

Oral Memoirs
of
Ima Jean Bostick Yarborough

An Interview Conducted by

Joseph Morris

November 10, 2011

Linda McKnight Batman Oral History Project

Historical Society of Central Florida

Museum of Seminole County History

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Interview Histories

Interviewers: Joseph Morris

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The recordings and transcripts of the interview were processed in the offices of the Museum of Seminole County History, Sanford, Florida.

Legal Status

Scholarly use of the recording and transcript of the interview with Ima Jean Bostick Yarborough is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on November 10, 2011.

Abstract

Oral history of Ima Jean Bostick Yarborough, conducted by Ashley Wilt on November 10, 2011. Yarborough was born on August 2, 1935 in Ocala, Florida, but spent much of her adult life working in the cattle industry in Geneva. In the interview, she discusses her childhood in Ocala, how Ocala has changed over time, living in Oxford, the cattle industry, life in Geneva, the 4-H program, and her husband's military service.

Ima Jean Bostick Yarborough

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Joseph Morris

November 10, 2011

Sanford, Florida

0:00:00

Introduction

Morris This is an interview with Ima Jean [Bostick] Yarborough, and this interview is being conducted on November 10, 2011, at the Museum of Seminole County History. The interviewer is Joseph Morris, representing the Linda McKnight Batman Oral History Project for the Historical Society of Central Florida. Ma'am, could you tell us about where you were born, and when?

Yarborough I was born in Ocala, Florida, on Sanchez Street, August the 2nd, 1935.

0:00:26

Growing up in Ocala

Morris Okay. And could you tell us a little bit more about where, what kind of environment you grew up in, house, and...

Yarborough Yes. This is a two-story home that my mother was living in at the time with her in-laws, and we went back later and purchased the home, but I was around ten years old at that time. So she lived there for about a year and a half with me. This home is still standing. When I go to Ocala on business or pleasure, I go by and look at it, and have wonderful memories there, because it was across the street from a city park called Tusawilla Park. That was very close to a logging company that was in Ocala at that time, and they used the ponds to float the logs in. So it was a wonderful place for a child to grow up and play. We could fish the pond. We could wade the pond. And there was tennis courts all around that one particular pond, so we just had a wonderful playground right there as we were growing up. That was way before television, and not many radios.

Morris Okay, ma'am. The community – was it a very sparse community, or very condensed?

Yarborough It's a large, it was a large community, because that's very close to Silver Springs, which is a beautiful, a natural spring, and the Seminole Indians were there for quite a while. And there was a big reptile collection [Ross Allen's Reptile Institute] out there that people could pay to go and visit. That was originally started by a gentleman by the name of Ross Allen, and he played with alligators and milked rattlesnakes for the venom, for medical purposes. So people could go out there and pay to watch all that. It was an entertainment place. But as children we, the city took a bus out each year during the summer, each day, and you

could have swimming classes out there. So we were very fortunate to learn to swim early, and enjoyed that particular area. Now it has grown into a home place for horses, especially racehorses and quarter horses.

Morris At Silver Springs, ma'am?

Yarborough No, Ocala.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough Yeah. I'm sorry. I didn't switch right. But Ocala has continually grown out, and it's quite a large city.

0:03:34 **How Ocala has changed over time**

Morris Can you tell me more changes that might have occurred from when you were growing up in Ocala and now how it is today? Like what kind – when you go there, what differences stand out to you the most, ma'am?

Yarborough More people. *[laughs]* More people. Of course, everything was centrally located uptown at that time. There was a town square in the center of town, which is still there with a bandshell. At that time, it had a bandshell on it, and a bandshell is used to – for a band to play music while people sit around and enjoy it, like a park atmosphere. There's a lot of shopping centers, of course. Most towns have those now. But everything was built around that square, and just evolved out from it like a star.

Yarborough There's a lot of horse enthusiasts, and horse breeders and racers up in that country, as I said earlier, now. So they have large statues of horses all around the square at this point.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough So it's grown, typically, like every other city in the state of Florida.

Morris Any particular reason the horse training took off in Ocala?

Yarborough They've got a lot of lime rock up in that area, and that helps to grow very strong grass, and you need good grass for cows and horses. And it was – some people were already growing horses in the area, and they had a race horse that had won one of the very important races, that was raised from that area. So it just, after he won the race, they just started coming to that area to raise their animals and winter their animals.

Morris Oh. Better climate?

Yarborough Better climate.

Morris Gotcha, ma'am. How do you feel about the changes that have occurred from when you were growing up to now? Do you – positive, negative changes, anything? How do you feel?

Yarborough Oh, I guess most of it's positive. I want to feel that way. I try to find something positive in everything I encounter. Sometimes it's harder than others.

Morris And any examples of that, ma'am? You knew I was gonna ask.

Yarborough *[laughs]* Oh, goodness. I'll think on that one and come back. Okay, Joseph?

Morris Okay. I'll keep that in mind.

Yarborough We'll put that at the end. Okay.

0:06:09 **Living in Oxford**

Morris And so, after that, where have you lived? Have you always lived in Ocala, ma'am?

Yarborough My mother went to work, and I lived with my grandmother in Oxford.

0:06:29 **RECORDING CUTS OFF**

0:06:30 **Living in Oxford**

Morris Okay, we're back, and we were discussing where you've lived over the years, ma'am.

Yarborough Yes. Oxford is a little town in Sumter County on the west side of the state, south of Ocala, and that's where my mother was raised. And I lived the first year before school and the first grade. I lived with my grandmother. And I had a sister, Nadine, who was about three years younger than myself. And back then, we carried our lunch to school in little brown bags or maybe like a little syrup can, whichever you had. But our grandmother always made sure that I had an apple in my lunch every day, and there wasn't always an apple left for my sister, Nadine, to have when she wanted it, under those particular circumstances. So one morning, Grandmother – we called her Granny, Granny Olberry – was packing my lunch, and my sister, Nadine, asked for an apple, and Granny said, "Nadine, you know that Ima Jean's got to take that apple for recess." And Nadine got very disturbed and started crying, and she says, "When I get big and go to school, I'm going to slap recess's face for taking Ima Jean's apple." So that has always been a laugh, a laughing situation in our family. Recess, of course, was time out in school to play outside. Not every kid even knows what recess is, 'cause now it's usually called break or gym...

Morris P.E.

Yarborough Something of that nature.

0:08:24

Family and occupational history

Morris Right, ma'am. What kind of jobs did your family have, and that you had, also, 'cause I'm...

Yarborough Okay. My mother's people were in the cow business. Her brothers and her dad were. And my mother's mother passed away at her birth, so she was adopted by the Olberry family and moved to Oxford. And the couple that adopted her were just good old salt-of-the-earth people. Granddaddy was a[sic] what we would call jack-of-all-trades. He was a repairman. He repaired people's cars. He repaired their equipment that broke down. He repaired their shoes. He just was a good fixer-upper. And of course, Granny stayed at home and canned, and took care of the garden and the family.

Morris And what about your...

Yarborough My mother worked as—she was in charge of the waiters and waitresses at a big hotel in Ocala. That was her night job. Her day job was cashier for a Piggly Wiggly, which was a strand of grocery stores at that time, that later became Winn Dixie, that we know today. She worked Winn-Dixie for 20-something years.

Morris Okay, ma'am. And how come—your grandparents, you said, worked in cattle?

Yarborough Yes.

Morris But your mother did not?

Yarborough No.

Morris Did she not have an interest, ma'am, or...

Yarborough No. By being adopted out, she wasn't where the cattle were, so she went straight from school to getting married, and then working at Winn-Dixie and the hotel.

Morris Okay. And when did you start working, ma'am?

Yarborough I started working as a freshman in high school, and I worked for the Winn-Dixie meat—in the meat department—making hamburger, cutting up chickens, weighing out the meat and wrapping it to go into the case to be sold. And I would work on weekends and at holidays.

Morris And how long did you have that job for, ma'am?

Yarborough Four years of high school, and about a year afterwards.

Morris Okay. And what did you do after high school, ma'am?

Yarborough My husband and I got married.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough And he went into the service, and I went back and worked at Winn-Dixie for a while, 'til I could go to Oklahoma whenever he was transferred to Oklahoma after basic training.

0:11:34 Meeting her husband, Edward, and moving to Geneva

Yarborough But let me go back into when I, how I met Edward [Yarborough].

Morris Okay.

Yarborough In October – in fact, October the 26th, 1949, my mother moved to Geneva. She had remarried, and my stepfather was coming down to help his brother work his orange grove and cattle over in the Chuluota area. So we moved to Geneva, because there was a good school there. And Mother went to work at the Piggly Wiggly, which is now the Goodwill store here in Sanford on Palmetto [Avenue]. And at that time we moved into a lovely home, and that afternoon, we had some heavy furniture to be moved. And Miss Pearl Yarborough was the lady who owned the home, and she said that when her son came in, he would help move the furniture for us that afternoon, along with my stepdad. So later on we heard him – what we know now was a cow whip – making a noise coming up the road, and it was my – it was Edward and his uncle coming in from work. And their habit was to crack the cow whip all the way up the lane, and that was just to give them practice, as well as let them – Mr. [W. G.] Kilby's wife and Edward's mother know to put dinner on the table. "We're coming home." So anyway, that's how I met Edward. And he had graduated from high school in June of that year, and we were moving in October. So we didn't begin dating, because I wasn't old enough to date for another year, year and a half.

Morris How old were you at this time, ma'am?

Yarborough I was thirteen.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough So, he had to wait on me to grow up. [*laughs*] That's what he had to do. And he did. But that's the way I met him.

Morris Okay, ma'am. Can you tell us a little more about him, and then the rest of your family?

Yarborough Mm-hm.

0:14:10

Husband, children, and grandchildren

Morris Because I know you mentioned that he was in the service, and that's why you moved to Oklahoma for a while, ma'am?

Yarborough Right. The draft was still very active in 1954.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough That's whenever a young man turned 21, he could be drafted into the service for two years. So we had been dating probably three years by that time, and we knew that Edward was going to be drafted in January or February. He wanted to get married so that I could go with him after basic training to wherever he went. So that's what we did. We got married December the 26th, 1954, and he went to the service in February. And after he had boot training, he was transferred to Little Rock, Arkansas, where I joined him for a couple of weeks, and then we moved everything out to Oklahoma. And we finished his two years out in Lawton, Oklahoma, at Fort Sill, and then came home, and he went back to work for his uncle, W. G. Kilby, on the cattle farm, cattle ranch. And we've been there ever since.

We raised four children, two girls and two boys, and the two boys have stayed on the ranch. They've got side jobs. Bo—or W. E. [Yarborough]—is the oldest boy, and he has a trucking business where he hauls cattle from one market to another out in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Florida base. He doesn't do that all year. There's just certain times of the year that that goes on. Otherwise, he works on the ranch, and he's got a little place in Alabama, a ranch up there. So he's back and forth.

J. W. [Yarborough]'s stayed here and stayed on the farm all the time, and he's got a fertilizer business where he puts fertilizer out on large areas, large pastures and groves. So that's his side job. Otherwise, he's on the ranch at all times and manages it.

Our oldest was Lynn [Yarborough]. She became a learning disability teacher, and has worked in—we've had the pleasure of starting three different private schools for learning disability children, through our years. J. W. had quite a learning disability problem whenever he was first started school, and there was none in Seminole County to take care of those problems, so we finally found a wonderful teacher, Mary Dunn, who helped us start PACE School. And the problem J. W. had was seeing upside-down and backwards, and glasses could not help that. You just had to retrain the mind, somehow or another, and it takes a lot of training to get that done. So in the process, as I said earlier, we had started three schools, and we got three wonderful schools. And Lynn has been a teacher. In fact, she retired this past summer. She's taught 33 years in learning disability.

Our youngest daughter, Reba [Yarborough], lives in Sumter County, and her family has cattle over there. So, in Lynn's retirement, she's helping the boys on

the ranch now. She works with them whenever we mark and brand. And both of the boys' wives help give shots and some of them, and they ride a little bit too.

Yarborough And I've got three grandsons: Robert [Yarborough], J. K. [James Kilby Yarborough], and C. W. Yarborough.

Morris Are they all from the, have the same parents, or...

Yarborough No. *[laughs]*

Morris Which grandkids go with which kids?

Yarborough Okay. Bo has a son named Robert.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough He's probably 26 now, and he works for the forestry service on Snow Hill Road, and he has a little girl, six years old, Gracie [Yarborough]. And they're expecting a second child around December the 21st. It'll be a little boy.

Morris Oh. Do they have a name picked out already, ma'am?

Yarborough They do, but I can't tell you right now. *[laughs]*

Morris Okay.

Yarborough Anyway, they have, then J. W. has two sons, James Kilby, which, who we call J. K. And right now he's doing his junior year at Gainesville, in college, and a double-A student all the way across, I'm proud to say. Then C. W., who was born with a slight problem similar to his dad's, and he's in Bridges Academy now. That's one of the schools that we started and is doing real well. He's 15 years old and about 6'2". He's a big fellow.

Morris Playing football?

Yarborough He's not playing football right now, but he does ranch rodeos.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough Yeah. He has played football, but prefers the rodeos.

Morris I gotcha.

0:20:44

4-H

Yarborough They're all interested in 4-H. J. W.'s wife is Francis Yarborough, and she is a teacher, and she is our 4-H leader, also. So we've got a wonderful 4-H group out our way, about 43 kids in the group. They show animals at Central Florida Fair every year.

Morris And what does the 4-H stand for, ma'am?

Yarborough 4-H is to teach the children about agricultural. Head, heart, health, and hands is[sic] the 4 H's.

Morris Ah.

Yarborough And they raise steers, pigs, chickens, rabbits, sheep, goats. They also plant gardens. You can do just about anything that you're interested in through the 4-H program.

Morris And how long has the program? Is it like a summer program they do for a certain amount of time?

Yarborough No. It's round-year, year-round.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough Well, if you're doing an animal, you don't have to feed that animal all year, but you do about six months—six to eight months of it—of feeding the animal. Then it goes to the fair, and it's shown and auctioned off to the highest bidder. And they buy the animals. Some people butcher the animal and eat—has it for food. Some people give it to, like the Methodist Children's Home, for them to eat, or to the Russell House. We've got quite a bit of food like that donated down through the years.

Morris Oh, okay.

Yarborough Then they get money back to pay for the feed that they put in the animal.

0:22:49 **Cattle industry**

Morris And—oh, by the way, thank you very much for the—I got everybody in your family here written down. But the, um—you worked in the cattle industry, correct, ma'am?

Yarborough I'm sorry?

Morris You worked with the cattle as well, right? Did you start working when you came back from Oklahoma with your husband?

Yarborough Oh. Yes.

Morris Did you go back to Piggly Wiggly for any amount of time, or did you go straight into the cattle industry, and have you stayed there the entire time?

Yarborough No. No, I stayed home at that time, because there was[sic] quite a few older people in Ed's family that needed to be looked after, and the only place to buy groceries back then was Sanford, which was twelve miles from Geneva, so I did

the little chauffeuring back and forth of about five different older people in his family, and just helped – helped where I was needed. If we had a garden planted, I always picked the vegetables – helped pick the vegetables and can them. Back then we didn't have too much running water, so Mondays were wash day. I'd fix a fire under the big old wash pot and heat the water, put it in the washing machine for Edward's mother to wash clothes. Tuesdays was days to iron. You used your wash water to mop the floors with, being as conservative as we could be with the water. And Wednesdays we did other things around the house, but Mondays was always wash days, and Tuesdays was always iron day.

Morris Did you not have indoor plumbing in your house at that time, ma'am?

Yarborough We had both. Both.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough The outdoor was there because that's what had been there to begin with, but they had put indoor plumbing at Edward's home about five years before.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough Before we got married.

Morris And when did you get involved with the cattle industry, ma'am?

Yarborough With the cattle?

Morris Yes, ma'am.

Yarborough That was started in our area and in Ed's family by his grandfather, E. H. Kilby, who came here from Pensacola as a young man, way back in the late 1800s. He stayed with a man by the name of C. S. Lee from Oviedo, lived in his barn and worked orange groves 'til he got enough money to buy a little piece of land. And then after he got married and had a family of his own, the boys grew up and W. G. [Kilby], his second child, stayed with him, and they hunted hogs, wild hogs, on the St. John's River area, and would butcher – would feed them out, and butcher them, and take them to the Piggly Wiggly and sell them. And they accumulated enough money to buy some land and buy some cows, by hunting the wild hogs. Then in 1949, Florida passed a law that all the animals had to be fenced in. So up until then, they roamed free, anywhere on the land that was in the area, and of course you wanted to keep them close to the river, because that was where they could get their water, and good grass too. So Mr. Kilby focused on purchasing land adjacent to the St. John's River, where – so he could have water, as well as grass. And that's what they did. They had land in Volusia County, and then he came over and bought some from Mr. C. S. Lee, along highway [Florida State Road] 46 and the St. John's River, bordered by Snow Hill on the west side. And altogether, at one point, we had about 12,000 acres that was under fence. So, a lot of fences to keep up, 'cause you did them different

pastures for the cows to live in, and you'd circulate your cows. You don't leave them on the same pasture all the time.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough So that's just part of the, part of the way you work cattle.

Morris And why would you rotate the cattle to different fenced areas, ma'am?

Yarborough Well, they eat the grass down, and you have to give it time to grow back. And you leave them on that same place too long, they just pull it up by the roots, and then you don't have any grass at all.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough So you rotate them about every 28 days.

Morris Oh, that frequently?

Yarborough Mm-hm. You can leave them a little longer, but just really depends on the weather. *[laughs]* Everything with farming and ranching depends on the weather.

Morris So if it was rainier weather you'd keep them there longer, and drier weather you'd have to move them faster, because the grass wouldn't grow as much, ma'am?

Yarborough That would be safe to say, pretty well. Yeah. But warm nights is really when grass grows. That's why grass grows so good down here in Florida. But the dirt—the sand is very porous, so you have to really fertilize it, and back then, they didn't fertilize much. They didn't know that back then. It was always native grass, but now we've got what's called "improved grass." So you fertilize the improved grass. The native grass, like on the river, grows on its own, because the river and the high water fertilizes the native grass.

Morris And what is improved grass?

Yarborough Argentina[sic] Bahia is one, and there's a Pensacola Bahia, and that's the two grasses that we use the most in our cattle ranch.

Morris Okay, ma'am.

Yarborough There's a lot of different grasses, though, Joe.

Morris Right. I just didn't know if there was native grass in other areas...

Yarborough Yes. There is.

Morris Or if they had been, like, tinkered with.

Yarborough No. We've cleaned, down through the years, we've cleaned up a lot of land, and made what's referred to as "improved pastures." That's on the higher land. And so, you fertilize these places. We've made them into hayfields. Some of them are hayfields, and some of them are just regular pastures. But you always have to fertilize the improved pasture.

Morris Okay. Could you tell me a little more about cattle raising, as is?

Yarborough All right. We have what's referred to as cow-calf operation.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough That means you raise the calf to about between six- and eight-hundred pounds, and then take it to market. Several years ago, we had cattle markets in Ocala, Webster, Kissimmee, Lakeland, and Okeechobee. We also had butcher houses at different parts of the state, but we no longer have but one butcher house, and that's Center Hill over in Sumter County, close to Bushnell. The Ocala market is still open, and Webster is still open, and Lakeland and Okeechobee are still open. But the market that we would go to every week with our cattle was Kissimmee. That was the closest one to us. That closed about 20 years ago, now. So now we use mostly Lakeland, but we also – let me back up just a little bit. We lost Edward in the year 2000.

Morris Okay, ma'am.

Yarborough And there was a little bit of changing in the way that we do our cattle. As I said earlier, W. E. has two trucks that he hauls cattle out west with, so we would take our calves in his semi[-truck]s to markets out in Texas and sell them. And we continue to do that today. We had done that a little bit before Edward passed away, but not on the big scale, like the boys have changed the operation a little bit. But the cow-calf operation means that you raise a calf and sell it, and breed the cow back. So you buy registered bulls, and put them – and we have a mixed herd. Our main stock are the Brahmas[sic], because they get along so well here in Florida. They're very tolerable of the mosquitoes and the hot weather and the rain, and such. But we have brought the English breeds in through the years, the Black Angus, and the White-Faced Hereford, and the Charolais, which is a cream-colored cow. And you cross that with the Brahmas[sic], and that makes for a good, good mama cow.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough So a good breeding cow is pretty good to raise calf for about 12 to 13 years, with good grass and good feed. A bull is probably good for maybe three to – they start breeding at three years, and they're good for three to five years, so you have to keep bringing in new bulls. Each year, you bring in a certain amount of bulls. One bull can service about 35 cows, so you have to go according to your largest herds, to see how many, to see how large your herd is, to see how many bulls you need. A good bull would cost you between two- and three-thousand dollars.

If you buy a bred heifer, which is a young cow, that will cost you between five- and seven-hundred dollars. But, if she has a calf in the next six months or so, then it'll take six months to get that calf up to – which will put you into a year – that calf will bring back what that mother cost. Meanwhile she's gotten bred again. Ready to have another calf. And that's the cycle that you work through.

Morris Okay, ma'am. And what would be the size of your herd? You said there's one bull for every 35 cows, correct?

Yarborough Yeah. You want it something pretty close to that.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough We've got about 1,000 head.

Morris Okay, ma'am. Are you still using – do you still have the 12,000 acres?

Yarborough No.

Morris Yes, ma'am.

Yarborough Down through the years, for inheritance tax purposes, we've had to sell land. We sold everything that we had in Volusia County. And we've sold – we sold 9,000 acres to the State of Florida, which has been turned into a game refuge and parks. It's overflow land that's not really a buildable property for homes. It's real low. But an old cow can get along real well on it, so we've got 1,400 acres left in the family now.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough We have leased the 9,000 acres back from the state to use for the cows. We have to pay for that lease, so much an acre, and also keep up the fences and keep up the roads, and there's a lot of responsibility there.

0:36:58 Markets and butcher houses

Morris Oh, okay, ma'am. I noticed you mentioned, before that, at one point in time you had this many markets and this many butcher houses. How come that number has decreased over time? Were they personally yours, or were they...

Yarborough No. No, no, no. They were, those were the ones that we could take our animals to. They were not ours personally. Kissimmee closed because of the management, and so many people started moving into the area around Kissimmee, and Orlando, and up our way, and the cattle, the little cattle ranches, were just not existent anymore. They were building homes. We could, a farmer could make more – and a rancher could make more selling his land than he could make with the cows on the land. Does that make sense to you, Jeffrey[sic]?

Morris It does, ma'am.

Yarborough All right. He could sell his land, and at that time put it at interest, which was 12 percent, 8 and 12 percent interest for a number of years, years ago, and could live—could live on that, and not have to work as hard. And the real estate was paying five and six and a whole lot more for land, an acre, see. So they could have that a lot easier. So, numbers were down. Numbers were down, and that's why markets have to close. Same with the butcher houses. Same, same thing.

Morris Okay, ma'am. That makes perfect sense to me, sounds like supply and demand. People kind of got squeezed out with the increase in population.

Yarborough That's right. That's right.

Morris Gotcha, ma'am.

Yarborough Now, going back into the '50s here in Seminole County, there was about six families that made their living on cattle, all around in Seminole County. Right now—and for the last ten years—there's three families that make, that make their living on cows. There's a lot of people that's got 20 head, or 10 or 20 or 40 or 60, or 150 head of cows, but they do something on the side to make a living. They work in a grocery store, or they're a mechanic, or something else to help them make a living. But there's only three families that's just made their living on the ranch, and that's the Robert Lee family of Oviedo, Betty [Yarborough] Schlusemeyer, who is Edward's sister in Geneva, and our ranch, Ed Yarborough Ranches, in Geneva. But they all kind of congregate around the St. John's River. Remember I said we needed the water?

Morris Yes, ma'am, I do.

Yarborough So the land adjacent and joins the Econ[fina] Creek and the St. John's River. All of these three ranches go around into that area.

0:40:31 Relationship between ranches

Morris And do the ranches ever, do you communicate with the other ranches often?

Yarborough Oh, yes. Definitely.

Morris In what ways, ma'am?

Yarborough Right now, by phone! *[laughs]*

Morris Well, I asked for that. I should have known that was coming, ma'am.

Yarborough That's okay.

Morris I meant in what capacity? Is it like a very positive relationship? Do you help each other?

Yarborough Yes. Yes, definitely. If one group might be marking and branding, and need a little help, or they might be cutting hay, and their tractor's breaking down, they come over and get our tractor. Or one of our boys will take the tractor and go over and bale for them. And they do the same for us.

Morris Okay, so...

Yarborough Yeah. It's a very congenial atmosphere. We have a very active cattlemen's association [Seminole County Cattlemen's Association] in the county, and you don't have to be a cattleman to join it, because everybody wants to—every young boy wants to be a cowboy. [laughs] But nevertheless, this is a group that is also a state group, and we get information from the University of Florida about feed, fertilizer, medicines, and all, that help us raise the cattle to the better level that it is today.

0:41:53 **Improvements in the cattle industry**

Morris So the business has improved over time?

Yarborough Very much. Very much. Yes. See, the cows were brought here back in the 1500s by the Spanish people.

Morris Mm-hm.

Yarborough And they were what we refer to now as "scrub cattle," because they lived in the scrubs, the woods, and they were all horns and bones. They weren't very fat. But now we have to put meat on their bones, so the steaks will turn out good. So the taste is there.

Morris Yes, ma'am. And I do love a good steak.

0:42:29 **Tracking cattle**

Morris Do you know where your cattle end up eventually? Do you know if it's sold in Florida, or...

Yarborough We do have that possibility of tracing every cow where it goes to, now. That is fairly new in our particular business world, I'd say five years or so back that all of this started. That is a health precaution, because if you have some tainted meat for some reason or another, it could go back to the owners, to find out if the meat was tainted at the ground level, so to speak, before it was butchered, or at the butcher house, or in transit to the grocery store.

Morris Right. You gotta find it.

Yarborough So you got to find that, that situation, and so we do have that facility to do now.

Morris Do you keep track of where your cattle go?

Yarborough Yes.

Morris Do you know, do they usually end up—because I know you said they transfer a lot to Texas. Do...

Yarborough They do, and they feed them out, out there. Then they get sold again to stores and such.

Morris Do they end up all over the place, ma'am?

Yarborough All over. All over.

Morris Oh, okay. I didn't know if there was a concentration. Okay.

Yarborough No.

Morris The Yarborough more cows tend to be in Massachusetts, where they end up in.

Yarborough Yep.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough But we do have buyers. They buy ours sight unseen, because they know from experience that we use the good bulls, and we use the right feed and medicines and everything to keep them well. So they, they even, there's a group that bids on ours, sight unseen.

Morris Is that a good feeling, ma'am?

Yarborough That's a very comfortable feeling.

0:42:29 **Family involvement in the cattle industry**

Morris And how long has the family been in this business? How far back does that go?

Yarborough Okay. My children—Ed's and my children—are one, two, three, are fourth, fifth generation.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough Fifth generation. And the grandchildren, C. W., J. K., and Robert, are next generation. And Gracie and her little brother will be the sixth generation. So, that's the way it goes.

Morris So you're covered for now?

Yarborough Right now.

Morris Okay, ma'am.

Yarborough It's like a baseball team, almost, but you got to have help. [*laughs*] That's one of the things that I take great pride in, is Edward coming through and working the kids, and working the ranch with the children, and one other man, all the years that they were growing up and all. They had to work hard, and they still do. It's not an easy life.

Morris It doesn't sound easy, ma'am.

Yarborough You don't get just — close the gate and go on vacation. You have to, you have to stay close by.

Morris There's work involved?

Yarborough There's a lot of work involved. Have you ever dug a fence hole?

Morris Yes, ma'am.

Yarborough Fence post hole?

Morris Yes, ma'am.

Yarborough You ever strung barbwire?

Morris Barbwire? Yes, ma'am.

Yarborough You know what barbwire is?

Morris Yes, ma'am.

Yarborough Okay.

Morris I'm in the military. We have our fair share of sharp pieces of metal that we set up.

Yarborough Okay. Well, see, we have to grow our grass for the cows to eat. You got to provide them with water. You got to keep an eye on them, because they get sick just like we do.

Morris Yes. Okay. So it's a very family-oriented business.

Yarborough Very.

Morris Not a lot of outside help, a lot of...

Yarborough No. But we got people that we know, that if we need help, we can usually call on them. We have one hired man that works five days a week, so.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough Of course our boys, C. W. — no, J. W., and Bo — ride through all the time. They're out there, pretty much.

Morris Yeah, it definitely sounds like it can be a tough job.

Yarborough It is, but it's an interesting job. It's rewarding. It's rewarding in many ways, Jeff[sic]. You see that when there where the grass starts greening up after you've had a hard winter, and the frost has killed it and everything's brown, and you're feeding hay every day, and you're feeding corn, and the ingredients that it takes to make the different types of feed we use, by the bagfuls, and spring starts coming, and the grass starts turning greener. The rains start to come. And you can smile again. But you always know it's God's country to begin with. You're just the caregiver. That's the attitude that I've tried to teach, and firmly believe in.

Morris It sounds like it's done a great job.

Yarborough We've done well. We've been blessed.

Morris And, I know you said one of your grandkids is 26, I think — one of the older ones?

Yarborough Yes.

Morris Will he be working in the cattle industry as well?

Yarborough Oh, he helps. Yes. On his days off, it's, and fortunately, his office is right across the street from our largest set of cow pens where we go in, off of Snow Hill Road. So, he can come over every now and then, and check on things. But on his days off, he can help us.

Morris I thought he was a student at...

Yarborough No, that's the second, second one. This is the oldest one.

Morris Gotcha. Oh okay, ma'am.

Yarborough This is Robert, the oldest one, that works for the forestry unit.

Morris Oh, okay.

Yarborough And usually Mondays are his days off, because he'll work weekends. And so, we plan to do a lot of pen work or have him riding on Mondays, when we got Robert a lot of times, 'cause he's a, he's a good, big, strapping boy.

0:48:49

Husband's service in the military

- Morris** I have a question from a while ago. I just didn't want to interrupt at the time. It was a — actually it goes even farther back, way back quite a ways, actually. You said earlier on that your husband had drafted into the service, correct?
- Yarborough** Correct.
- Morris** And this is in the early '50s — 1954, I believe.
- Yarborough** Yes. Actually, it was '55.
- Morris** Oh, '55, okay. Is that, was that a common occurrence at that time?
- Yarborough** It was. Yes. You had the general, the boys, when they turned 21, they had to register. Or might have to register at 18, but they had to go about 21.
- Morris** Definitely you get your draft card at 18, ma'am. That has not changed.
- Yarborough** Oh, it hasn't? Okay. *[laughs]*
- Morris** No. I have my draft card.
- Yarborough** Okay. But he, he had to go.
- Morris** Okay. So most, almost all males at that time...
- Yarborough** Back then, yes.
- Morris** Oh, okay. I didn't realize that that was still occurring after the end of World War II.
- Yarborough** Yes.
- Morris** Okay. I just wanted to make that clear. I didn't know if there was an exception for him, if it was a...
- Yarborough** No. No, in fact, they did make exceptions. It's called hardship [exemption]. If a family did not, did — a lot of agriculture families did get excused, because they needed the boys on the farms.
- Morris** Couldn't afford it. Oh, okay, ma'am. But that family could, or he chose to do it regardless of...
- Yarborough** Well, no, he, they didn't give him a choice. *[laughs]*

0:50:15

Female figures in Yarborough's childhood

Morris Oh. Oh, the military. Okay, ma'am. I'd like to do some more general questions about your life.

Yarborough Please.

Morris Do you have any, any stories or childhood memories that come to mind, that you'd like to share – have recorded, ma'am? Anything that you find hilarious, or that was really important during your life as you were growing up, or even past that?

Yarborough I was very – I have always felt I was very blessed having people in my life that would take the patience to teach me many of the things they had learned in life – older people. And my mother working, as I said earlier, I stayed with my grandmother in Oxford. I also had the opportunity to stay with a great-aunt on my mother's side, Grace Bevel, in Bushnell. She never had children, but she accepted me as hers, and Mother let me stay with her quite a bit in my younger years. And she was a very – she was a learned person, and most willing to teach me how to crochet, how to cook, how to be good to others, and a lot of Bible verses, and rhymes. Because in her day, a lot of the teaching was done by voice, from one to the other, and singing it or either telling the stories is where doing it like the history and such. But she taught by repeating rhymes and songs and things. And states and capitals, multiplication tables. There was a railroad track right next to her house, and we had to – for me to get to play on the railroad track, between trains, I had to learn to spell certain words, big hard words, and then I could go over and walk the railroad tracks.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough And that was – like I said, we didn't have TVs or radios, back then. We invented our own playtime and playthings. But I had Aunt Grace, and I had Granny Olberry, and my mom. Those were the close ladies in my life until we moved to Geneva, and then Edward had an aunt, Catherine Kilby, who was his Uncle W. G.'s wife. They had no children, neither. But she took a liking to me, and was just like a mother in teaching me, because she too was a schoolteacher. And then Edward's mother, Pearl Yarborough, was like a mother to me. We called her Mama Pearl, especially whenever the children started coming. Ed and I were married four years before we had any children, because we didn't want to live in the house with his folks and raise children. So we waited 'til we accumulated enough money to build a house, and we were given the piece of property by Mr. Kilby to build right there between his mother and him. They put the young couple there to help the older people, is what I was told. *[laughs]* And we did. We worked together beautifully as a family. But go ahead.

0:54:29

Declaration of World War II

Morris Oh, I was going to say, are there any historical events, even international or domestic?

Yarborough I remember the day that that Second World War was declared. I had broken my arm. I was in the third grade, doing something very foolish – the seesaws. The seesaws at school were built up about three feet high, and the boards were about twelve foot long. And I was acting like Tarzan. I was standing up on one end, and there was five girls on the other, and they would bounce me up. They would hit the ground hard with their end, bounce me up, and I'd come down, and supposed to hit the board. And I was pretty good at it, 'til I fell one morning and broke my arm, my shoulder, right in the shoulder. And the doctors wanted to remove my arm because gangrene set in. They could not set it. At that time, Second World War was going on.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough And all the good doctors had been taken to war, so it was just a group of older doctors in Ocala. No surgeons. And my mother was pregnant with my third sister. And she just begged the doctor not to, not to take my arm off. Girls couldn't get along without an arm. And this is – this will show you how God works. God sent up a surgeon home to Ocala, Dr. Davis, and he was home for two weeks, because they were going to ship him overseas. And Mother's Dr. Ferguson heard that he was home, and he called him up and told him about my arm, and he said that, told him that we're going to have to cut it off, unless he thought he could do something. He said that he didn't have any idea what to do, but he would try. So they fashioned some type of plate to fit around the bone, because it was broken in the joint, so to speak, where the arm joints the shoulder. And it had four screws in this plate, and the operation took six hours. And that was a long operation, back then, especially. And they said I could use that plate for about a year, but then they'd have to go in there and take it out, because my bone would still be growing, and they, it wouldn't stay properly. But it would probably never be a working arm. But, during all of this, Mother had had the baby, and she stayed home with me, and they didn't have physical therapy that much back then, but Mother would rub this arm and exercise it, and I wasn't let ride a bicycle, or skate, and I was a very active sports person. But today I have use of my arm.

Morris That's fantastic, ma'am.

Yarborough Because of the doctors. And they did the surgery the next year, took the plate out, and I've got about a 14 inch scar on the arm that doesn't bother me a bit to show. I'm proud to have the arm. But that's, two of them – oh, and to getting back. I'm regressing. During this time, I said I remember the day that they...

Morris World War II.

Yarborough World War [II] was declared. I remember reading in the Bible, as a youngster, that God said He would destroy the earth the next time by fire. The first time He destroyed the earth by water.

Morris Yes, ma'am.

Yarborough And they talked about the atomic bomb. Maybe it wasn't war declared. It was when they did the, dropped the atomic bomb.

Morris At the end of the war.

Yarborough Yes. Whenever they did that, I said, "Well, that's what's going to have a part in God's next coming, is the atomic bomb." That was just my mental perception.

Morris That stuck out to you?

Yarborough Yes. Yes.

Morris Okay.

Yarborough But that could have changed my whole life, too. I could have lost my arm on that deal, had Dr. Davis not come home.

Morris That's definitely a memory that would have stuck with me too, ma'am.

0:59:45 **Closing remarks**

Morris Do you – we're about to wrap up. Do you have anything you'd like to share before we go, ma'am? Anything that you feel that we overlooked or bypassed?

Yarborough I think you've done a marvelous job, Jeff[sic]. I just feel it a great privilege to have had the opportunity to grow up in the little community of Geneva. Geneva is made up of a lot of older people that have retired from businesses, but they are willing to work with youngsters down through the years, through the school systems and the different community groups that we have out there, through the homemakers and the 4-H, and through the [Rural] Heritage Center and churches. I just feel very fortunate to have been put there for a reason, and I've tried to repay it in every way that I could by working with the youth as much as I can, all through the years. So I feel very blessed to have been there.

Morris Thank you very much, ma'am, for coming in today.

Yarborough Thank you.

End of Interview