

**Oral Memoirs**  
**of**  
**Grace Marie Stinecipher**

An Interview Conducted by

Diana Dombrowski

July 13, 2010

Museum of Seminole County History

Historical Society of Central Florida

*Museum of Seminole County History*

Copyright 2010

This material is protected by US copyright. Permission to print, reproduce or distribute copyrighted material is subject to the terms and conditions of fair use as prescribed in the US copyright law. Transmission or reproduction of protected items beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written and explicit permission of the copyright owners.

## **Interview Histories**

Interviewers: Diana Dombrowski

Transcriber: Diana Dombrowski

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 Grace Marie Stinecipher is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on July 13, 2010.

## **Abstract**

Oral history of Grace Marie Stinecipher, conducted by Diana Dombrowski on July 13, 2010. Stinecipher was born in Sanford, Florida on September 19th, 1936. In the interview, she discusses her family history, growing up in Sanford, her career in education, living in the Orlando-Winter Park area, school integration, the effects of the Naval Air Station (NAS) Sanford and Walt Disney World Resort on Sanford, the First Baptist Church of Sanford, her role as church historian, organizing new churches and missions, her career in journalism, and her childhood experiences at New Smyrna Beach.

# Grace Marie Stinecipher

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Diana Dombrowski

July 13, 2010

Sanford, Florida

0:00:00

## Introduction

**Dombrowski** This is an interview with Gracie Marie Stinecipher, the historian of the First Baptist Church in Sanford. And, uh, this interview is being conducted on July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010 at the Museum of Seminole County History. The interviewer is Diana Dombrowski, representing the museum for the Historical Society of Central Florida. I'd just like to start with a couple basic questions, like, where and when were you born?

**Stinecipher** I was born in Sanford – Fernald-Laughton Memorial Hospital.

**Dombrowski** Cool. When were you born, if you don't mind?

**Stinecipher** September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

**Dombrowski** Okay. So you grew up in Sanford?

**Stinecipher** Yes.

**Dombrowski** Where in Sanford did you live? Could you describe it?

**Stinecipher** I lived at 2404 Park Avenue. And at the time, that was, Park Avenue was [U.S. Route] 17-92. It was the highway.

**Dombrowski** Okay. Did you live close to the railroad station or anything?

**Stinecipher** No.

**Dombrowski** I'm sorry. My last interviewer[sic] – she lived off of Park Avenue, as well. And she mentioned her family arriving on the train. So I wasn't sure how close it was. I'm sorry.

**Stinecipher** No. That's way downtown.

0:01:21

## Family history

**Dombrowski** Okay. I'm sorry. Um, how – when did your family come to Florida?

**Stinecipher** My mother came here in 1913—I believe, as an eight-year-old—with her family. And my dad came in 1926.

**Dombrowski** What did their families do here?

**Stinecipher** My mother's father was a butcher. He had a store down on First Street. Grocery store, butcher shop, whatever. My dad's family—his dad was a farmer in Tennessee. He was born in Spring City, Tennessee. My mother was born in Butte, Montana.

**Dombrowski** Wow. That's a-ways.

**Stinecipher** Oh, yes. There's a story there.

**Dombrowski** What brought them to Florida?

**Stinecipher** I really don't know. My mother—my grandmother and grandfather—my grandfather was from England. He came over, to the Gold Rush in Canada, Alaska. What was the word? Anyway, and they met in Montana. I have no idea why my grandmother was there. And they married in Montana. My mother was born there. My aunt, Gladys [Stemper], was born in Phoenix, Arizona. My uncle, Jack [Stemper], was born in Homeland, Georgia, and my uncle, Bill [Stemper], was born in Sanford.

**Dombrowski** Wow. That's a lot of traveling.

**Stinecipher** Yes.

**Dombrowski** Did you grow up around all these relatives?

**Stinecipher** Not those, no. My grandfather Stemper—my grandmother was Marie Stemper—left the family. I think about 1925. And they didn't find him until 1960—I believe it was—in Baton Rouge[, Louisiana]. Yeah. That was quite a thing.

**Dombrowski** Growing up in Sanford, were you always a member of the [First] Baptist Church [of Sanford]?

**Stinecipher** I was always attending. I joined the church in 1947.

**Dombrowski** Okay, alright. What did your parents do? You know, was your mother a homemaker?

**Stinecipher** My mother was a schoolteacher.

**Dombrowski** Okay. Where did she teach?

**Stinecipher** She taught at Sanford Grammar [School], Sanford Junior High [School], and Seminole High School.

**Dombrowski** Okay. Where did you go to school? Did you go to those as well?

**Stinecipher** Yes. Also Southside Primary [School].

**0:04:28** **Growing up in Sanford**

**Dombrowski** I'd like to find out a little more about what it was like to grow up in Sanford. How was it different from then? What changes did you see and witness growing up? Do you have any favorite memories growing up in the town?

**Stinecipher** It was a fairly small town back then. About 10-12-15,000. It was a fairly close-knit community. You knew almost everybody. Everybody you went to school with. Or at least, knew of them.

**Dombrowski** Yeah.

**Stinecipher** It was a time when most people attended church. I think it could be, because there wasn't much else to do. But I think, I mean—you know, the downtown churches were very, very active. The youth groups were really overflowing. And it was really a great time to grow up. So, that—we—some of the memories I think some of us have are somebody always mentions the drugstores, you know. Preston's Drugstore, where we congregated downtown. And Robert Anderson. And McColonel's Drugstore was at Twenty-Fifth [Street] and Sanford Avenue, and he had curbside service, delicious milkshakes. And a lot of the fellas worked at some of these drugstores. And there was the Pig 'n Whistle. It had a big drive-in space there. It was at Twenty-Fifth and Park [Avenue]. And then Angel's Eat Shack was a restaurant. It's still there—the building—on 25—something—Sanford Avenue. I mean, the people of that era when I grew—there wasn't much else. But we had a lot of good memories at all those places. And the zoo.

**Dombrowski** Oh.

**Stinecipher** Yes. The zoo downtown. Yeah. I was part of the Girl Scouts. We met down at the old depot. Down where—what's the bank? SunTrust Bank is—right down in there. Every Friday afternoon, from the time I was 10 years old 'til I graduated from high school. It was really, really good. We had a lot of good memories there.

**0:07:15** **Girl Scouts and college education**

**Dombrowski** What did you do in the Girl Scouts?

**Stinecipher** Well, of course, we went through the Girl Scout handbook, learning all the things for the badges and things. And we'd have slumber parties down there. And Miss Henton, who was our leader—I can remember her sitting up in the middle of the depot. This big depot, you know, keeping an eye on us throughout the night. We went camping. I still don't know where it was that we camped. It was somewhere west of town by the lake, and it was just sort of—the kitchen was

very primitive. And the long table, you know, where we ate, and the outhouse—we called “the Commishy.” Because some commissioner had had it built. That was the story. But that was fun. We pitched tents. We only were only there about three nights or something like that. Got to know a lot of the older girls, because they were our leaders, and then we became leaders.

**Dombrowski** Were you a leader in the troupe?

**Stinecipher** Well, we all were when we got into, you know—later on in high school. We led the little ones, the younger ones.

**Dombrowski** That’s nice. Did you go to college?

**Stinecipher** Yes. I went to Maryville College in Tennessee for two years, and then I transferred to Stetson [University], and I graduated in 1958.

**Dombrowski** Did you graduate with plans to become a teacher?

**Stinecipher** Yes. I majored in elementary education.

**Dombrowski** Did you get married?

**Stinecipher** No.

**0:09:11** **Career in education and life in the Orlando-Winter Park area**

**Dombrowski** Okay. Where did you begin teaching?

**Stinecipher** I began teaching at Lake Silver Elementary in Orlando. And I had an apartment over there in Winter Park for three years.

**Dombrowski** Winter Park is nice. What do you remember from living there?

**Stinecipher** From living in Orlando? In Winter Park? Well, it was a much smaller place then. I was able to drive around, you know, and not get lost, or too much lost. I became a member of North Park Baptist Church and thoroughly enjoyed it. Made a lot of good friends, some that I’m still in contact with. Dr. Edgar Cooper was my pastor, and he later became editor of *The Florida Baptist Witness*, which is the state newspaper. I taught fifth grade.

**Dombrowski** What was the education system like? What was it like to teach then as it is maybe compared to teaching later?

**Stinecipher** The kids were much more well-behaved.

**Dombrowski** Really?

**Stinecipher** Yes. There was more parent participation. Yes. I only taught over there three years. And then I could not afford to continue. I was making \$360 a month and

not being paid in the summer. So I'd come home and borrow money from my dad to get through the summer, and then I'd get him paid back by Christmas. So, I figured that couldn't last too long. So I moved back home to Sanford in '61.

**Dombrowski** Okay.

**Stinecipher** I could not find a teaching job in elementary schools in the upper grades in Sanford, so I went down to the personnel director, Stuart Gadshaw, see if he could help me. And he had taught me math in high school. He said, "You'd make a good math teacher!" And he sent me up to Mr. [Andrew Joseph] Bracken, principal of Seminole High, and he hired me. So I had to go back to school and get certified in math.

**Dombrowski** Did they pay your way through school?

**Stinecipher** Oh, heavens no.

**Dombrowski** Okay. How long – when did you begin teaching there?

**Stinecipher** The fall of '61.

**Dombrowski** How long did you teach there?

**Stinecipher** I officially retired in '92. But I had been on medical leave for a few years before that.

**Dombrowski** Wow. So, all that time at Seminole High School. You must have seen a lot of things. High school – wow. I've heard that's a really hard time to teach.

**Stinecipher** I think junior high's the worst.

**Dombrowski** Really?

**Stinecipher** Yeah. I remember even when I was in junior high. No – I thoroughly enjoyed it. Especially the first, the '60s were really good.

**Dombrowski** Yeah?

**Stinecipher** Yes. I had really, really good students then, and I still keep in contact with a lot of them. Go to the reunions, and so on.

**Dombrowski** That's nice.

**0:12:50**                    **School integration**

**Stinecipher** You've probably heard the story about, you know, when integration came.

**Dombrowski** I was going to ask. Yeah.



**Stinecipher** Yeah. First, I think it was about 1967 or 1968, they had something called "Freedom of Choice." I think that was what it was called. And the black students could attend the white schools. I think they had to apply or something. So we did have a few black students there in the late '60s. Then in 1970, they closed Crooms [High School]. And the Crooms students came over to Seminole High School. Seminole High did not want them. Crooms did not want to be there.

**Dombrowski** Oh, yeah. That sounds tense.

**Stinecipher** That year, 1970-71, was terrible. We were on double sessions. I was on the teaching in the afternoon session, and in the mornings they would have had fights and all kind of problems, and I'd get to school around 10 or 10:30, and they'd already had to close school several times. So that was a bad year. And the early '70s was still pretty hard.

**Dombrowski** How were the students who elected to go to school received?

**Stinecipher** You mean in the late '60s? They were received very well. They were the good students. In fact, one of the boys served as president of his senior class.

**Dombrowski** Wow. That's amazing. How long did it take for, uh, black students to be more accepted in the high school? Do you think they are now? Did they end up building another high school that served that neighborhood?

**Stinecipher** Oh, no. No, no. They're all at Seminole still. It's the only high school in Sanford.

**Dombrowski** Oh, okay. I didn't know that.

**Stinecipher** Well, they've done something to Crooms [Academy of Institute Technology]—I haven't kept up. But it's a school of technology or something like that. Yeah. But that's just been in recent years. And then they later made the school into a ninth grade center. I guess, right after we merged. Somewhere in there. So the ninth graders went there until—a few years later, all the ninth graders came back to Seminole High. I can't remember the years.

**Dombrowski** How were the rest of the '70s like, in terms of tension at the school? Did it end up getting resolved somehow?

**Stinecipher** Gradually. Gradually. It was hard. It really was. And then there was still one thing that always irked me was, the first couple years was okay. In the homecoming. They'd have a black queen and a white queen.

**Dombrowski** Oh.

**Stinecipher** And that just kept on for years. And I thought, can't we get together?

**Dombrowski** Wow. That's like two separate worlds in one school.

**Stinecipher** I know. I know. It was bad. And, well, I think there's always going to be a little tension. But, uh, it gradually got better.

0:16:22

### Naval Air Station Sanford and Walt Disney World Resort

**Dombrowski** Okay. How did things like Cape Canaveral affect – you know, the opening of the [John F. Kennedy] Space Center affect – did you see any effects from that in Sanford? Like people coming here for the space industry? Or did you teach anyone related to that?

**Stinecipher** No. No. The Navy base was here. So I taught a lot of Navy students in the '60s. Of course, the Navy moved from here in '68. But, yes. A lot of Navy kids. And the school, Seminole High, was right in the pattern of the jets. Because when they'd have their touch-and-go, you know, to practice landing on the carriers, it would come right over Seminole High. They would come, and then there'd be a lull, and you know, just keep on coming. And you'd just have to learn to teach in between the comings and goings.

**Dombrowski** How did the town change after the base left, do you think? Did the population drop very dramatically?

**Stinecipher** Oh, I can't go in – probably a little bit. Something like that always affects things, but something else always comes along. But Sanford was a very good Navy town. The personnel always seemed to think Sanford was a good place to be and a lot of Navy people retired here.

**Dombrowski** I have a couple more questions about general events like that, like the opening of [Walt] Disney [World Resort]? What do you remember from when Disney opened down here?

**Stinecipher** Hm.

**Dombrowski** Was it very significant at all?

**Stinecipher** Well, I guess it was. It was exciting to go down there the first time or two. But, as you realize, gradually the impact has come up to Sanford, because of the growth. That's what really brought the growth to Seminole County.

**Dombrowski** Yeah. What do you think about that? Do you think that's a positive thing?

**Stinecipher** Oh, in some ways. But I'd rather it go back to, you know, the old days with the smaller population.

**Dombrowski** Yeah. Yeah.

**Stinecipher** But you can't go back.

0:19:05

## First Baptist Church of Sanford

**Dombrowski** Through this time, you know, that you were a member of the [First] Baptist Church [of Sanford], was the church very involved in community activities? Did they have local events, or did they throw parties in the town or something? How were they involved in the community?

**Stinecipher** How were they involved in the community?

**Dombrowski** Well, uh, you know, did they take measures to feed or serve the homeless or anything?

**Stinecipher** We do now. We do now. Yes. We have a program on Sundays. I think about 1:30, they feed the homeless. I think about 40 or 50 that come. And they have a devotional and so on. I don't know exactly what the program is, but yes.

**Dombrowski** Uh, how has the church during your time as a member? Or as a historian? Has it changed at all?

**Stinecipher** Yes. It's changed. It used to be a very large church with a lot of young people. When I was growing up we had – probably my high school class – we had about half the class at First Baptist.

**Dombrowski** Wow.

**Stinecipher** Of course, we were just a little over a hundred in the class, but – maybe not quite that many. And the other churches too – they were very active and large Sunday schools had their training unions and MYAF and whatever. Most people went to church back then. Now – and then of course, we had the downtown churches. There were a few scattered out, but mainly the First Baptist, First Methodist [Church of Sanford], First Presbyterian [Church of Sanford], and the Catholics<sup>1</sup> were all right downtown and very, very active, all of them. Back up to the '60s or early '70s.

**Dombrowski** Okay.

**Stinecipher** But the downtown churches are all losing members. Of course, there are other churches too. But still, it's sad. It really is.

**Dombrowski** Why do you think that is?

**Stinecipher** I don't know. People seem to have more to do. And, I just – I don't know. Not interested in church anymore.

**Dombrowski** Okay. Where was the original church – the Baptist church?

---

<sup>1</sup> All Souls Catholic Church.

**Stinecipher** The original church is the same church – the same property. It was a wooden church. Are you familiar with the First Baptist Church downtown?

**Dombrowski** No.

**Stinecipher** No. Okay. It's on – well our address is 519 Park, but the original church was a small wooden building. The church was organized in 1884, and the wooden building was finished, I think, by the end of that year. It was on the corner of Sixth [Street] and Park. And that's where our brick church was built later. That wooden church was moved and the brick church was built there – built in two parts. The first section, which included a Sunday school, the front part, was built in 1914. And the second part, the auditorium part, was built in 1920. Then, in 1949-50, the education building next door was built. Let's see. The new – well, the next educational building, which is now the Chance Education Building, which was named for our former pastor who died while he was a pastor in '71. It was built in '66. That's on the corner of Fifth [Street] and Magnolia [Avenue]. And in all that process, we bought all that property on that block. House by house. And they all had to be moved to build that education building or demolish. Some were moved, some were demolished. And finally, in 1994, we broke ground during our 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary – broke ground for our new sanctuary, which we entered in August of 1995. We finally got it paid for a couple of years ago.

**Dombrowski** The education building sounds enormous. Taking over the whole...

**Stinecipher** Well, not the whole property. But we've got four buildings there on the block. And we also have a youth building, which is across the street on Magnolia.

**Dombrowski** Okay. You talked about how active the church community was. Was the church community – yes? How was it active? What kind of events or activities did the church hold? You know, what was Sunday service like? I don't know much about it. I don't know much about the First Baptist Church.

**Stinecipher** Oh, we had Sunday school. We still do, and worship service on Sunday mornings, and then at night had Baptist Training Union, BTU – Training Union, whatever – for the entire church, you know. We had different unions – learning. In Sunday school, you learn more from the Bible, you know, like that, but in Training Union it was more about other – I remember once, we had to learn about other different religions. We learned Baptist beliefs. Things like that. And the members took part were – were assigned parts. That was a good learning experience for people, especially young people, you know, getting up in front of people and doing. That was good. There was also a lot of socials. I remember having hayrides and things like that. Parties and stuff. You know, it was a good youth group. And the older people had their own things. Somewhere along the line, Training Union went out the window. I don't understand. Things change.

**Dombrowski** Oh.

**Stinecipher** But we still have Sunday night church.

**Dombrowski** Okay.

**Stinecipher** And, uh, other things, you know.

**0:26:46** **Role as church historian**

**Dombrowski** Okay. What is your role as church historian like? What do you do for the church?

**Stinecipher** Well, in the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1984, we had a big celebration. I was not chairman of the committee. I was on it, but I volunteered to write a history of the church. We had this little bitty book. I said, "We have to get a little better than that." I wasn't expecting to do too much. Got in there and found all the records, ending up writing a book. I think about 270 pages.

**Dombrowski** Wow.

**Stinecipher** It was a wonderful experience, because we have a lot of documents, and minutes, and things of all church business meetings, and oh, just a slew of stuff. And church bulletins, you know, have information in them. So it was really interesting experience. Also, none of the memorabilia of the church had ever been collected. It was scattered all over the church and some people knew where things were, so I went scouring around trying to find all that, and I got all that collected, got a crew together to work on, to organizing it, and we had a huge display of all our memorabilia. I mean, there was a bunch of stuff, all in the fellowship hall for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. And then I had the book published, you know.

Since then, I've continued to collect things from different people. It's amazing what things pop up still about the history. Collecting it – and have a special room in the memorial education building. That's the first one that's on Park Avenue, to collect all that stuff. Then when we built the new building in '95. They put a special heritage room in there. It was supposed to be larger than what it is, but when the costs came in for building the church, things got squeezed. And that did too. But I have a room there, and cases around the room, which were given to us by one of the local jewelry stores who[sic] was moving or going out of business or something. So I've got that. So people can go in there and see the displays. It gets changed occasionally. And I have an excellent storage room. It didn't get squeezed! It's still there, so I've got a good storage room for all kind of stuff in there. So I continue to collect things, and I've chaired the anniversary committees every year since. Now, we had 125<sup>th</sup> [anniversary] a year ago, in February. I told them then, that was my last one. I'll be almost 80 years old. I think it's time for somebody else. But it's been fun, I've thoroughly enjoyed it.

**Dombrowski** What kinds of memorabilia?

**Stinecipher** Oh, goodness. One thing we have – the old pulpit – the original pulpits from the first church, and a couple of chairs. They’ve gotten moved into my heritage storeroom there. But it’s okay, they’ll get room for them. We bring them out. Oh, all kind of paper things. And lots of and lots of pictures. I still take pictures of important events. And, oh, I can’t think of what all there is. We’ve got a lot of important documents, the incorporation papers. Goodness, I’m trying to think of what we do have. Just a lot of interesting things. We’re always finding new things. It’s good.

**Dombrowski** It sounds like the Baptist church was the big church force in the community.

**Stinecipher** It was the largest, yes. It was.

**Dombrowski** Okay. Okay.

**Stinecipher** But as I said, all the downtown churches were very active, just not as large.

**0:31:45**                    **Organizing new churches and missions**

**Stinecipher** But there – oh, we sponsored five missions which are now churches.

**Dombrowski** Wow.

**Stinecipher** Yes. Central Baptist [Church], Pinecrest Baptist [Church], Westview [Baptist Church] – it’s changed its name two or three times. Lake Mary – it’s something else now. I don’t think it’s even a Baptist church. Well, that’s another story. Oh, and Victory Baptist [Church]. We formed it as Elder Springs Baptist [Church], but it later withdrew from the Southern Baptists and became independent. But we did organize it. There are three that are still Southern Baptist.

**Dombrowski** How did you organize the missions and get these churches started?

**Stinecipher** We’d have a commissions committee go into the neighborhoods and start Sunday schools and, you know – at night. I wasn’t, you know, involved in any of it. Gradually, as attendance grew, they’d want to become a church, and so we’d organize it. It took several years. Pinecrest didn’t take very long, because a whole Sunday school class of ours went out there and started it – a men’s class. So that didn’t take very long, just a few months. Bu the others, some of them took several years.

**Dombrowski** Is there a story behind the Lake Mary? That sounded a little complicated.

**Stinecipher** Well, we took them back as a mission. They had been a church and they wanted to go back into mission status. We had not started them originally, but they wanted to come back in mission status and asked us to be their sponsor. So several of our members went out there and helped them for several years, and then they became a church. I knew it was in ’83, because that was the last thing I put in my history book. They became a church. Elder Springs and Pinecrest were

both organized in '57. And Central Baptist, which was originally Southside Baptist [Church], was organized in 1938. And Westview [Baptist Church], I think, was somewhere about the early '60s. It was originally Oak Lawn [Baptist Church], because it started—I think the first meetings they had was in the funeral home out there, you know the one out there by Rinehart [Road]?

**Dombrowski** Mmhmm. Yeah.

**Stinecipher** Yeah. Because one of our church members was—that was his funeral home.

**Dombrowski** Uh, it sounds from your book like you exhaustively researched everything.

**Stinecipher** Yes. People keep asking, “Are you going to add to the book?” “No way.” It’s a lot of work.

**0:35:31**                    **Important figures in the church**

**Dombrowski** Yeah, I bet. Um, did you, uh, let’s see. Were there any big personalities in the church? Or people that you wrote about in your book? Stories that you could tell me about people or families in the church?

**Stinecipher** We had a pastor there, Dr. Debbie[?] P. Brooks, who was there for 33 years. He was very influential. Wonderful person. He came, I think, in '29 and retired in '62. The—oh, Reverend [George] Hyman, of course. That was way before my time, but he’s the one that was pastor when they built the brick church. And from what I heard, he had a vision as to how it should be built. And the first—the front part was to be the Sunday school, and that was to be to educate the people, and so forth, and bring them close to God. Then that would lead them into the sanctuary, which was the second part. Something like that. And it was built. He was there for the first part, and then he had to go off to war—World War I—as a chaplain. He came back and they built the second part. And then he thought that the church would be more in the community with programs and so on for the community, and he called it the “Baptist Temple.” They didn’t ever change the name. Incorporation papers for the First Baptist Church, on the front of the church it says, ‘Old Baptist Temple,’ and some of our pictures have that on there. And he was having various speakers and things come in, in addition to the regular church. Soon as they left, they had a meeting, and everything came down. There was more to it than that, you can see it in the book, because it was mainly his deal.

**Dombrowski** Okay. Yeah.

**0:38:21**                    **Career in journalism**

**Dombrowski** Those were about all the general questions that I have. Is there anything that you’d like to talk about that we haven’t yet? Any, you know, special memories that you have that you’d like to share or keep in audio?

**Stinecipher** I could tell you about a club we had.

**Dombrowski** Okay. Cool.

**Stinecipher** You know, I wrote for *The Sanford Herald*.

**Dombrowski** Oh, I didn't know that.

**Stinecipher** Yes. Well, in high school I wrote The Celery Crate. That was our youth group, the teen group. We met second floor of old City Hall. We had pool tables, ping pong, all kind of board games, and card games, and things like that. The space had originally been an auditorium, so there was a stage up there. Occasionally, we'd have various programs. The Celery Crate committee would plan the parties. We'd have about three or four parties a year—square dances and things like that—but we were open every Saturday night during school, just to go up and have fun. The PTA [Parent-Teacher Association] sponsored it. My mother was one of the sponsors. My mother and dad were always chaperones. So that was a lot of fun. But then I wrote that column. That was a freebie. Then there was *The Herald* also had a Seminole High column. A student would write that. And so I said, "Well, since I'm writing this..." I applied for that, and did that for my senior year. Got paid ten cents an inch.

When I was in college, for one year, I wrote—what was it called? Oh goodness, can't believe what it was called right now. But anyway, I wrote it one year at Stetson about Seminole High students off at college. I talked to a lot of parents, because I came home quite a bit. In 1994, I started writing "The Way We Were" column. I wrote that until July of [20]07, when the owner of the paper fired me—fired my column. And also, he also took away the Sanford column—you know, social news. And then when we got the new publisher, and I was writing extra things, like the class reunions, high school class reunions, Historical Society [of Central Florida] news, anniversaries. I wrote a couple of weddings. But the new publisher said he's not printing any of that and he didn't need me anymore. And that was just about a year and a half ago.

0:42:02

### *Polly Pigtales club*

**Stinecipher** Let's go back to the club.

**Dombrowski** Okay.

**Stinecipher** We were in fifth grade. And this girl, Joanie Saunders—moved here from I think Bradenton—and was in Miss McNab's room where us girls were who had grown up in Sanford. There was a magazine at the time, called *Polly Pigtales*, and they encouraged people to form Polly Pigtail clubs. So Joanie came in, and I guess probably because she was new, and wanted new friends—I don't know—she got us together and we formed a Polly Pigtail club. All the girls that were in there were in Ms. McNab's room. All of us. Several of us had grown up together and been good friends. Then, through the years—sixth grade we added some people,



went to junior high, we added some more, some people dropped out for various reasons, and we'd add some more. And we'd meet every other Tuesday afternoons at member's homes. We had parties. We had dues of ten cents a week. We made candy sales. We'd make about eight or ten dollars at a time.

When we got in the eighth grade, we decided we wanted to go to the beach for a week. So we had to have more candy sales! And we did. We started – we rented this house over in New Smyrna [Beach], Sandy Shack, and went over for a week in August. Our parents were chaperones. We went to the beach every summer for a week through our senior year.

Our senior year, after we graduated, we went to Daytona [Beach] and had this house right smack dab on the beach. It had been a restaurant, and it had three bathrooms, which was great, because the other one only had one. And we'd had this all the way through school, 'til we graduated high school. So we were all very close. We started out with friends that were friends anyway, and we added some of the others. Two of the girls got married, and of course, we couldn't let them – our mothers wouldn't let them stay in the club. So it was a lot of really, really, really good. A lot of us still keep in contact. We've lost a couple to deaths and most of us are still around. Still good friends.

**Dombrowski** That's wonderful.

**Stinecipher** It really was.

**Dombrowski** It sounds like the community was really close.

**Stinecipher** I just wrote it again, or re-wrote it, for the Seminole High magazine that comes out every year. Well, they were having some articles in there about the beach, because New Smyrna – we always went to New Smyrna all the time, stayed over there on weekends and daytrips. A lot of people were writing memories about New Smyrna, about the beach, so I asked if I could write about our beach parties over there, so I did. Because we had some experiences. It was fun.

0:46:12

### **New Smyrna Beach**

**Dombrowski** Do you want to tell us what kind of experiences happened over there? What did you guys do? You went to the beach? Was there much around New Smyrna to go and do too?

**Stinecipher** No. Just the beach. Well, the Sandy Shack was – oh, right in the – it was in the zone where the lifeguards weren't. But our chaperones would make us go up further on the beach where we could go. Well, of course, we'd go camp right by the lifeguard tower. Think we were hot stuff. The first year we were there, we were just out of the eighth grade, we went to the lifeguard dance. Thirteen-fourteen-year-old girls sat over in a corner. And of course, the lifeguards were much older than we were. They were high school and college kids, mostly college, I think. And I remember sitting there – canasta was a big deal back then.

I remember Tricia saying, “We should have brought our canasta cards.” Because everyone’s out there dancing, and here we were. Then the head of the lifeguards, Joe Canard, came up and asked Jeanette to dance. She didn’t know how to dance! She was out there doing the best she could, so she was our heroine of the night.

We did have a couple of Sanford boys that were there that came and rescued us, and once we had, a couple years later we met some of the New Smyrna boys. They were more our age. And we had a bonfire on the beach with hotdogs—I guess, I don’t remember—and invited the boys that we knew. And some of the fellows that usually stayed at the beach with their families. They were over there. We asked them to come. There are all these people showed up at our bonfire. All these cars, all these people. Our chaperones got kind of upset. Finally, after a while, they came and shooed the others away, because we got a little scared too.

Yeah. We met the local fellas from over there, and we dated some of them. When there were football games, or any kind of sport, we always played New Smyrna and whatever. So we’d always go to the games, and they’d come over, and we’d see the New Smyrna boys. That was a big deal. And so forth. That was fun. One time, a couple boys from Sanford came over, and said, “Let’s go to the drugstore.” And so the whole bunch of us—I think there were six or eight of us—the whole bunch of us jumped in the backseat and went down to the drugstore. And after that, one of the fellas said, “Where do you want to go?” “Let’s go to Daytona.” We took off to Daytona and went to the boardwalk. Of course, didn’t tell our chaperones, we just went. Didn’t get home until, oh, late. So they were furious. We had to wash the dishes, I think, for the rest of the week or something like that.

**Dombrowski** But it was worth it?

**Stinecipher** Oh, yeah. It was fun. We had fun.

**0:50:23** **Parents**

**Dombrowski** Well, those are all of my questions. Is there anything else you’d like to mention?

**Stinecipher** Hm.

**Dombrowski** You, Sanford history, teaching? Anything.

**Stinecipher** I don’t know, but we could talk about my parents.

**Dombrowski** Okay. Okay.

**Stinecipher** They met at Piedmont College, in [Demorest,] Georgia. My mother went up—she was a Congregationalist, and that was a Congregational school. And my dad was from Tennessee and his sisters—one of his sisters was teaching there. He was the youngest—next-to-youngest—of a family of ten. So he and his brother decided to

go down to Piedmont College. And they met there. And Mother just stayed for two years. You could teach after two years then.

Then Dad graduated in [19]25. He sang in a quartet – a male quartet – that traveled with, uh, advertising the college all up into the eastern states. That was something for him – all of them – especially for my dad and his brother, because they had never been anywhere. I've got his diaries at home telling about their experiences, staying at home, staying in hotels, and YMCAs [Young Men's Christian Association], and all this. And singing, mostly in churches. And all like that. And they traveled for one year after he graduated. He graduated '25. They traveled for one year. And they had been traveling in the summers or before that. And so, in the fall of '26, he came to Sanford and got a job at Chase & Company. Stayed there for 40 years, became head of the Building Material Department. And he and Mother got married on July 6, 1927.

**Dombrowski** Did you have any brothers and sisters?

**Stinecipher** No. I was an only child. They waited nine years before I was born.

**Dombrowski** Oh, wow.

**0:52:59** **Closing remarks**

**Dombrowski** Okay. Those are my questions. Thank you!

**Stinecipher** Okay.

**Dombrowski** Thank you for your time.

**Stinecipher** Oh, you're welcome.

*End of Interview*