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Sue Maddox Oral History Vanishing Culture Project
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Interviewers: Mike Jepson/Wayne Nield

I 1: Sue, we first start these interviews by asking you to state your full name and your date of birth.

R: I'm Sue Turner-Maddox. I was born March 3, 1932. So I'm 61.

I 1: What was your father's name?

R: Christopher, if you can believe this, Columbus Turner. And he was born and raised in Polk County, our neighboring County to the North. My mother is Myrtle Fulford. She was one of 11 children of Nathan and Betty Fulford.

I 1: Tell me a little bit about your father. What did he do for a living?

R: Well, when I was very young he was a mechanic with a phosphate company and one of the charter members of the AF of L. And in fact, my mother kept books for them on a volunteer basis. That's when the Unions were just coming into the phosphate industry. He was very pro-Union, very outspoken and the company got rid of him because he was wanting to make changes that they didn't want to make. Then he worked as a salesman. He could sell anything. Just a dynamite personality, loved people. Never met a stranger.

I 1: So, you say the company fired him and then he became a salesman.

R: Yes, he worked for W.S. Bacop Corporation. Their home offices are in Mulberry. That's where we're from. Then he had a very severe heart attack in 1950 when he was quite young, in his mid-50s I guess. He wasn't able to work. But I guess the family was desperate for funds. He did come down here and stayed with some of our relatives and he drove a fish truck for Bell Fish Company for awhile until he was able to go back to work again.

I 1: You said that you were from Mulberry. When he was working in sales, were you living in Mulberry at that time?

R: Yes.

I 1: And then he moved to Cortez.

R: No, he never lived in Cortez. I moved here in '65 with my two little boys.

I 1: But you said he did come to Cortez for awhile and stayed with some relatives.

R: Yes, that was '50, '51, maybe '52, along in there. I think it was just a matter of a few months.

I 1: Then he worked in sales and he came to Cortez and drove a fish truck for awhile while he was here.

R: While he was recovering from a heart condition.

I 1: Why was driving a fish truck any less stressful than sales work?

R: I don't really understand that unless maybe he was doing the driving against doctor's orders. I'm not clear on that. But I do know it was for a short while and he was here working. In fact, I remember him coming through Mulberry. He was driving some fish to Americus, Georgia and he came to the house and I rode up with him. That was very exciting. I thought that was really something to have quality time with by Dad.

I 1: How old were you at that time?

R: I'm saying in the '50s but that couldn't have been it because I was maybe 13 or 14. So maybe he worked some part time down here between jobs maybe.

I 1: Do you remember much about that trip when you got to ride with him?

R: Yes. I know we couldn't have been 30 minutes away from home and I was thinkin' we were a long ways off then. We got to Americus about 1:00 or 2:00 in the mornin' and there was a policeman walkin' the beach with a big Shepherd and we were all animal nuts. So we walked with the policeman and his dog for quite awhile.

I 1: So he spent a lot of time away from home when you were growing up?

R: Yes. In fact, he was usually just home on weekends.

I 1: Tell me a little bit about your mother. What type of a woman was she?

R: Very strong. Industrious. She really was a worker and a good homemaker. I realize now that we had a quality of life that not even some wealthy have now. The starched and ironed tablecloth on the table three meals a day. Three good, well-balanced meals a day. A very well cared

for home. She grew not only vegetables, but flowers. We had cut flowers in the house. She sewed for us and always had a big garden. We generally had a pig or a cow, but the pig could never be slaughtered because it was named before it got old enough.

I 1: I should ask you, how many brothers and sisters did you have?

R: I have one brother. He lives in St. Pete. And I have an older sister and a younger sister.

I 1: And what is your brother's name?

R: Christopher as well.

I 1: And your sisters' names.

R: Betty is the older and Martha is the younger. So I'm the very well-balanced middle child.

I 1: Tell me a little bit about growing up. You said that you look back now and you think that you had a life that was very ...

R: It was gracious. Absolutely gracious. Yeah. Mulberry at that time was mainly middle class people. The Babcock family was there. But you wouldn't know from the way they lived that they had any more than anyone else. We all ate about alike. We dressed alike. There was no distinction between the haves and have nots. And it was a very wholesome town. All the kids had music lessons and dancing. It was just a good community to grow up in. It's quite changed now. But then it was a nice place to live.

I 1: Was your mother ever employed outside of the home?

R: For a very short while. She took a job at a canning plant and it didn't last very long because she insisted on maintaining her home just as though she were there full time. Your system can't stand that. You can't work 24 hours a day.

I 1: It sounds like she was a very good homemaker.

R: Yes.

I 1: What else do you remember about Mulberry growing up?

R: Oh, well I remember in the '40s during World War II I had a paper route. I was in the 6th grade. The mornings that I wasn't able to go the paper route, well either my mother would or my older sister and a friend of hers. I think I made enough money to buy the bicycle that was necessary to my job. That was the only thing I realized out of it. I remember we used to play hide and go seek at night. We would catch fire flies and put 'em in a jar. I used to love to hike the phosphate dumps. There were a lot old ones with full-grown old trees on them. Camphor and Pine trees. And we would even slide down those

things in a cardboard box.

I 1: Was Mulberry an agricultural community?

R: No, phosphate mining. In fact, it claimed to be the phosphate capital of the world. We thought that was some great big distinction. But now we know with all the pollution and the millions and billions of gallons of water that's wasted ... of course, phosphate is necessary but most of it's sent overseas. I don't think that's too smart.

I 1: Did you graduate from high school in Mulberry?

R: Yes. In 1950.

I 1: And what did you do then?

R: I couldn't really decide what I wanted to do and I was thinking what would realize a good income and being a dental hygienist appealed to me some. But the closest school was Reading, Pennsylvania at that time and there were no opportunities to work and go to school at the same time. It was a two year course. This was right at the time my Dad had the heart attack. In fact, he was in the hospital the night of my graduation.

So I didn't really know what to do. And I had worked ever since the paper route days. I had been working as a car hop and saving money to go to school and I went to the University of Florida for just a year. I left just before the year was over. I guess we were really hard up for money and I had my older sister in college at the same time too. She was going to Florida Southern in Lakeland. So I dropped out.

I worked that summer and then married at the end of the summer.

I 1: Was that a hard decision for you to drop out of school?

R: Well, I think had I gone to a small school I would have stayed. But goin' from a little school where we had 50 in our graduating class to a school with thousands of people, and where you're just a number, that was bad too. The principal didn't send my transcript timely and I was unable to participate in orientation which was really bad for me. But I don't think the year was wasted. And I did start back to Florida Southern when my kids began public school. So I got another year there.

I 1: So, you married at the end of that year after you dropped out of the University of Florida. How did you meet your husband?

R: He and his brother and father owned a small family-type restaurant and drive-in on the outskirts of town. I had worked there as a car hop during my high school days. He was quite a bit older. I don't know, it just seemed like a good idea at the time. I wish I had written the reasons

down because I'll swear within a few years I was scraping around trying to find out what they may have been.

I 1: So you married and then where did you live?

R: I lived in Mulberry. I moved from there in '65 after my marriage ended in divorce. I either wanted to go to Gainesville, I liked Gainesville. I did have some relatives there on my husband's side. So I thought about either Gainesville or Cortez. I thought well, a University town is a hard place to raise little boys and too, I had remembered just wonderful summers here. Until I was 15 I

came and spent a long time in the summer with a favorite girl cousin, Marian Johns.

I 1: Tell me a little bit about what you remember of Cortez when you were younger and you'd visit.

R: The shell streets and they smelled so good when it rained. In the summer you could smell guavas. In fact, this yard had a regular guavas grove I believe. I remember the little ditches between all lights and everyone had a few planks over the ditch to make up a bridge so you could go from one yard to the next. My cousin Marian and I would go scallopin' in the summer to make our spendin' money.

She was a blonde too and my hair was just cotton white and we'd get so blistered and nobody thought anything about it. We would sell the scallops for eight dollars a quart. We'd go to Bradenton on the County bus and spend the whole day in Bradenton. Bradenton had two theaters downtown at that time and we'd have lunch at Walgreen's. We'd see both movies. Then we'd come back on the Beach bus in the evening. We must have been 13, 14, maybe 12 even. And what freedom we had because you were always so much safer.

I remember us one night even going in Dad's boat across to Bradenton Beach. I don't know why we wanted to go there or what we did. We were kids. I do remember we climbed out of her bedroom window in order to go.

I 1: You took his boat without him knowing it?

R: Yes. Or she did. I couldn't run anything. Marian was really a tomboy and she was so pretty and didn't know it. She could have cared less. What a character.

I 1: Did she stay in Cortez?

R: Until she married. She and Earl had I think four girls. They were killed in a tragic car/truck accident the day after Thanksgiving when the kids were little. They were goin' fresh water fishing and it was foggy. I couldn't imagine being on the road in such fog, and they were hit head on.

I 1: You say you really liked coming to Cortez as a child. You remember wanting to come to Cortez?

R: That was the longest drive and cars didn't go so fast then and the roads were so narrow and humpbacked. I remember

Highway 37 from Mulberry to Bradenton was just filled with pot holes. You had to just poke along and dodge those and it seemed like an all day excursion. My little brother, if we had a flat, he could just jump right out and fix it. He was just a little kid. But Mama always referred to Cortez as home. Every Christmas we'd pack up all our packages and come home for Christmas.

I 1: Do you think your father felt the same way about the community?

R: No. He didn't spend that much time here. Generally he wasn't with us when we came home. Not often. I don't remember him being with us.

I 1: Let's go back to when you married and then you had children. How many children did you have?

R: Two sons. Rick and Tad. They're 39 and 38 now. Rick is police chief at Holmes Beach and Tad works for Florida Power and Light, usually out of the plant at Parrish. He lives at Terra Ceia.

I 1: You said you divorced in 1965.

R: Well, I actually divorced in '68. I couldn't afford a divorce and I didn't really need one until I was buying this piece of property. Under Florida law at that time a married woman was treated just like a child in the State of Florida. So I didn't realize that until the very closing and the banker told me I'd have to get my husband's signature to buy this house that I was working two jobs to buy. I said, well I do need a divorce. The time has come. I really need to spend that three hundred bucks. So that was how the divorce came about.

I 1: Then you moved to Cortez and you brought your sons with you.

R: Yes. They were 11 and 12.

I 1: How was it when you first came back to the community? Were you accepted?

R: I was mainly around relatives and I didn't even think about that at the time. I felt like I was on a permanent vacation. Even though I was working it was so good to be where I had been so happy. I was renting the garage apartment from Calvin and I swore I never wanted to own anything again because it was so nice to pay rent and it was kind of like a vacation. The kids and I would walk across the bridge to go swimmin' and it was fun.

But you know, after a couple of years you want to have your own place again.

I 1: You say you were working two jobs.

R: After I negotiated to buy this place. I wasn't earning enough for a living. So Mora's Stone Crab Restaurant had just opened and I was the second waitress they hired and I worked there on weekends to help Dorothy Whitaker. She was the number one waitress. And I worked for Bell Fish Company in the office. Bub was very good

about if it was an evening I had to work, he'd let me leave the dock about 2:00 or 2:30 so I could run home and put on my waitressing type clothes and go over and get that Yankee buck.

I 1: Was it hard raising two children at that time.

R: No. Like I say, the world was so much safer and we had really good times. I was interested in being a parent. That was my number one job. And I did good. I give them a lot of credit too. They were easy to get along with. Oh, there was a little sibling rivalry occasionally

but. One thing I remember when I was in between the two jobs I asked the kids to pick up their room and they'd pick their toys up out of the yard before they went into the house for the night. And when I came home from the restaurant about midnight they hadn't done anything. So I turned on every light inside and out, got 'em out of bed. It was summertime. And had them to do their chores. Enough time went by where Tad should have finished and he didn't come back in the house. I thought oh my God the kid's left home for this unusual treatment. I went lookin' and he was on the front porch in the swing asleep.

I 1: Tell me a little bit about this piece of property that you wanted to buy. This house.

R: Well, Walter Taylor and his wife. I can't remember her name and I should remember that. Anyway, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Taylor lived in it and it had a little homemade sign in the yard that said For Sale. I inquired and he wanted $20,000. Well, $20,000 in 1966, '67 was a bunch of money and I think I had a total of $2,000 to my name.

Anyway after awhile he telephoned Bub, Walter, at the fish house and said tell that girl if she still wants this place she can have it for $10,000.

I 1: Really! He dropped the price by half?

R: Yes. Over a couple of years time. There again, $10,000 was a lot and I didn't know that it was hard for a woman to get a loan. But anyway I went right on up to Manatee River Bank and asked for a loan. They said they could only lend me $7,000 on this piece of property because they said property was funny in Cortez. They said you either wanted something there badly or you wouldn't touch it. Property ownership was kind of shaky in Cortez at that time.

So Albert Berrome with West Fortune Street Fish Market didn't know me at all. Just from the association of him coming to pick up some fish and he told Walter that he would lend me $2,000. I said no. I can't do that. I don't know that man. He doesn't know me. Walter said well let him. He said he wants to help. So he wouldn't even allow any papers to be drawn up. But I told the kids, you know that if anything happens that I owe Albert that money.

By then I was working the second job and we paid Albert

off first. So, hence the house.

I 1: Tell me a little bit about the history of this house.

R: It was built I think about 1889 by Billy Fulford. It was his first homeplace. In fact, Sally Mora, his youngest child, was born in this house and she died just this last year. I think at age 86. I just loved it. It was a jungle and it still is a jungle. It's a jungle out there.

I 1: It's a nice jungle though.

R: You could find something to eat in the yard practically year-round. It had fourteen big Mango trees and lots of citrus and Catly Guavas and regular guavas. You could always find something to nibble on out here. Then we had a flood tide that killed the citrus and the Mango trees several years back.

I 1: When did you move into the house?

R: In '68.

I 1: And your sons were probably how old?

R: We rented for about two and a half years. So, they were about 13, 14, something like that.

I 1: Tell me a little bit about Cortez at that time? What was the community like?

R: Well, you had the two churches and those people were together. I remember the Culbreath's and the Mora's would always have their family get togethers. But outside of that I don't recall a whole lot of community spirit or gettin' together. I remember when the old school hadn't been used for a long, long time. The 1912 school. We thought, gosh, what a great place to have a community center and a place for kids to go. We thought sure we could get some ping pong tables and maybe a little library started. This must have been in '70s, the early '70s. Because I remember we had a meeting down at the laundromat and some of the Adams family came and Judy Guthrie. Judy and Junior were living in the Adams' house then. They were very interested. We all met together and tried to get the old school.

But the School Board wouldn't let us use it and Judy and I explained that the land was given at a dollar an acre for the school and why not let it revert back to the community. And the fire department said they would be interested in using the facilities too. But they wanted it seems to me, about $30,000. Well, that was just a lot of money and we couldn't seem to get the fish companies to get interested in helping us acquire that. And there wasn't a whole lot of interest I guess. But it was too bad. The community could have used it. Because this was just before the crazy drug days in Cortez.

I 1: Well, let's talk a little bit about the crazy drug days. But before that, you were sort of an activist in this

community. I'm not sure if that came before Bell's freezer ... was it Bell's ...

R: The Sigma freezer was the last thing. I guess about the very controversial, hurtful thing was the 124th Street access being given to the fish company where I worked.

I 1: What was that all about?

R: Well, just before that I was trying to ... Well, I had a little sailboat to start with. And everytime I wanted to put it in the water I had to just drag it all over Cortez

and go through people's yards to get to the water. And then way later I found out that at the end of my very own street, a block away, is public access. It didn't look like it. Didn't feel like it. It looked like somebody's yard. And I got to thinkin' well, I'll go downtown and find out where the accesses are and see. And see if we can't open 'em up and mark 'em so that people will know that they've got this access to water.

Well, they had already given away one to the Antilles when they owned the Albion Inn. The one at the end of 124th Street Court I guess it was. Then there was one available over by Charlie Guthrie's place and it was blocked off. The one where the fish company's original dock was and at the end of our street. But anyway, when I was looking into it the guy at the County said you're gonna get in trouble. He said the company where you work is sitting on a public right of way. And I said or surely that can't be. That's been there since before ... I said it can't be a public right of way or it never would have been built.

But I guess things were very lax and I said well this works out just fine because they're going to build a new plant. So the old dock won't be needed so we can open it up and it will be fine. Little did I know! Well, really I think the only reason I still have a job today is because of my relatives. But that was a bad time. And it dumbfounds me now. The community pulls together and they're concerned about the bridge. But I think giving away access to deep water is about the biggest loss we've ever had. You can't even launch a boat in Cortez. There is noplace to launch a boat. That was access to deep water, not just water, but deep water.

I 1: So, the County then granted that access to the company.

R: They gave it to A.P. Bell Fish Company.

I 1: So they kind grandfathered it into their property or something like that?

R: No, they absolutely gave it to them with a deed. So it's theirs. And at the meeting the hearing room was just packed. And three of us spoke against it. Robin Kike and Smiley Guthrie and myself. But the first meeting I went to, the Commissioners were going to decide whether to allow a public hearing for it and one Commissioner banged his fist on the table and said no, we're through

giving away property to the water. And I was elated. Absolutely tickled to death because it belonged to the people and that's where it should have been kept. Then the next thing I knew there was a big yellow and black sign posted that there would be a public hearing. I just wonder and wonder what happened.

I 1: That was your first sort of activism in the community. So what happened after that? What was the next thing that happened?

R: Well, I guess the next after that was the Sigma Plant, the proposed Sigma Plant. And that would really have been a

mistake. That's why we have industrial parks. It's for big industry to be there. And with fork lifts and trucks you don't have to have everything to do with the fishing industry all in this one Village. In fact, I think Bell's Plant is too big for the Village. But that's neither here nor there now.

I 1: Tell me a little bit about why you think it's too big for the Village?

R: Well, this is mainly a bedroom community. I bet there's not two percent of the fishermen here who live in Cortez anymore. Before the ice machines and the big, big trucks coming in and out, it didn't impact adversely because well, the trucks didn't run at night. So you didn't hear them and you didn't hear the noise of an ice machine, the ice dumping. The industries just weren't as large. And I think the people who live here are entitled to have a night's sleep too. Everyone has to consider the other.

I 1: Even though it's a fishing community, the processing or the plants have added an industrial nature?

R: Yes. Before they were quaint. The old dock was quaint.

I 1: Bell's old dock you mean?

R: Yes, Bell's old dock. Fulford's old dock is the only place that's like Cortez used to be. That is the only bit of old Cortez left.

I 1: Now, you said Sigma's Plant was probably one of the last things that you were involved in. Let's go back and talk about what happened with the drugs because that was kind of ...

R: I guess maybe that was the first thing. The first thing that I jumped into. I didn't really think about it, I was just reacting.

I 1: What were you reacting to?

R: The fact that it was such a terrible, horrible thing to do. And that the community just looked the other way. I mean, people hauling in drugs. They were treated like they were dealing in apples or mangos or mullet. They just refused to believe the horrors of drugs and what they do to children. Well, some profited very much. They've had their cake and they're eating it too. You know, they made

a lot of bucks, they've got big boats. They're in competition with the honest fishermen and they're having the best of both worlds.

I 1: What made you feel that you had to do something?

R: Because nobody else was. I think the final straw was we counted up seven drug-related deaths in this two-block by six-block area in just two or three years. And the last one was Harold Garntow and he was about 26, 27. He fished out of Bell's and he was killed in a boating

accident that would not have happened if he hadn't been using drugs. I thought about buying flowers but then I thought no, I'll just hire a billboard. So I hired a port-a-sign with the message that smugglers are killing our kids. I care, do you? I think was the exact wording.

I told the sign owner that there might be some damage to his sign but I would pay. I expected some kids to throw a rock or two at it. And he brought the sign in about noon time and at ten that night I was back in the kitchen watching tv and I heard a popping sound. I thought well, the kids are throwing rocks at the sign. So I went to the front of the house just in time to see flames leap about 30 feet in the air. They had dragged it out into the street and doused it with gasoline. I saw all these little legs running south from the flaming sign.

I 1: So they burned it.

R: They burned it.

I 1: How old were your children at this time?

R: They were not living at home. So they were grown.

I 1: I had wondered if maybe you were concerned for them.

R: No, it was just me and the dogs here at that time. And that's the first time in my life I have ever known just raw fear. I was scared to death. I thought well, they'll be back for the house next.

I 1: So what did you do?

R: Well, I called Florida Power and Light the next day to see about some outside lighting and I don't like even street lights in Cortez. I like to sleep in the dark. But I thought well, for this I'll have some lights put in. But they said I'd have to cut bushes down to be safe and I wasn't that afraid. I wasn't about to part with the bushes. So that was that.

I 1: What was the community's reaction?

R: I think that they disliked me for doing it. I think even the people who were just as appalled by the drugs being brought in and by the harm to children, they just didn't want anybody to say anything about it.

I 1: Was there any reaction to your sign being burned down?

R: A lot of newspaper coverage. They kept telling me that it needed to be put in the papers because that would mean protection for me.

I 1: When you say they kept saying ... who are they?

R: Reporters. Newspaper people. They said it needs to be publicized and that means that you will be safer. Then the next thing, it was in the paper that Judge Gilbert Smith and a Circuit Court Judge from Arcadia had on the qt

allowed some drug smugglers to buy their way out of prison. $50.00 a day for the remainder of their sentence and boy I saw red again. So I fixed some signs up and went down and paraded at the south side of the Court House as Judge Smith came to work that morning. But I had called Channel 13 and various ones because there again, it just takes one person if you've got coverage to call attention to a problem.

I 1: So you were down there by yourself with your signs?

R: There were four of us. Gerri Miller from Bradenton. I met her I guess through the newspaper stories. And she was having difficulties with one of her children and was very interested in trying to do something so she joined me. There wasn't nobody from Cortez there.

I 1: Were you there when the Judge came to work?

R: Yes. And he couldn't believe it. He's a real fine man. He has always been a very good Judge. I said I just disagreed with him very much on that. It was effective. They put them back, though they may have anyway. But I kinda doubt it. I like to think that it did some good.

I 1: This was in Bradenton. Did you do any more in Cortez related to the drug issue?

R: Yes. I don't know the year. I guess it was early '70s too. The Fisherman's Landing Restaurant was built.

I 1: And that is where?

R: At the end of 119th Street. And in my heart I felt that it was built with drug money. I can't prove a thing. But it wasn't just in my heart, I think a lot of other minds told them the same thing. My boss got an engraved invitation for the grand opening. It was going to be on Monday before they opened to the public. I called my sister in Lakeland. I was so frustrated. She said I'll be down for the weekend and we'll make some signs. She could print very nicely. She did calligraphy. Nice printing.

So she and I fixed a lot of signs and there were some other Cortez women who wanted to protest there but their husbands would not allow it. It was in October. I remember it was cold and drizzly and I got out there with my signs and a Deputy was sent to get me off the corner. I told him I

didn't want to put my signs down. I was holding one in each hand. I said, just look at my other signs. They're in the back seat of that old Dodge. He said lady, you can stay out here forever if you want to. You're not naming anybody. You just have good slogans.

I 1: So someone called the Sheriff's Department and they sent a Deputy?

R: Yes. The people who were opening the restaurant.

I 1: And he said there was nothing wrong.

R: Well, I had called beforehand. Well, it took me four or five phone calls to find if I could have permission to demonstrate or be on a corner and Manatee County deemed it proper that I could. That it was my right to protest.

I 1: Your protesting of drug smuggling and all of that happened over several years. It didn't all happen in one year.

R: No. But it was kind of close together I would say.

I 1: Did people say things to you personally about what you were doing in support or against what you were doing?

R: It seems like the support mainly came from the outside. Well, the second time we sat on the corner close to this restaurant Mary Green and her sister Irene and my sister Betty and I ... there were four of us.

I 1: So you protested at the restaurant again.

R: Twice, yes.

I 1: Once in October and then ...

R: Two or three weeks after that.

I 1: What did people say as they came by?

R: Some would give thumbs up and some did obscene gestures. My older son after that first time, came down and sat off to the side just to see that I was safe I guess. He seemed ok with it, but my younger son I think I was a source of embarrassment for him.

I 1: Where were they living at this time?

R: They were living on 102nd Street. Before the restaurant opened his wife would stop by frequently and she said oh, I found a job. I said well great, where? She said well, you're not gonna like this but it's down at the new restaurant. I said Paula, think about the money that the restaurant's built with and that you're helping those people. Well, she didn't see it that way and she'd come by every two or three days to try to change my mind. But my mind just could not be changed. Finally, we had really hard feelings over it. She did go to work there. In fact, when I was out there with the sign she came by and blasted her horn at me.

I 1: Did you ever feel unsafe? Were you ever afraid?

R: Just immediately after the sign was burned. I guess a few weeks after that I did. But years before, from the time I moved here until that happened, I didn't have too much free time because I was working two jobs during about 13 of those years. Well, these years just start adding up. But a lot of years I worked the two jobs.

I 1: Did you feel that you were becoming effective in what you were doing?

R: I felt that ... I think it was effective for Cortez. I think it did dry up the entry of drugs some. Maybe they just relocated.

I 1: Do you think the authorities were beginning to take a ... tried to stop it?

R: I think they did. I believe so.

I 1: So, you protested at the restaurant twice. Was there anything else that you did?

R: Well, years after that I had a Crisis Home here for children who needed a place to stay. It was through HRS and it was strictly a volunteer thing. That was really satisfying. I enjoyed doing that.

I 1: But related to the drugs. Did you ever feel that you had more support from the community ... from Cortez? Other than the few people that helped you?

R: Not really. There again, I think that they thought it was bad for me to do it. Because these are relatives. They are all related I do believe. But I tried talking to Junior, I had. And gotten noplace. That was so sad. I remember when I came here he was a teenager. Just the cutest little guy you have ever seen. And everything he touched fell apart.

I 1: Well, it's funny because you said he, in the beginning, was at a meeting with you to ...

R: Yes. He and Judy. I often wondered if we had been able to get that community center I think he would have been involved in that and he would not have wanted to do the other. That money would not be that important.

I 1: What do you think of Cortez today? How do you feel about this community? It's certainly changed a lot from when you were a child and came to visit. In what ways has it changed?

R: Well, I think there's a lot more community activity. Well, there always has been with the fish frys and the two churches. And some of the big families that still got together. But now I believe with the Historical Society. I think that was a beginning in drawing the community together in other ways. And of course, F.I.S.H. now. And these things are good and too, the common bond that we're

about to be wiped out. That certainly would draw people together. You know who the enemy is and you can work together.

I 1: You were probably one of the first to join the Historical Society?

R: Yes.

I 1: Tell us a little about that group and why it was formed and what they've been doing in Cortez.

R: Well, Mary Green was the instigator. The absolute spark plug for that. And she did most of the work. And she wanted to try to preserve what we did have here and I think it's helping. And of course, F.I.S.H. is going to help a lot on those lines too.

I 1: Mary's son Ben wrote a book, "Finest Kind", and in that book he talks about the problems with drugs. And that was written in the early '80s. So it was probably mostly over with by that time?

R: The flamboyancy of it, yes.

I 1: Do you feel that it helped again to draw some attention to the problem in Cortez and what was happening?

R: I think so.

I 1: I'm not sure how to ask this question because I find in Cortez that the women tend to be the activists. They tend to take the lead on trying to get things done or to resolve some problem. Do you have any insights on why that is?

R: No. Let's see. Mary was gone from here quite awhile and nobody loves Cortez more than Mary. Maybe it's that the men are so busy with their fishing night and day. Maybe that's it.

I 1: Because Mary is one and you are another. And Linda Molta now is another. I think Sheila Mora is very active in the O.F.F. and some other things. Now Karen Bell is also very active. And Connie Osborne is now becoming active in the P.F.C.C. I just wondered if you had any insight into why that was. But it may be because the men are too busy fishing or doing something else.

R: And too, sitting in the office with a phone right there and you're seeing people come and go. It's more convenient for the women I would say.

I 1: Do you still like living in Cortez?

R: Yes. I don't really ... I live on this lot. And I spend most of my free time at Bean's Point or in Bradenton or walking on the beach. I'm not really in the community.

I 1: Why not?

R: I don't know. I think the Sigma deal just kind of totally burned me out. There were a lot of harsh things said.

I 1: But you won that battle in a way?

R: Yes. But there were losses.

I 1: Well, I think it kind of did divide the community. And that division is still there in some ways when I talk to people. What do you feel is the future for Cortez?

R: I'd like to see more people who actually fish to move back in as the houses are available. Like my Aunt's house is empty and I would love to see a fishing family buy that property. To really make it the fishing Village that it used to be. Though the Northern neighbors are very good and I'm so thankful for Wayne because he's interested in preserving. I was really happy to see him buy the property across the street from me. I'm just hoping Cortez can hang on.

I 1: What do you think about the future for commercial fishing with the proposed net ban and everything?

R: I think there'll still be some fishing. I just cannot fathom anybody being so unreasonable as to wipe out an entire industry when there are regulations in place and when the authorities are saying that the regulations are working. And if they don't work, impose more. But it's just like saying well, overpopulation is hurting the fishing so we'll just close the gate at the North Florida line. You can't do that. You just cannot end the fishing industry.

I 1: Tell me about your birds. We can hear them on the tape sometimes. When did you become interested in birds?

R: I had a lady friend in Bradenton who raised Cockateels but she wanted me to raise Quail. So I ordered Quail cages from Atlanta and also the Quail eggs. They would ship them and I would incubate them. The only thing I had never thought about, Quail are slaughtered. And to have to kill something that you watch hatch and raise, that just didn't play. So then I went in for cage birds and I have real mixed feelings about that.

Something being caged up forever. But with their natural habitat being destroyed, there's no place for them there either. I just have a few now, about 24 birds.

I 1: You say that's a few. How many did you have before?

R: I had hundreds. Well, lots of small birds. Canaries and Finches and things. Now I just have larger birds.

I 1: Do you raise them for sale?

R: Well, if I can sell them enough to pay the feed bill that is nice. It's an expensive hobby. I always said I couldn't afford to play golf because that was too

expensive. I think golf would be chicken feed compared to raising birds.

I 1: What type of birds do you have now?

R: Some blue and gold Macaws, one pair or Amazon Parrots, a pair of African Gray Parrots and some Sun Conyers. And three cats and three dogs.

I 1: A small menagerie.

R: I live alone.

I 1: You know, we talked about Cortez. Things happening in Cortez. We have a term called Sacred Structures that Wayne and I have been using and it refers to buildings that we feel are important. They have a sort of symbolic importance to people in Cortez. These could be vacant lots, commercial buildings, houses, whatever. Do you know of any Sacred Structures in Cortez for you?

R: My house is. When I first bought this place the house was in such bad repair. It had a beautiful cedar shake roof, but the first rain I realized there was nothing under the cedar shakes. No solid sheathing and it was like living under an oak tree. I thought, well as soon as I get that mortgage paid off we'll tear this thing down and build a small modern house. But by then I had looked through the Abstract and you can't tear down history. So I keep trying to paint the porches and to keep it going. I would hate to see it destroyed.

I 1: Are there others in Cortez?

R: Yes. The house my mother was born in across the street. I'd like to see it stay. And all the old houses. The old Taylor house at 124th Street. It's been beautifully renovated and the Adams house. Of course, it doesn't look a thing like it did, but it's still nice.

I 1: Which one is the Adams house?

R: Where Polly lives now, on this same street.

I 1: Any others?

R: Well, the Burton's Store. I'd sure like to see it get a resting place.

I 1: I wanted to ask you when you mentioned earlier that you and Marian Johns would scallop. That seems to be ... a lot of women would do that.

R: Yes, and another occupation for women along in those years was, they called it picking shell. They would buy, or a jobber I guess would furnish in bulk to them, a mixture of shells and they would put say a half of cup on a piece of glass and they would separate the shell, sort them, with a watercolor brush. The good ones in one direction and the others in another. And they would earn spending money picking shell for these shell factories. Then they would bag it and sell it to arts and crafts people. I had

forgotten about that. I haven't thought about that in years.

Then I had a couple of Aunts who did laundry for their income. I remember Julia Taylor, when I was a child. The old Taylor house that's so pretty now on 124th Street. She had a big laundry. That back yard was just filled with lines. Thousands of feet of clothes line. She would wash those clothes with probably a Maytag machine with all the tub stands for the rinsing and all. I think mainly she did laundry for servicemen stationed at Anna Maria. She employed my cousin Marian and myself one summer. I

wasn't allowed to iron at home because I didn't know how. But Julia had me ironing uniforms.

I 1: You said your mother took very good care of you when you were young. Was she a good cook?

R: Very good. In fact, my son Rick when he was little. He'd say, Nan you're a good cooker. She baked and it's a wonder we all didn't have a weight problem. But we didn't. I guess getting the nutrition you need you don't overeat.

I 1: I was going to ask you about women's work in Cortez. Did you see any women fishing?

R: Mada Culbreath is the only one I recall fishing. And she would trout fish. I'm losing my voice!

I 1: I did want to ask you if there is anything else you'd like to say concerning your life in Cortez.

R: Gosh, it seems like I've said about everything. I wish I still had the Pollyanna view that I had years ago. And I wish the drug things had never happened.

I 1: Would you live anywhere else?

R: Yes.

I 1: Would you move from Cortez?

R: Yes. When I retire I plan to move because of what this place is worth. It's probably going to be part of my retirement income.

I 1: Where will you move?

R: Well, years back I would have thought Lakeland. But I don't know. I'll probably be here. I'll probably be at Bell Fish Company just working a half day the day of the funeral. That's more than likely what will happen. I do love Cortez, yes.

I 1: Well, I felt a real sense of community when I first came here. But I don't know. At the same time, there are a lot of divisions.

R: Yes, many.

I 1: And they are based on various incidents and happenings in

the past and along kinship lines and things like that. But at the same time, when it comes to Cortez they all stand up for it at one time or another. I find that interesting.

R: It's like in a family. I can talk about my sister, but don't you. That type thing.

I 1: Well, and then your activism in trying to, I would imagine, save Cortez is something that I find rather fascinating too because you at least felt there was something worth fighting for.

R: Yes. Well too, I had worked for a Juvenile Court Judge before I came here. Very concerned with children and their lives. And with the drugs all I could see was killing kids. And that's still how I see it.

I 1: Cortez doesn't have very many young children here today.

R: Not many.

I 1: There probably were more when you first came.

R: Yes. I had I don't know how many cousins. All the Bells. There were six or seven of them. And the Johns'. There were three. And all the other cousins in the community. This was really a good place to be a kid in. It was good for my kids too. They had a sailboat. They loved it. Well, after a few years I began thinking maybe I'd be better off elsewhere. But I didn't want to say that to the kids. I'd say what would you think about moving? No. They wouldn't want to live anyplace else.

I 1: Well, I think we're going to have to stop. Thank you Sue for taking the time to do this.

R: Well, thank you.