

Oral Memoirs
of
Mary Carolyn Bistline

An Interview Conducted by
Stephanie Youngers

December 10, 2010

Museum of Seminole County History

Museum of Seminole County History

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Interview Histories

Interviewers: Stephanie Youngers

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 Mary Carolyn Bistline is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on December 10, 2010.

Abstract

Oral history of Mary Carolyn Bistline, conducted by Stephanie Youngers on December 10, 2010. Bistline was born on December 22, 1928 in Memphis, Tennessee, but has spent most of her life in Florida. In the interview, Bistline discusses growing up in Miami, the economic and social development of Miami, going to college and getting married, migrating to Longwood, her career in education, the history of her family and her husband's family, the Central Florida Society for Historic Preservation, her husband and children, opening Oak Tree Preschool, and her children and grandchildren.

Mary Carolyn Bistline

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Stephanie Youngers

December 10, 2010

Sanford, Florida

0:00:00

Introduction and biographical information

Youngers Today is December 10, 2010. My name is Stephanie Youngers and we're here at the Museum of Seminole County History doing an interview with Mrs. [Mary] Carolyn Bistline. How are you, Mrs. Bistline?

Bistline I'm fine. Thank you.

Youngers And if you'd like to start with where and when you were born?

Bistline Oh. It asks my name—I have your little paper here, and I'm seeing that it says your name, and I usually mention to some people when it's important and necessary for the record that my first name is Mary, but I've never gone by that name. My middle name's Carolyn and that is how I've always been recognized. My birthday is three days before Christmas, and so there were carolers outside when I was born, and that's why my mother decided on Carolyn.

Youngers Very nice.

Bistline And that was in 1928. In the Dark Ages. I was born in Memphis, Tennessee. My dad had little desire for farm life, and they were living in the Carolinas. But he was good at mechanics, and so he took a chance to move from South Carolina—before I was born to Memphis—with an offer for a job where he got on a newspaper. However, the job didn't last all that long, and so we moved back to the farm when I was about four, I think. And my little brother came along. That was in Clemson, which is formally called Central[, South Carolina]. I don't think they call it that anymore, but that was the little town on the side of the road. And then we moved to Miami when he was about a year old, which I think was 1936. I'm not sure of my brother's age precisely.

0:01:46

Growing up in Miami

Bistline So, I essentially grew up in Miami, which was just starting to boom. We thought it was a big city. We went there, but it wasn't as big then as it came to be as I grew up. In our little neighborhood—or our community—we were happy and knew all our neighbors. No worries about crime. I went to Santa Clara[sic]¹ Elementary and Robert E. Lee Junior High School and rode my bike and we

¹ Santa Clara Elementary School.

loved going to the beach and the skating rink, etcetera. But in starting high school, I decided to attend Miami Senior High [School], which was not the nearest school to our home. This meant I had to ride the bus downtown, and then take another bus across town. And the bus stop was several blocks from my home. So, I had to go early every day to make it there, but I loved the school. I was in the chorus and several clubs, and very active at Miami Senior High School. Now they have several Miami high schools, among others. I don't know if you've ever been to Miami...

Youngers I have.

Bistline You have. Well, there's more than one. This is the northeast section of Miami where I went. And I lived in northwest.

Youngers Oh, goodness.

Bistline But the Andrew Jackson [High School] was nearest to me, and I didn't want to go there. As it turns out, my brother ended up going to [Miami] Edison [Senior High School], which was not too far away, and we were bitter rivals. So we played football, we were both on each side, even in the band. I visited, when I was in high school, a military high school in Atlanta[, Georgia], because I was dating a young student there—a young man that I had gotten acquainted with at church. And I really enjoyed going there, because I got to see a real military-type formation. They did all the things. They did first—and then the dress parade, and the graduation and the dance afterwards. Of course, there were stipulations how I had to dress. I had to wear a picture hat, which was the big straw hat, you know—it's called a "picture hat" at that time—with flowers on the crown. And the long gown. I remember again, I was having been raised in Miami, that I was inclined not to wear hosiery, unless I was wearing...

Youngers That's because it's too warm.

Bistline Well, I had them. But I hadn't put them on, because I thought that with the long dress, I wouldn't need them. And so his sister came in to see and check on me, and I was getting dressed, because this was very formal, and she said, you're not wearing your stockings. And I said, "Do I need them?" She said, "Absolutely, yes." [laughs] So I really learned that this was military life, and that was the way they were. They were very formal. But I did enjoy it, and I dated him for really several years.

Youngers And this was when you were in high school?

0:04:53 **Development of Miami**

Bistline Yes. But everything really began to develop land-wise and population-wise in Miami when World War II started. So there were a lot of servicemen in our church in Downtown Miami. So I dated mostly servicemen. And so it went to where I had been dating steadily with this boyfriend, I went to dating others.

Miami became a [inaudible] city. Too big. Too much traffic. And there was an influx of Cubans, and later Haitians. And Miami Beach – having been made of Jewish folks mostly from New York, and etcetera – was taken over, you might say, by servicemen. Navy, Army, Air Force. And South of Miami – Homestead – also became service-occupied. Did you say you had been to Miami, or you had been...

Youngers Yes.

Bistline You know something about it?

Youngers I've been to Biscayne Bay. I've been to Coconut Grove. Been to various places down there.

0:05:48 **Brother in Coral Gables**

Bistline My brother lives in Coral Gables. He's an attorney, and now in the process of semi-retirement. A liaison, you might say, or mediator, in the circuit courts and so on. Just something to do. He's really not handling, but he used to handle civil cases and had to learn Spanish while he was along the way. He drove downtown from the Gables every day, and then when he got to Flagler, he would drive up into the parking garage and park it and then go upstairs and cross Flagler to his office in the federal building. And when he was through with his day at work, he'd come back across – three or four stories up over Flagler – the walkway, and then get in the car and in the garage and drive back to Coral Gables.

Youngers Right. Wow.

Bistline Because he avoided downtown anymore. But when we were little, we went downtown to church, we'd get our shopping downtown and everything. We weren't cautious or worried about it.

0:06:49 **College, marriage, and migrating to Longwood**

Bistline But in 1946, I graduated, and then I went to Florida Southern College in Lakeland, Florida. And it's a lovely, quiet, small town, which I liked. And I met Fred [Bistline] and dated him for a year. We married in 1949, after he graduated. We lived off-campus for a year since I had one more year of college. And I graduated in 1950, in the spring, already expecting. And in September of 1950, our first child was born in Lakeland.

In December of 1950, we moved to Longwood, because Fred had a chance to get on with Minute Maid Corporation, and he was into citrus. He was one of the first ones to go into citrus school there on campus. And so we've lived there ever since – here, in other words, where we live now – for 59 years in the same house, ever since. We actually stayed in a little guest cottage before we could build on their property, the Bistlines.

0:08:02

Career in education

I started teaching in the old Lyman School, which is[sic] of course been torn down, and that was the school that Fred attended all 12 years. He played football there. He grew up in that school, because that was first [grade] through 12th [grade] at that time.

And I taught second grade. And during my high school year, I had worked as a clerk in a 10-cent store, as we used to call it – Woolworth’s in Downtown Miami, as a file clerk in a furniture store – my uncle’s – and I also worked one summer in the office at the church in Downtown Miami. And I also did a lot of babysitting. But when I went to college, I decided to be a teacher. I had always thought I wanted to do that. So I received a degree in Elementary Education and Early Childhood [Education], and that was a very, very hard year – my first year of teaching. And it was a very extremely hard time for me. But I’m glad I stayed with it, because I became a teacher and have been for all these years.

Youngers

And you stayed at Lyman for the whole time?

Bistline

No, I taught one year at Lyman and I had a downstairs basement room, really, with stairs to climb to come and go. And I had a young boy who was paralyzed from the waist down, and I had to get him up under his armpits and lift him and drag him up those stairs to get him to the top level and put him in a little chair with casters on it – because he was paralyzed – and take him to the bathroom down the hall. And of course, I would always not quite make it in time, and then all high school boys would be in there between classes, and they’d say, “Mrs. Bistline, get out of the boy’s bathroom.” And I’d say, “I’m sorry, but I’m here because I have to get this little guy in and out.” And I’d try to go between classes, but I couldn’t always make it, so – but I remember how Chucky was so dearly loved by all of our other students, because they could take him in the wagon, and they could pull him – we had an outside door to the playground, and he would bring his cowboy hat and guns, and pretend he was a cowboy. And they would pull him around, and take turns. Just loved to be able to be the one to take Chucky for a ride. We really adored him.

0:10:22

Raising her children

Youngers

Where did you go after Lyman?

Bistline

After I left Lyman – I’ll get into that a little bit later. I went to stay at home for a while and had another child, a little girl. And at that time, it was really – I felt – in my best interest not to put my children in a school, or in a place where, anyway...

Youngers

Childcare.

Bistline

Mm-hmm. Childcare. I didn’t think they were really well set-up. I didn’t really like them an awful lot, so I stayed home as much as I could with them – my

children – when they were born to when they were about of age to go to preschool.

0:11:02

Family history

Bistline Now you asked, there's a question here about your family history. And I don't know how I got onto that, because I wanted to try to go by your questions. And I see it there – number three – on the page...

Youngers Oh, it's fine.

Bistline Oh, I'm trying to keep my head on by writing this all down, because I'm not good at remembering things. Anyway, number 10 says – my family history. And so I wrote down some things, which I've just told you and Kim [Nelson] about a few minutes ago before we started officially here. I'm trying to have it researched now, and a lady and I – a local historic society is doing genealogies. But when she did mine, she traced names and birth dates only, back to the 1700s, which was interesting, but I'm curious about the occupations they had, and the birthplaces, some of which she did find. So I'm going to have to find someone who will delve further back, maybe, and find out what the people did, their jobs.

And then one of the next questions on your list – “Do you know any stories about how your family first came to Seminole County?” Well, that would be my husband – and I'll tell a little bit about him – my husband Fred and his mother Adeline Alvina Niemeyer, were born in Longwood. So my husband's brother John [Bistline, Jr.] – whom you've met, I'm sure – was born in Longwood. And he has studied the Bistline side of our family background with a lot of help from several cousins – Bistlines in Pennsylvania – who really came up with a lot of information. Fred's father, Mr. John Aaron Bistline, from Pennsylvania, came to Longwood in answer to an ad from the founding father of Longwood to get a job. He started working with Mr. Niemeyer, who had a general store, and eventually married his daughter, Adeline. That was Fred's mother. Mr. Frederick Niemeyer had married as Ms. Clouser, who was related to the master carpenter, Clouser, who was hired by Mr. Hink to build the hotel, and most of the houses in Longwood, the chapel in Altamonte [Springs], among others. We now own the Clouser cottage [Josiah Clouser House], and hope to keep it in the family in Longwood. Mr. Bistline, Fred's father, grew orange trees, had quite a large acreage, and raised squabs, which were specialty birds for eating in hotels. Have you ever heard of squabs?

Youngers I haven't ever heard of a squab.

Bistline Okay. It's a baby pigeon, is what it really is. That's what it's called – a squab. I don't really know how it's derived. But they would take care of them by wringing their necks – I guess it was – like we do chickens sometimes, and they would pack them in ice, and ship them north each week by train from Winter Park.

Youngers Oh!

Bistline So my husband would get up early hours in the morning and help his father, because they had to pick them and ship them as soon as they did to keep them fresh, and they had to be a certain age, and a certain size. If they got too big, they became very tough, and so people don't usually eat pigeon. But squabs are different. They're very tender if you get them at a young age. And it was — that day also would have them in the hotels here that he raised and started his business. Then he got started and shipping them north, and so they would take them in a wagon, pack them in ice box, crates, and take them in the wagon to Winter Park and have them shipped out once a week.

So, another thing about Mr. Bistline — J. A. Bistline, Sr. — is that he started raising prize poultry as a hobby. And he became immersed in communicating with other men doing the same thing all over the world. And he won all sorts of awards, trophies, and prizes. Raised excellent expertise in raising silver-laced Wyandottes.² And these are beautiful, big, very regal-looking birds. Usually the roosters — the cocks, as they call them — with the large red cockade on their heads, and stripes along the sides. Feathers which might look lacey. They were in little rows, like on their feathers. I have pictures. And a lot of trophies. And some of these awards and letters from different countries — men soliciting information about Mr. Bistline about how he raised this beautiful poultry, because he won so many prizes and so many trophies and awards. And that's a funny kind of an occupation to have, but it was a hobby, really, because he had the orange trees and the squab farm. We had over two thousand birds in that squab farm at one time. And so that was quite a job for Mr. Bistline and for Fred. John didn't help very much there, John was always helping his mother.

So, anyway, Mr. Bistline was also very community-oriented, and he was on the town council in Longwood for at least, I think, 20 years. I'm not sure. He was active in church choir — an elder, a Sunday school teacher. He played trombone in a band. Now, I have a picture of him on the stage at our building — the City League Building, we called it — in Longwood. And he was on the Seminole County School Board for 19 years.

Mrs. Bistline — or Addy, as she was called — went to Rollins [College], and she played piano. I have a picture of her doing a concert. And she played piano and sang in the choir, and she was a charter member of the Woman's Club [of Longwood] and officer most every year — some sort of officer. And her mother was the same way, Frances Niemeyer. So it was accepted that when I married Fred and came there with him to live that I become a member of the Woman's Club immediately, and be active in the church.

² Wyandotte chickens.

Parents and siblings

Now, it mentions on your list my background and my parents. My father was the newspaperman. And he inspired—he was probably inspired—I mean, possibly by his rich Uncle Vernon. We have a book on him. He was in the Midwest as an editor of a newspaper. But my dad's mother had died when my dad was born, as was his twin brother. He died also. And since he had another older brother and four sisters, his father sent him as a tiny infant to live with Aunt Fannie. Doesn't everybody always have an Aunt Fannie? In Pelzer, South Carolina. And so he told me some stories about how she carried him around on a pillow, because he was so tiny, and she nursed him to health and kept him there till he was almost nine. By the age of nine, he was on his own, I was told.

Youngers Wow.

Bistline Somehow, he worked on farms and moved about, and received minimum education. But then he met my mother, Hettie Catherine Hollis, in Central—or Clemson—South Carolina. And they married, and he went back to the farm business again, and they lived there on the farm. My mother went to Furman University, and studied business. And when my brother was born, I was ecstatic, because I hadn't been told before. So when the doctor drove in under his [Ford] Model T, and saw my playing under the giant walnut tree, and he told me he brought me something in a little black bag, and I would get to see it later.

Youngers That's a good story.

Bistline I loved my little brother. And I tried to help my mother to look after him. I remember when we built a house in Miami, after renting for a while, there were beds of scorpions in the palmettos when my dad started the dig the foundation—the coral rock, which is solid down there. He, being from South Carolina—or actually, he was born in Georgia—was not familiar with the conditions, and he was stung many times by the red ants and insects, scorpions and all, and finally decided that the rock was the foundation, because he couldn't remove it with a pickaxe. When we got the walls up and the roof on, we moved in with the spiders and the snakes as well, and one night, my little brother stepped on a scorpion and it stung him, and being about a year old maybe, he didn't know what was happening, and he just kept stepping up and down on that scorpion. These bugs—the scorpions—were very large, not tiny. Sometimes, we see them around here in Central Florida, but they're very small, and very seldom do we see them. But these are large, large ones. Many two to three inches long, and had a lot of venom. His feet were swollen for weeks and we kept putting ice on them and carrying him around for long time, but he finally got well—survived.

So, as we developed a neighborhood there, we were fortunate ultimately in having a very nice home. Improved on our home a great deal, and my dad built additions on, and it became a nice building. We had great childhoods—my brother and I. Sometimes we did have a slight problem, because my father's brother divorced and brought his four children to live with us at once time. And

that was pretty hard. His youngest daughter was three months older than I was and she and I got along pretty well most of the time. But we were more like sisters I think in that we would fight occasionally. We love each other now to death. We have a lot memories, and nice memories. And he finally moved out and took one of the children with him. Anyway, we basically grew up together there for several years down home.

0:21:52

Going to college and working in the library

Bistline And then I went to summer camp at Florida Southern and that's when I decided I wanted to go to college. So I'm backtracking a little bit here, because I mentioned it earlier.

Youngers That's okay.

Bistline I entered as a freshman and joined a sorority right away – Alpha Delta Pi – and I enjoyed campus life and dated a lot. But because my uncle divorced and went to Miami with three children to live with my parents, I just decided to work part-time in the college library to help with my college tuition, and I learned a lot with that.

Youngers Oh, okay.

Bistline Learned a lot about library books and how to catalog them. I had a little old lady who was probably 90 [years old], who was very, very strict. And she would make me look at those numbers until I was blue in the face, and so tired of trying to type them and keep the numbers straight. And I wasn't a good typist. I would almost cry. I would get so tired of it. Finally, I got to be on the floor and handle books and see people, because I like people.

0:22:56

Meeting her husband, Fred

Bistline Okay. Next question. "How has it changed over the years?" Well, I don't know where that goes. I have number six there. I'll just go with what I have in my notes here.

One day, while standing in line at the campus cafeteria, I was chatting with friends, one of whom was talking to her boyfriend – she was the campus homecoming queen. And she introduced us. And he in turn introduced us to his roommate, and that was Fred. He and the roommate lived off-campus working part-time in a science lab, located on the grounds there, while attending school on the GI Bill [Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944]. They both were from Longwood. Charlie Stum was his roommate, famously know in Longwood for Stum's Corner, where they used to live. She was not a very nice woman – his mother. Charlie's now in Polk County and on the staff at the university there – the college there.

So, I had never heard of Longwood. And we chatted a while, and when my friend and I left, I felt something pulling me on my ribbon sash from behind. And I guess it was tied in the back. Anyway, he was trying to catch up with us, so he pulled on that, and I realized—I looked around and caught him trying to catch up, and looked at him kind of funny, and he thought that was funny. So anyway, we laughed and we stopped to talk and then he asked me out. Our first date was to attend a play in town called *Everyman*, and dinner later at the town cafeteria. That was a big deal in Lakeland, because that was all they had then.

Now, trying to get to the family here. Your question is, “Does your family have any heirlooms or keepsakes?” When Fred’s mother passed away, I was given permission, along with John’s wife [Mary Bistline], to share some of her jewelry—his mother’s—and porcelain figurines and dishes, photo albums, which I really treasure. And silverware and other stuff. So I was very glad to share and still have most of that. That was some time ago when she died.

0:25:19

Community involvement

Bistline Now, number 19—question is, “What kind of local events and gatherings were there?”

Youngers In Longwood.

Bistline We were active in the Central Florida Society for Historic Preservation. We were charter members. And Fred was the very first treasurer, and then a trustee. And I was a docent, as well as a secretary and head of several different committees. We were active in our church, also. He was Superintendent of Sunday Schools, and I was a Sunday school teacher. Eventually, we were both ordained as elders. We were active in [Boy] Scouts [of America]. Fred had been a scout as a boy. I was a Cub Scout mother and leader of the Cub pack, also leader of the Brownie Scouts and Cadets, which I think now are called “Intermediates.” I think that’s what they’re called, anyway. Fred was a member of the Indian Guides. He was one of the dads, and he was a timekeeper at swim meets. Our second son got a scholarship from swimming. He followed through. He was very good at swimming. So we were both workers with the booster club at Lyman High School, where Fred went. And I was—for a short time, I was a helper with A[lpha] D[elta] Pi at UCF[University of Central Florida], which at that time was called FTU—Florida Technological University. I was always active in educator’s associations. President one year of Seminole County for Children Under Six—now, that’s not quite right. I’m sure it’s Seminole County Association for Children Under Six, which ultimately became part of the 4C [Community Coordinated Care for Children, Inc.] program now in existence, and I helped start that. I enjoyed that.

0:27:03

Central Florida Society for Historic Preservation

Youngers When did you all start the Central Florida Society for Historic Preservation?

Bistline In '73, I think it was. And the reason for that being that we wanted to move this house that was up for grabs for the fire department to use...

Youngers The Bradlee-McIntyre House?

Bistline And so, it was either '73, '75? No, I think it was '73 that we moved the house. I'm not really sure. It was right in there, that we moved the Bradlee-Mac house from Altamonte Springs to Longwood, and we also got the inside house while we were at it. We had to chip in, of course, a lot of our own money, and the move was quite large. Can't remember his name – the man who did it – but it was quite an effort because, of course, because the Bradlee-Mac being three stories – Queen Anne. It was in terrible, terrible shape. I didn't think to bring any pictures to show you today, but I do have pictures of how it looked before we moved it.

Youngers I think I've seen some pictures of it.

Bistline Okay.

Youngers And it was in very bad shape.

Bistline There was a man who lived in there, Bill Orr – he's an artist. And I have pictures here where he had his – I don't know if it's a kerosene stove or not – but he had a pot sitting on it. Anyway, there were some pictures on the wall of the Beatles, or something like that. And you don't really recognize or realize that's the Bradlee-Mac house the way it looks now. You don't realize until you find a few doorways and windows and things that you recognize. It comes to you that that's the way it looked when it was going down. And after the move, we had to have power lines removed, or taken down. And a lot of trees had to be cut back, and a lot of hours spent on the road trying to move it. And there was just a small group of us, but we got it done. Of course, we were in the red for a lot of years afterwards, but we finally got ourselves in black.

0:29:26

Husband's employment history

Bistline Fred was a member of the Board of the [Florida] Farm Bureau for over 40 years, because he's into citrus. And he was with Minute Maid, and they later became connected to Coca-Cola – part of Coca-Cola. And he had been, more recently, traveling a lot and helping out Coca-Cola to look for properties suitable for orange trees. We went to China twice. We went to Africa a couple of times. And I got to go with him to some countries, because Coca-Cola was interested not only the cocoa part of it, but they were also at that time selling coffee. And so I went to Jamaica with him a time or two, and Mexico several times. So I got to travel too some in between raising children.

Youngers Now was Minute Maid – was it located in Longwood?

Bistline No. It was actually Orlando. It was a place called Fairvilla, which is still there. And he had an office there for a while, and then they moved to Plymouth – oh, I

think they really were Plymouth first. I think that's backwards. I think they were Plymouth first, and they had a packing plant over there and everything. And that was a little drive, but it was only 20 minutes then.

Youngers Right.

Bistline Now it takes at least half hour or more.

Youngers So it's really a commute.

Bistline Yeah. And he worked over there for a lot of years, and then they moved to Fairvilla and then opened more plants and opened more, not necessarily more packing houses, but more plants. Concentrate was coming in then. That was real important then. And he helped to start that, had to help get the vats in and all that that they required for that.

Youngers Mm-hmm.

Bistline So, he was instrumental in the beginning of orange juice as we see it now, and concentrate, and then since then, fresh orange juice. It was almost, at that time, impossible to find. Then he became a kind of troubleshooter and consultant.

0:31:42

Woman's Club and the City League Building

Bistline Then I was president of the Woman's Club for a couple of years, and instrumental in setting up the old-timer's reunion once a year. This was a get-together of all the old-timers in Longwood, which we all loved. That was discontinued when the Woman's Club disbanded. It was no feather in my cap that we had to give up, but we had dwindling numbers—membership—and most of the ladies were not able to drive or get out without help. And we're getting up in years. We were just to the point where we couldn't seem to get younger people in. They were busy working. We finally disbanded and we gave the building to the historic group in Longwood—Central Florida Society for Historic Preservation—with the provision that the building would eventually become a museum. It hasn't happened yet.

Youngers And is that the Bradlee-Mac House?

Bistline No. It's the City League Building. And it was the former Woman's Club building, and we gave it away. Kind of regret that, sort of. But if we had tried to sell it, we didn't know how we would divide the money, or what we would do. Where it would go. And there were so few members left that we didn't seem to think that seemed fair. So I suggested we give it to the historic society, which we did, but it was with the provision that it become a museum. Now, we're putting some things in there. We have a museum committee, of which I am a member and John is the president—my brother-in-law. We're trying to get a museum set up and started. We've got some bulletin boards up and things, but they're renting the building out now to society, because they did a whole lot of renovations. It

was in pretty bad shape. So they spent a lot of money on it. So now they're trying to make up that money that they spent by having people come in for weddings, and such as that. Bar-mitzvahs, other things. They do raise money, anyway.

So right now, we're not having much luck on getting – we don't want to really put anything in there of any value, museum-wise, anyway. So we're collecting a few things, but we're basically just trying to do the bookwork that goes with it, and collect some information on people who helped start Longwood. And we're putting together a little book, we're calling it *Footprints*. And we're trying to get some information together. And some, you might say – the basics, just right now, and hopefully we'll someday have a museum in Longwood. I don't know if it'll happen before I'm gone, but we're trying.

Fred and I have also been active in the Seminole County Historic[al] Society – charter members there also. And I've been Recording Secretary at one time as well as Chairman of the Student Tours. Now, that goes with the society – the local group, the tours. CFSHP, which is Central Florida Society for Historic Preservation. I initiated tours – student tours – by visiting approximately 55 schools in the county, one by one, and introducing the history of the Longwood area for them, and setting up field trips by bus, through a grant. We had to work hard to get the grant. We've had as many as four days a week sometimes touring students through the town and/or the Bradlee-McIntyre House museum. It was I who introduced John and Mary [Bistline] – Fred's brother – to the local group after he retired from New York, and they moved back to Florida and they became very active. I was raising four kids and teaching school, so I became less active for a while, and I'm again more active now since I retired from teachers. This getting too long?

Youngers Nope.

0:36:02 **History in Longwood**

Bistline I'm proud to say that – now, number 21, you asked how historical events affected your family – community. Proud to say that we in Longwood were included in the Bicentennial Parade. The governors came through Florida in 1976. And I have some snapshots of a similar celebration in – I'm not sure if it was 1880 – but Ulysses [S.] Grant came to visit, just for a day, in Longwood. His name is on the book at the hotel. We're also proud of the Clouser heritage, hence the Niemeyers, and then the Bistlines, and pioneering the oldest city in Seminole County. The Clouser House has been acknowledged with a small plaque, and we had a little celebration at the City Hall, then Mayor Paul Lovestrand and other dignitaries – and our now-grown children, our four children have greater respect than when they were young, and appreciate the history of Longwood now. We put out a book, so we have some recognition, when we have our book on. And that's our family on the front cover, the Niemeyers.

0:37:19

Opening Oak Tree Preschool

Bistline Number 23 is, “Is there anything you’d like to discuss?” I just going to say—I’ve always wanted to have my own private kindergarten, so my husband agreed after some rentals we had were vacated, and he was tired of being a landlord anyway. So with some renovations to three small homes, we opened a school. We connected them all together, three little houses in a row, and we called it Oak Tree [Pre]School, because we have what is probably the largest tree, the live oak, anyway, in Seminole County.

Youngers Oh!

Bistline It’s supposed to be between 400 and 500 years old, according to a forester who came out in ‘88, and I’m trying to have that checked out now, because it’s been so long, I think it may have grown a little, and there was an article in the newspaper in *The Orlando Sentinel*, fairly recently, about a large live oak in Lake County, and according to the writer, there’s nobody in Seminole County who pushed through like they did there in the town council who worked on getting this tree recognized with some kind, you know...

Youngers Oh, to protect it. Yes, mm-hmm.

Bistline I called the writer—The *Sentinel* writer—to ask him and he talked with me and suggested names, one of which is a lady who works for the forestry service. And she’ll come out and measure for me which is the other one did, when I had this—but I had gotten the children out there and talked about the tree, and then they helped him measure. And they enjoyed that and they had a little—they gave me a plaque. And around that time—it must have been already. So I want to bring this back to attention in our little town of Longwood, and because it’s in our backyard. It’s not something you just invite the whole town to, but I do want them to know that they can come and see it, and be ready to mention it to anybody who’s interested in trees. And so I’m going to look forward to her coming. She’s coming after Christmas sometime to measure, and she said, by the way it sounds—with my measurements that I gave her—it sounds like it is one of the largest oak trees in the state.

Youngers Wow.

Bistline At least in the county, anyway. So we hope to have that recognized soon. And anyway, since I’ve been teaching in Seminole County for about eight or 10 years in public school at that time, I was disenchanted with all the paperwork, so I enjoyed revising the joining of these houses into one building, and making up the playground, etcetera. And I had that school for 11 years, we call it the Oak Tree Preschool. Well, actually, it came to be kindergarten. That’s my love, that’s my Early Childhood degree. But I had it for 11 years, but I gave it up after that, because even though I loved it very much, nobody wanted to pay tuition. They wanted to bring the children, but they didn’t want to pay. So it was just like—they thought it should be free, and I just let it go too long. I am a dedicated

teacher, but I'm not a businessperson. So, I really let it go, and there were a lot of disappointed parents that we put a lot of money into, and we finally had to give up on that.

0:40:44

Children and grandchildren

Bistline Now, I was just wondering – when you ask if there's anything else I would like to discuss, I realize I must not forget to mention our children, of which I am very proud. Walter Bistline, Jr. was born September 30, 1950, in Lakeland, and he's now an attorney with several large law firms. But he's been semi-retired and he was in New York City, where he got his law degree, and he went with White & Case. Then he moved to Dallas[, Texas], and opened a branch there, and later he went to Houston[, Texas], and opened a branch there, and now they live in Richmond, Indiana, and that's because he found it on the computer – they have a photography studio there like, that he can go to there, because that's his hobby. And so he's on the faculty teaching photography and he judges shows, and they just came back from Turkey. Brought me this back from Turkey.

Youngers Oh, very nice, yes.

Bistline Did you know that tulips were grown originally in Turkey?

Youngers I did not know that.

Bistline All of us all think of Amsterdam[, the Netherlands] as the base for tulips.

Youngers Very pretty.

Bistline He and his wife bought that for me – a pendant with the tulip on it. And they've travelled, not only just to Turkey. They took a group of students there, and they stayed in England this time three months, but they were only in Turkey for a couple of weeks. But they do take students, say, a group like 25 students and sponsor them included. Well, they get sponsors, but they get help. This time, they got a flat to stay in in England – that was last summer. He's travelled a lot. He's been to China, he's been around quite a lot in different places. Travels a lot. She's also a lawyer.

And then Frances [Bistline], our daughter, was born June 23, '53 in Sanford. And she has become an environmentalist and a magazine writer, and lately she's been teaching school. She met Paul – her husband, Paul Stephen – at a church summer trip and went to Florida State University, lived in a co-op dorm, and then they married after graduation and moved to Naples[, Florida]. They lived there about 20 years. He's a Clearwater guy, and he loves the water, so they did a lot of surfing, fishing, boating. You name it. And now they have moved to California, which I'm very sorry that they've done, but he's looking for a new job, so they went out there.

Youngers Oh, wow. That's far away.

Bistline Our next one was John Leland [Bistline], named after my husband's brother and my brother. He's a doctor of psychology, and he's now working with insurance company. His wife is very, very sickly, so he has to stay home. Has his office there. He wrote a book. He met Kathy [Bistline] at Richmond University, at which time she was very, very into sports, and very strong. But she's become ill with arthritis really bad now. They're married in Virginia. Living there now. He's really looking after Kathy himself. He's her caregiver.

Youngers And when was he born?

Bistline He was born in 1955 in Sanford. And at that time—I have a picture of that old house that was the hospital in Sanford where they were born, he and Francie, and of course, it's terrible, in bad shape. And when he was born, I had apparently just come out of a sleep afterwards, and they were going to bring him in, and they said they'd bring the babies in a few minutes. And all of a sudden, this rumble-rumble-rumble sound. And I said, "What in the world happened? My bed's shaking." And she said, "Oh, that's just the elevator."

Youngers Oh, my goodness. [*laughs*]

Bistline And it turned out my bed was near the elevator shaft. Whenever anybody went up or down on the elevator, it made my bed shake.

Youngers Oh, I bet you couldn't wait to get home.

Bistline That's exactly right. And then they brought him in and he was nine pounds and a half ounce and since you have a football player, I said, "That's not mine." Because Walter was only seven pounds and four and three quarters ounces, but they said, "Yes, this is yours." So he's a handsome young man and a big guy. He played football at Lyman, and as I say, they're living there now. He's in Richmond, Virginia, and Walter's in Richmond, Indiana. Strange consequence.

Jane [Bistline], our baby, was born in '65, December 4, 1965. And she went to Florida Southern College, where we went. And she was homecoming queen in high school. She's a fitness instructor at the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] now, and she does personal fitness in the home. She married Keith Reardon and they have three children. Two are twin boys—Keegan and Kamden. They're now six, and Khloe is age nine. They all start with K's. All of my four children attended Lyman High School, just as their dad had. And I have five grandchildren altogether. I lost Fred about a year ago, but I stayed busy and I have an active life. I meant to mention my granddaughters, Katie and Addie, now in their twenties. They don't have any children yet.

0:46:37

Closing remarks

Bistline And one other little addition, I forgot to explain my teaching job sort of. I didn't really go into that very much. But I did mention the old Lyman, when I had the base...

Youngers Basement classroom?

Bistline Yes. Thank you. *[laughs]* That was first through 12th grades, but then they started building new schools, so I went home and waited. I was inclined – I kept taking leaves to have family, and I taught one year at the old Lake Mary Elementary, which is also now gone. It was about 1957, I think it was. Then I taught at Altamonte Elementary for a lot of years – I figured, around 1966, but I’m not going to be able to remember it for sure – until I opened my private school in 1985. And had that for 11 years, and then I decided to retire. I don’t think I taught after that. I may have gone back to public school. I don’t remember.

But anyway, I now serve on the Seminole County Historic Commission, and the Board of the Seminole County Historic Society, which I enjoy. And I’m interested in history, even though I hated it when I was in high school. That’s it.

Youngers Is that all you have?

Bistline That’s all I have.

Youngers Alright, well thank you so much, Mrs. Bistline.

Bistline Thank you for being patient with me.

Youngers Absolutely.

Bistline I was writing things and realizing how long I was writing and how much I was writing. And I thought, *This is terrible*. *[laughs]*

Youngers Oh, it’s fine.

End of Interview