, uh, that was a... I, I guess we all thought that, uh, that maybe the enemy would

bring airplanes here. We didn't, we didn't know, but, uh, that, that was one of the ways to, uh, protect this area.

Nancy: You were in the Carribbean, you were looking for these submarines?

Robert: Yes. There were activity, there were, they were active in, in the Caribbean area against all type of shipments. And, uh, a number of submarines were sunk in the, in the Caribbean area, uh, by, uh, planes that, of, of our kind and by, uh, ships, uh, war ships.

Nancy: What was the Banana River Naval Air Station like?

Robert: Well, it was, uh, (laugh) it was just an air station, uh, primarily devoted to, uh, to watercraft. Uh, I flew in, uh, PBMs which landed on the water and then were pulled up on shore. Uh, that's what it was selected for because of the protection of the Banana River from, from, uh, the, the sea. Uh, it can be pretty rough landing, uh, uh, such an aircraft at sea because of the swells, and you didn't have that in the river, and it was, that was what it was used for.

Also, it was the headquarters of a, of local patrol, uh, smaller planes patrolling and looking for these subs there. Uh, and it was a training area, and while I was there, uh, we were training other crews. That's what I spent the last 16 months doing was, uh, being a, a, an instructor in navigation and, uh, for, for the crews that came through there. So, uh, it, it was, it was a pretty good life, really.

Uh, you know, not many, uh, naval air stations or army places had a beautiful beach right in front of them, which it was. And, uh, although there was not the population anywhere [01:06:00] near the population that was here, the fact of the matter is, if you were speaking of Banana River Naval Air Station, there was nothing south of it on the A1A. The road was built down to Melbourne, but there was nothing south on it until you got down to the Eau Gallie area. And, uh, it was very, just wild, just wilderness. Very few homes, uh, built... A few homes built in Cocoa Beach, but most everybody that was stationed there that was married lived in Cocoa or Eau Gallie or Melbourne. Uh, others lived on the base.

But, gosh, it was a great place to serve because of a great beach and good weather and a lot of flying days. We didn't have much bad weather for flying.

Nancy: I heard they had a, um, a radar, uh, program there they were developing some ...

Robert: They did. Uh, and, uh, LORAN navigation program too, in the late, latter part of World War II. Uh, it, uh, that, uh, was, uh, thought of, uh, by a lot of people as a possibility that, uh, uh, this area might be attacked because of that base there.

But, uh, that was, there was little likelihood of it, but you always think of that and worry of it.

Nancy: Well, very good. Let's take a cut. What about mosquitoes in this area?

Robert: Oh, they've always been a problem, uh, much more in early days. I don't know how people lived here in the early, in the real early days. I don't know how they were living around them. I remember when, uh, we moved here, uh, my mother and my sister and I came down by train from Cleveland and I never will forget getting off the train and, uh, and literally the mosquitoes just ate you up. You know, they were all over your arms and everything, so we were so anxious to get somewhere where they were, where they weren't bad. You can imagine people, uh, coming to this area like but.

But mosquitoes were, were bad and they were a problem, and uh, the first mosquito control was, uh, cutting [01:08:00] a swatch of, of palmetto, uh, you know, the palmetto fronds, and just using it like this to ward off the mosquitoes. And then, uh, other people, uh, burned, uh, sometimes they burned rags, uh, or burned a powder, a mosquito powder to keep them off. Uh, didn't have air-conditioning. Of course, screens were very necessary in that day and age. Even some people slept under mosquito netting in their homes because of that. But you can imagine how, how that would be in the middle of the, of the summertime when it was pretty hot.

Mosquito control came in at the latter stages of World War II when they first started the aerial spraying. And, uh, they did quite bit of aerial spraying for that. And then, uh, later years, of course, they, they did the, went through this process of diking and flooding the areas, and that, uh, that is probably the most successful mosquito control program. You know, the mosquitoes will become, like anything else, will become immune to, to certain types of spray and you got to go on and get stronger and then that affects people and affects other wildlife, so we have to be very careful of that. But the diking and that type of thing, the making sure that you're, you're, uh, areas around your home aren't, they're not areas for mosquito breeding.

Speaking about your home, uh, a lot of people had their own mosquito control, a fogger on their lawnmower. I had one, and we, we were able to control the mosquitoes around the plants and the shrubs around the house pretty much if you got out and, and mowed your yard at the same time you were giving it a mosquito control process. But they were bad, and I'm sure they were bad, uh, in the early days of, uh, of the space program, after, because after all, the space program was located on the North Merritt Island which was one of the headquarters for the mosquitoes, and, uh, [01:10:00] I'm sure, uh, it was very difficult. Of course, we've got air-conditioning, you know, and so they were, it

wasn't quite so bad. But I'm sure that there was, uh, a mosquito problem there in the early days outside. Uh...

Nancy: Tell me a little bit about what you did about mosquitoes there at work.

Robert: Well, at work, uh, you know, you have a screen door, all the businesses had screen doors because you couldn't stand it in the summertime. Sometimes people would take the doors off in the wintertime and the fall and put them back on in, in the spring. But, uh, for example, uh, the, uh, at our newspaper office where people were working at machines or maybe sitting and setting type, they had to have something, so there was, we usually had an insect powder that we called it that was burning around their legs or something like that and that would keep the mosquitoes off. There was just no way to keep the mosquitoes from coming in with people, uh, through, you know, as a result of the screens. So you did have a problem and you'd sit there and type and swat a mosquito. We don't think of that nowadays, but it did interrupt you a lot, and it made it very uncomfortable. (cough)

Nancy: Okay. Uh, what are the biggest changes that happened around here or happened when the space program came?

Robert: That probably is the most dramatic change we've ever had in Titusville, when the space program came, and particularly after the, the, uh, uh, NASA, uh, acquired all of the property, some 100,000 acres of property east of us here, which, uh, several things.

It, it changed our life dramatically in that prior to that time, uh, we had, uh, a, a beach that was available to the public at all times and a lot of people, uh, in town had built cottages over there, primarily cottages for the summertime. A lot of people went and lived at the beach in the summertime, and, uh, uh, we have a, a map behind me here that shows some of those cottages, [01:12:00] or aerial photograph. Uh, they, they did that, uh, and, and the big problem was water, uh, water was, uh, drinking, good drinking water was hard to, uh, to, to obtain there. But they, they did and there were, there was a, a number of cottages over there.

Uh, of course when the space center purchased that property, that cut that out and Titusville became virtually an inland community even though it was on the coast. Uh, no direct availability of the, of the, uh, Atlantic Coast until such times the wildlife people and the seashore people came in and that is available, uh, to, to the public at all times, except when there are anticipation of missile, missile launches, shuttle launches, and landings.

But, uh, the, the advent of the space program here dramatically changed the community. For one thing, uh, we had three communities in this area, uh,

before the space program came. We had, uh, Titusville was incorporated and a little town of Whispering Hills to the west was incorporated, and south was Indian River City area which was unincorporated, but was seeking incorporation. So, it was determined that these three would go together, and so overnight the population, uh, jumped from about 6,000 to about 20,000, and that was one of the effects of the space program, the buildup.

We prided ourselves in North Brevard as being a bedroom community for the space program. And we, although, uh, the glamorous part of Cocoa Beach, and, uh, I'm not saying about that, but that was, that was more of the glamorous area, more, uh, motels, uh, more of the corporations brought their people in, uh, living there to, to work at the space center, but we tried to attract families, and that was a, a big thing in North Brevard because so many of our churches worked hard to attract families, [01:14:00] our schools.

Life was a little bit slower here than it was at Cocoa Beach, and so we attended to attract the family atmosphere, whereas maybe the singles, uh, and others, and other families, of course, lived throughout the county. That did a lot for our community buildup.

Then of course at the end of the space program in the mid 70s we really hurt, and uh, there were, there were at times during, during the cutback people just had to leave the community, left their houses, uh, couldn't sell them so they just left them, and let the, the financial institutions take them back. In many cases, FHA had to take back these houses. And we at one time during that period had as many as 600 or 700 homes empty and available. Well, well, we began an advertising program to point out that these were available at very reduced prices. So, it, it was pretty successful in that our first influx after that was from South Florida. Many people down there, uh, selling their homes for, for bigger prices and coming up here and buying what we might call, uh, bargain prices. And, uh, so, uh, a lot of those homes were filled that way.

Uh, we were determined after that cutback that we would try to diversify so that we were not dependent on the space program as much as we were in the past. And, uh, some of the ones that have come in since then, McDonnell Douglas's operation here is, is, is not... There are two operations, one's related directly to space, and another larger operation is, is, is involved with the Tomahawk Missile and component parts for airplanes. And, there is quite a diversity of other types of, uh, industry here now, non space-related, and that's what we had hoped to do because we'd never [01:16:00] like to go through, uh, uh, the same thing we did about 17 years ago when that was a real downturn. That hurt everybody.

Nancy: Okay.

Robert: But of course, uh, when we think about it, there's the thrilling part of the, of the shuttle, the thrilling part of the Apollo launches. Uh, the launch, uh, when man first went to the moon was probably the, the, just the most thrilling thing that people in this area had ever seen. Uh, it, it was so fascinating that, uh, before the launch we had people, uh, literally camping everywhere along the Indian River, uh, along the causeway, uh, everything was filled. We had people sleeping on blankets on the median between the two lanes of US-1, even which was very dangerous, but that was the way it was. And our facilities were really, uh, taxed to the limit. That was mainly in the days of the Apollo program.

Uh, since then, the, the shuttle launches have also brought many people. We have more facilities, more areas for, for, for people to view and watch and then of course they've, they have a, a better policy for allowing people to, to park along the NASA causeway and, and the causeway leading to the air force station as well as many people, uh, viewing it from, uh, the launch area itself. But, uh, those were thrilling days. They still are. We still get thrilled at watching shuttle launches go, and nighttime launches in particular are so dramatic. But it's, it's changed us forever. It'll never be the same. We wouldn't want it to be the same.

Nancy: With the, uh, the change in the population, people coming in for the space program, uh, it wasn't too long after that there was a change in the newspaper business.

Robert: Oh yes. We had quite a change in the newspaper business. The, the, the Star Advocate of which I was associated with all these years, uh, had grown before [01:18:00] that, uh... Well, we were a twice a week newspaper and then, uh, in the late 50s, as the buildup started, we went to three times a week. And then in 1964 we changed to an afternoon daily newspaper. And, uh, the following year Gannett Company, which, uh, uh, they bought the Cocoa Tribune, and then we sold to them, our paper sold to them, and then they started the Today newspaper, which later has become Florida Today. I stayed with the company, uh, after we sold. (cough) So, I, I was with them from 1965 until 1985 when I retired. I was with them 20 years. Very dramatic change in the, in the newspapers, uh, during that time.

Of course, uh, we gained, uh, radio stations and eventually television stations. And, uh, the first television station that we could get in this area was, uh, in Jacksonville. And, uh, I had a tall tower at my house and a small, small screen and we would get a rather snowy picture, but we got our first, uh, January 1st bowl games and other, other types of entertainment. We were real pleased with it, and of course it improved so much now with, with, uh, the television stations much nearer. (cough)

The view we're seeing here is Washington Avenue, uh, looking north, about 1900, shows a couple of bicycle riders in the middle of the street, unpaved street. To the left is the, uh, the Florida Star building, the first building. Beyond that, with the, the tower there, is the Advocate building, and uh, others are grocery stores and, uh, and a couple of department stores.

This is another view of Washington Avenue looking north, about the same view as we had before, however, now we have automobiles in here. This was in the late 20s. [01:20:00] Uh, more buildings. More two-story buildings. Washington Avenue has filled in a great deal then, uh, since the earlier picture.

This is the Dixie Hotel which is on the site of the old, uh, Titus House, right on the Indian River. Uh, it was, uh, it was originally a one-story building and then they built this three-story structure overlooking the Indian River.

This is the view along the Indian River in Titusville. You can see the docks that jut out, uh, into the river. A young lady there sitting on the seawall. This is, uh, probably in about the 1920s or early 30s. Uh, even maybe earlier than the 1920s. It's hard to tell from this postcard.

This is a scene along the Dixie Highway, uh, through Brevard County. The highway ran pretty close to the Indian River. And, you can see all the moss draped off the trees, an old car moving along there.

This is the bridge over the Indian River in Titusville named the Walker Bridge. It was built in 1922, connecting the North Merritt Island with Titusville.

Nancy: You remember going across that bridge?

Robert: Many times.

Nancy: You remember waiting for it?

Robert: Oh yeah. It was operated by hand. A hand crank would open that bridge for river traffic.

Nancy: Was there a bridge stand or station there?

Robert: Mm-hmm (affirmative). There was a house later built there, but, uh, I don't know what they did in this, in the beginning. They just had somebody living nearby or something that went out there.

Celebration in Titusville on July 4, [01:22:00] 1912. The decorated, uh, horse and buggy, and the decorated bicycles there. That was a big event in Titusville on July 4th every year for many years.

Nancy: Did you ever decorate your bicycle?

Robert: No. No, I never decorated a bicycle.

This is Dummett Castle located on North Merritt Island behind what is now the NASA space center. It, uh, was a site of the, the first orange grove built in this area, or that was raised in this area. Colonel Douglas Dummett planted this grove and he is thought, as a result of that, to be the father of the Indian River citrus industry.

Nancy: What happened to that old house?

Robert: It, uh, burned down. It was, uh, moved up to the causeway here after NASA bought the property and, uh, that's the way it looked in the, it, it, it, um, really they couldn't move it across the bridge, so they parked it on the causeway and then while they were waiting on a barge it burned down.

Speaker 2: This wasn't Dummett's house?

Nancy: No, not... It was on the side of his place.

Robert: Yeah, it was on the side of his place.

Nancy: I don't know that he...

Robert: Popularly known as Dummett Castle, but he didn't built it.

Speaker 2: Okay. Rolling.

Robert: The picture shows the, uh, newer bridge across the Indian River here with the draw, uh, span open. The older portion of the bridge is in the foreground. That's part of the old wooden bridge. They left that there for a fishing pier.

Nancy: I see there is some information about the tolls. I didn't realize, had it always been a toll bridge?

Robert: No, it was only a toll bridge in the early days and, uh, you can see that, uh, that was in the days of when the bridge was wooden. Uh, it was 5 cents, a nickel to go [01:24:00] across per person. A horse and rider was 15 cents. A horse and

vehicle and driver were 20 cents. And it went on down to where it cost, uh, 75 cents for trucks to go across.

Speaker 2: Okay. Rolling.

Robert: A picture of Miss Universe and Miss USA who were here for an annual Christmas parade sponsored by the Titusville JCs. The prior year we had Miss America here, and uh, they were here for special, that special occasion which was an honored guest at the Christmas parade.

Speaker 2: What year was that?

Robert: Uh, 19, in the 60s, I'm not sure which year. Pianist, uh, Count Basie, very popular, uh, entertainer. He, uh, was here for a, a dance at Royal Oak Country Club. This was about 1970.

Speaker 2: Rolling.

Robert: St. Gabriel's was Titusville's, St. Gabriel's Episcopal Church was Titusville's first church. Uh, it was founded in 1886, uh, and was built on land that was donated by Mrs. Titus, Mrs. Henry Titus, and also built with donations made to the church, uh, from a basket on, uh, onboard, uh, the steamers that moved up and down the Indian River asking donations to build the first church in Titusville.

Nancy: When was that picture taken, do you think?

Robert: That was taken in 1927.

Speaker 2: Rolling.

Robert: Meyer's Cottage, a, uh, forerunner of bed and breakfast's, but better known as a rooming and boarding house located on Julia Street. This picture was taken July 4, 1912 with the people who were either eating their [01:26:00] lunch there or were there to spend the holiday, uh, period of July 4th.

Nancy: [inaudible 01:26:12]

Robert: Palm Hotel and Apartments, another of the hotels built along Julia Street which led from the, uh, railroad station down to the Dixie Hotel on the Indian River. This building was built in the 1920s, typical of the Spanish-type architecture of that day.

When the Flagler railroad was extended into this area and all along the east coast, workers were housed in this type of quarter called a quarter boat, which is

housing aboard a, a large, uh, barge moved down along the Indian River as the workers continued to build the, the railroad on south. And this is typical of the, of the way they were, uh, housed because there were no, uh, facilities for them to be, to be, to be located as they went and built the railroad.

Speaker 2: Rolling.

Robert: First railroad station of the Flagler railroad in Titusville was built when the, when the trains first came in, and that was in the early 19, uh, 1890s, located right alongside the one, uh, track. Later, the railroad was expanded to dual tracks through this area.

Speaker 2: Is that a northbound or southbound train?

Robert: It's a southbound train, coming in.

Nancy: What color were the, was the station?

Robert: And the station was yellow and trimmed in white. Those were Flagler [01:28:00] colors for all his stations.