

Oral Memoirs

of

Lars D. White

An Interview Conducted by

Sarah Thorncroft

March 27, 2015

Oviedo History Harvest

Dr. Connie L. Lester's Introduction to Public History Graduate Course

Spring 2015

Regional Initiative for Collecting the History, Experiences, and Stories (RICHS) of Central Florida

Oviedo Historical Society

Copyright 2015

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

Interviewer: Sarah Thorncroft

Transcriber: Sarah Thorncroft

The recordings and transcripts of the interview were processed in the offices of the RICHES of Central Florida Department, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida.

Project Detail

RICHES of Central Florida is an umbrella program housing interdisciplinary public history projects that bring together different departments at UCF with profit and non-profit sectors of the community.

Central Florida has often been associated with large-scale, commercial tourism and housing development. While those aspects of Central Florida are important to the economic growth of the region, much of its history has remained unnoticed and under researched. The Public History program at UCF links many projects under one initiative to promote the collection and preservation of Central Florida history. By facilitating research that records and presents the stories of communities, businesses, and institutions in Central Florida, RICHES seeks to provide the region with a deeper sense of its heritage. At the same time, the initiative connects the UCF students and faculty with the community and creates a foundation on which Central Floridians can build a better sense of their history.

The Oviedo Historical Society was organized in November 1973 by a group of citizens. The society is a 501(3) non-profit organization. Its purpose is to help preserve the community identity of Oviedo by collecting and disseminating knowledge about local history, serve as a repository for documents and artifacts relating to Oviedo history, promote the preservation and marking of historic sites and buildings in the Oviedo area and foster interest in local, state, national, and world history.

Sarah Thorncroft is a student in the Masters of History program at the University of Central Florida with an emphasis in Public History.

Lars D. White has lived in Oviedo, Florida, his entire life and currently serves the community as Fire Chief. He is also involved with the Oviedo Historical Society and has been instrumental in the planning of the Oviedo Veterans Memorial.

Legal Status

Scholarly use of the recording and transcript of the interview with Lars White is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on March 27, 2015.

Abstract

An oral history of Lars D. White, conducted by Sarah Thorncroft on March 27, 2015. In the interview, White discusses the transformation of Oviedo, Florida, from small agricultural community to a suburb of the University of Central Florida (UCF) in Orlando. He discusses attending desegregated schools, school bus rides, various school activities, and what people did for entertainment. White also talks about growing up on a horse farm and the different riding shows and competitions that he participated in. White talks about meeting his wife, her community involvement, and how their children's upbringing was similar and different compared to theirs. He also discusses volunteering as a firefighter and then rising in the ranks to become Fire Chief and the Emergency Management Director. White recalls some memorable moments from his long career with the City of Oviedo, as well as discussing his involvement in the development of the Oviedo Veterans Memorial. White also talks about the iconic Oviedo chickens and the lesser known Oviedo peacocks.

*A RICHES Project: Regional Initiative for Collecting the History, Experiences,
and Stories of Central Florida*

University of Central Florida

Lars D. White

Oral History Memoir
Interview Number 1

Interviewed by Sarah Thorncroft
March 27, 2015
Oviedo, Florida

00:00:00 Introduction

Thorncroft This is an oral history interview of Lars [D.] White. Interview conducted by Sarah Thorncroft at the Fire Administration and Emergency Management Office at 1934 County Road 419 West in Oviedo, Florida, on March the 27th of 2015. Our interview topics include growing up in Oviedo and the Oviedo Fire Department. Um, so will you just please state your name for me and explain where you were born and when?

White Okay. Um, my name is Lars White.

Thorncroft Mmhmm.

White Uh, I was born in Winter Park Hospital, uh, November of 1960, and, uh, you want me – elaborate?

Thorncroft Yeah.

White Okay.

Thorncroft When did your parents come to the area?

White Okay, um, we relocated to Oviedo about 1968. It was pretty small town then. It was about 2,000 population – maybe a little less. A single traffic light, a lot of dirt roads, and Oviedo, in that era, was really known still for its agricultural beginnings and it was still a very active agricultural community, but it was on the cusp of development. A lot of that is a result of, uh, what was Florida Technological University and now the University of Central Florida, and as that campus began to grow and expand, and in its many offerings, we needed residential homes for people to, uh – to use that amenity of the collage. So that's really what started changing Oviedo, to some degree, as well as, uh, there's[sic] many historians that feel like the children of the original farmers recognized

what a hard life farming is, and as the land became so valuable, uh, it became worthwhile to them to begin to sell the properties, and, uh, of course that turned into a lot of residential living units for our town. So that's kinda the beginnings, I say, of Oviedo and its – its, uh, expansion to such a nice residential – or what we call it: “kids and cul-de-sacs.”

0:02:11

School desegregation and homecoming

Thorncroft So you were about eight years old when your family came to Oviedo. What schools did you attend when you were here?

White Well, I had gone to, uh, St. Luke's [Lutheran School], uh, for kindergarten, because it wasn't offered at Lawton Elementary [School] at the time. Oviedo had just desegregated. They'd opened Oviedo High School about that timeframe. Uh, it was a very peaceful, uh, setting. There – there were not – there was no turmoil with it. Uh, it was a very smooth transition. Uh, I don't recall any encounters or difficulties with that, and then I started, uh, first grade at Lawton Elementary – first through fifth grade – and then Jackson Heights [Middle School] sixth through eighth grade, and then Oviedo High School, of course, ninth through 12th grade. Graduated in 1979.

Thorncroft What are some, um, school memories you have, if any?

White [*laughs*] Well, [*coughs*] I do reminding[sic], uh – remind myself of riding the bus to school, and the busses of that, uh, era were a little bit different than they are today. Today, they're, uh, air-conditioned and very comfortable [*laughs*]. I can remember very hot rides in the bus, and, uh, trying to get the windows to go down and get the best seats, but, uh, it was such a small town. You really – you knew everyone. I mean – you knew every student. You pretty much knew where everyone lived. Uh, today I don't think that's quite the case, 'cause of the campuses, two high schools, two middle schools, uh, about five or six elementary schools. So, uh, there's pretty good chance you don't know everyone.

Uh, so that was kinda a neat, uh, part to be from, uh, Oviedo, but the, uh – the schools were great, uh – a good education. A[?], uh – the high school years probably were my favorite. Uh, you just tend to develop more relationships in those – those timeframes, as well. I got active in, um, a little bit of politics as sophomore class president and senior class president, and enjoyed that a lot. Homecoming bonfires and things of

*A RICHES Project: Regional Initiative for Collecting the History, Experiences,
and Stories of Central Florida*

University of Central Florida

that nature, a lot of fun sporting events, but, uh, it was just a nice — it was a nice time in Oviedo.

Thorncroft Where were those bonfires? Because they've stopped doing those now.

White Yeah.

Thorncroft [*laughs*].

White [*laughs*] Uh, [*coughs*] yeah, the [Seminole County Public] School[s] system decided it wasn't necessarily the safest thing to do. Um, maybe they had a few episodes after our class graduated, but they used to be on the front football field or off to the side, and the junior-senior class would compete in competition, uh, to win the trophy, and I'm proud to say my class won the junior and senior year. There weren't[sic] a whole lot of classes that won back to back, but certainly thereafter, they stopped the bonfires. Uh, they've turned it into parades and, uh, other contests and things.

Thorncroft So the bonfires were more like the pep rallies?

White Yes, Yup.

Thorncroft Um...

White Kind of a throwback to the traditional days. I think bonfires were probably a very common, um, almost a patriotic occurrence at the schools, you know, for the homecoming game.

Thorncroft And were you involved in any other activities other than student government?

00:05:23 **Horse competitions and entertainment**

White Well, I grew up on a horse farm, so I rode horses, uh, all the way up through my — 'bout my junior year in high school, and then I got kinda disinterested in it, but we used to ride in horse shows — hunter/jumper horse shows, and we competed in what was called the, uh, 100-mile endurance ride up in the Ocala National Forest. That was once a year, and that was fun. Had a, uh — a great time doing that. So that was kinda — my childhood years was[sic], uh, horses.

*A RICHES Project: Regional Initiative for Collecting the History, Experiences,
and Stories of Central Florida*

University of Central Florida

Thorncroft So what were some of the local hangouts and what did you guys do for fun growing up in Oviedo?

Unidentified [coughs].

White Oh, gosh. There wasn't...

Unidentified [coughs].

White A lot in Oviedo. I mean—the school system was really your entertainment, unless you created entertainment on your own. There wasn't[sic] any recreational or other activities in town. The city parks hadn't really developed yet. If you were engaged in little league or sports like that, you had those venues. Uh, church was—was very instrumental in our lives, as well. Um, they had a lot of activities at—at church to—to fill our needs, as—as well. Um, I guess the high school sports—you know, attending the games and so forth—were primarily the form of entertainment, and then, uh, movies. Visiting the movie theater usually we had to go to Altamonte [Springs] to do that. We did have what was known as the Oviedo Lights. Uh, you have probably heard that story, but, um, most of us, uh, uh, visited that location from time to time to—just kind of a hangout type-thing. Never found or discovered anything, but, uh, that was kind of a—always a fun evening.

0:07:08

Career in firefighting

Thorncroft So when you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

White I had no earthly idea. I didn't. As I was going through high school, I was one that was struggling with what to do for a—a professional career. I started working my senior year at Sears, Roebuck and Company on Forsyth Road in, uh, Winter Park-Goldenrod area, and thought I would probably take a job in retail. I actually ended up working in their accounting auditing department, for some reason. Uh, they said I scored real well on the math test, which, uh, didn't reflect my school grades all that well [laughs], but anyways, I did that for a year or two, and the volunteer fire chief at the time, Andy McDaniel, approached me, said, "We need a little help. We're kinda low in our volunteer roster. Would you mind lending some time, uh, participating with us?" And I said, "Well, okay, sure. It's my hometown. I'll give that a try," and I really took a love for it, and it looked like an opportunity for a career, as well. Um, I

*A RICHES Project: Regional Initiative for Collecting the History, Experiences,
and Stories of Central Florida*

University of Central Florida

knew the town was growing, so I went and got my certified firefighting standards and state examinations certificate, and my then my Emergency Medical Technician, and soon after that, uh, a job was offered to me in 1983, and I've been here ever since.

Thorncroft [inaudible]. Um, so have you ever lived outside of Oviedo or outside of Florida?

White Nope.

Thorncroft Nope [laughs]?

White [laughs] Born and raised Oviedo. I'm as hometown as you can get [laughs], I would say.

00:08:42

Wife and children

White Um, even my children have grown up here, went to the same schools I did, and they're graduates now of, uh, Lawton and Jackson Heights and Oviedo High School. Uh, my son's a graduate of the University of Central Florida. Uh, my daughter's got her two year degree from Seminole State College, and working on a, uh – an esthetician, and in paramedical program now for dermatology.

Thorncroft So how do you think their childhoods being raised in Oviedo compares to yours? Are they similar? Are they different?

White Yeah, I think there were a lot of similarities, uh, except on a larger scale. Um, my daughter participated in the Pop Warner cheerleading and did cheerleading in high school, as well. So she was well connected to the school system. My son was very active in a lot of things in the school, very, uh, school-spirited and so forth. So it was fun watching them enjoy some of the same, uh, traditions and nuances that we got to experience.

Thorncroft So, um, what about your wife? Is she also from Oviedo?

White She is. Uh, she was from Winter Springs, but Winter Springs was designated for Oviedo schools. Uh, we knew each other in school. We didn't date in school. It was, uh – as soon as we graduated, we started dating, but, uh, yes, we've known each other for a very long time [laughs].

Thorncroft [laughs] Um, has she been involved in the community at all? Or...

*A RICHES Project: Regional Initiative for Collecting the History, Experiences,
and Stories of Central Florida*

University of Central Florida

White Yup, she's retired from, uh, one of the hometown banks – Citizens Bank of Oviedo is what it was called at the time. Now, it's Citizens Bank of Florida. Uh, she's been very active a lot of the activities I have with the [Oviedo] Historical Society and many other venues. Uh, she works right now part-time, uh, as an office manager and taking care of a local insurance company and all their booking and accounting needs, and so forth – personnel management.

0:10:37

History of the Oviedo Volunteer Fire Department

Thorncroft So earlier you mentioned got involved with the [Oviedo] Fire Department at a volunteer basis. Was the fire department volunteer back in the [19]70s and '80s? When did it become more professionalized?

White Well, the – the history of the Oviedo Volunteer Fire Department started about 19 – uh, 60. around that time frame is when they began to organize themselves, and after a couple catastrophic fires in town, where they had to rely on resources from way out from other entities, they decided to, uh, put it – something together, and it was really a bunch of farmers that, uh, built a fire engine – you know, really a water truck, and it grew from there.

Uh, when I joined the department, it was a little more organized than that. They issued you a pager, so you were alerted to the calls through a paging system, instead of the old siren system that used to alert the whole town, and if you could come help you ran down to the fire station, and grabbed some gear and went to the call. So it evolved from that, but it was obvious in the early 80s, as we start forming the full-time department, that it would have to move that way. The traffic, the growth – all of that was lending itself to something that volunteers just could not take care of any longer. So we kept them on board as a combination department for about 10 years. It was in the early '90s when the volunteer portion of the fire department dissolved itself, and we were then just a full-time fire department.

00:12:09

First call and most memorable call as a firefighter

Thorncroft So what have been the most memorable calls you've had to go out on as a fire – firefighter[?]?

*A RICHES Project: Regional Initiative for Collecting the History, Experiences,
and Stories of Central Florida*

University of Central Florida

White

Okay. Well, I've been involved in it for 31 years full-time, and volunteered about three or four years before that. Uh, I would say my first day as a volunteer firefighter was rather exciting. Uh, I had joined on a Wednesday night. They gave me a pager, gave me some gear, and pretty much just said, "If – if the pager goes off, come down to the fire station. We'll tell you what you need to do, and we'll get you trained in this overtime."

Well, the pager went off, uh, that first Saturday, and I came down to the fire station, and, um, no one else showed up, and the pager went off again, and a police officer pulled up. He said, "Are y'all coming to the call or not?" I said, "Well, I'm by myself. I really [laughs] haven't really been trained." we both started the rescue vehicle, and he led me to the call with his police vehicle, and I went by myself [laughs]. It was just a very unusual occurrence. Usually, there was a senior officer that was always in town. There was a miscommunication that day, and it happened one more time that day – that afternoon. So I went to my first two emergencies by myself. One was just a Band-Aid call, uh, and I think the other was just a trip and fall or something like that. So they were both very low key incidents, but I thought *Well, I guess I was meant to participate. They do need some help here* [laughs].

Some of the more meaningful calls though, um, have been where I've been involved in, uh, assisting on traffic crashes that were, uh, very traumatic and things of that nature. I have one that really sticks in my mind with a – a young high school girl that was, uh, stuck by a car. She was walking along the side of the highway, [coughs] and when I got there, she was almost taking her last breaths. Um, she was so tragically injured, but everything worked the way it was supposed to. All of our training showed that night. Uh, we – we prepared her, uh – started treating her, packaged her for a[sic] emergency helicopter flight, got her to the trauma center in less than 35 minutes. She was in surgery in one hour. Uh, she had major extensive damage, but about six months later, she walked into the fire station to – to say, "Hello," and say, "Thank you," and that one really touched my heart, uh, you know, pretty – pretty hard. So...

0:14:40

RECORDING CUTS OFF

0:14:41

Becoming Fire Chief

*A RICHES Project: Regional Initiative for Collecting the History, Experiences,
and Stories of Central Florida*

University of Central Florida

Thorncroft So other than the more memorable calls, what has been the most rewarding aspect of your career?

White Well, I've been blessed to move up in the organization at different levels. Um, I—I don't think it was ever my intention to become the Fire Chief and Emergency Management Director. It just kinda happened. Um, in 2004, my Fire Chief retired and the City Manager put me in as the Interim Fire Chief Emergency Management Director, and encouraged me to apply for the—the position, and they were doing a—a national search at the time. At that time, we were hit by three back-to-back hurricanes. So, uh, I had to manage those events as the Emergency Management Director, and as they referred to me at that time, they said that was really my formal interview, uh—was my performance, uh, at those three events, and that was, uh, quite a memorable experience as well. our town experiencing that. It certainly wasn't a one man show. All the departments, and all the directors, and all the employees were instrumental in our disaster response and recovery efforts, uh, but the Emergency Management Director kinda is the conductor of the band and—and keeps everything together as you're going through it. So, uh, We had a good plan in place and I was familiar with it, but, uh, it was kinda thrown in my lap real—real quickly, but I think that's been good for me. I did have the advantage of fulfilling all the different positions—a Lieutenant, a Captain, uh, a Battalion Chief. I was the Division Chief of Training and Emergency Medical Services when I got promoted to Fire Chief. So I had some real good, diverse education and training that I think helped prepare me for the past 11 years as Fire Chief [*laughs*].

0:16:40

Oviedo Veterans Memorial

Thorncroft Um, so you spoke earlier before our interview about the Veterans Memorial for Oviedo. what are your main motivations for creating that?

White Well, being involved in the historical society, I always took interest in that aspect, as well. Um, Around 2002-2003, we learned that the road widening project was, in fact, going to take place in Oviedo on, uh, [Florida] State Road 426-County Road 419, and it also was going to take land from the fire station and the Memorial Building. In fact, to the level that we have to take the buildings down, the City [of Oviedo] even looked at having the Memorial Building lifted and moved, but it just wasn't feasible. So, uh, we learned that we were going to lose our only

connection to our veterans. The Memorial Building was built in honor of, uh, four men who lost their lives in World War II, and the town built that building. Uh, used to be pictures of our military veterans depicted inside the building.

So [Oviedo] City Council asked me, “Would you, uh, chair a committee and study building a veterans memorial in our town somewhere.” So I took on that task. I studied veterans’ memorials all across the country for about six months, and then formed the committee, and we included, uh, city staff, um, the American Legion Post [243] from Oviedo. We had a[sic] architect on board, uh, um, uh, a – another architect that was instrumental in Winter Springs [Veterans] Memorial. So we put the team together, started our planning efforts, and it went from there. Um, it’s – it’s been, uh, a good experience. We’ve been working on it for about three years. We’re going to dedicate it, uh, this, uh, May 25, uh – Memorial Day 2015.

Uh, I’ve had a lot of interesting conversations with families and veterans, and heard some real personal stories, and I think that’s probably been the most meaningful aspect of it. I think it’s made the project more meaningful to me. I’ve also had, uh, family members that have served, uh, primarily in World War II, and learned a lot about their personal stories and things I had – I had never known before and some very heroic acts, uh – not only of them, but all those protect us every day every night. So this is going to mean a lot to me. I’m excited about it and Excited to get it done, ‘cause we’ve been working on it for such a long time.

0:19:30

Demolition of buildings in Downtown Oviedo

Thorncroft So with the impending, you know, de – demolition of Downtown Oviedo, um, that fire house there – I heard through the grapevine – is the oldest one in Seminole County. Is that any sort of major loss to the community, you think?

White Well, it has some sentimental value, since it was the original fire station location. Um, I think there – in the region, there were older fire stations than that, ‘cause there’s, uh – Sanford goes further back than our time frame for volunteers and full-time department. Um, it’s probably second to Sanford, in age. Um, it – yeah, it’s going to a little be hard to see it come down, um, but we’ll take some bricks off it. We’ll memorialize it. We have some wonderful pictures of it, and we’re gonna start a new

legacy at the new location, but it is important to document it and capture it in our history, but we know all things change, in time.

Uh, ironically, all those business down that corridor have been waiting for this moment. Uh, their – their properties have had limited value, and property owners knew that, and children that inherited them. So they knew when the road widening project was coming along. They hadn't been able to sell their properties. nobody wants to buy those buildings. Um, There's – parking has been a[*sic*] atrocious problem down there for those businesses – businesses to thrive. So, um, we – we've captured in – in records the best we can. Historical society empowered the local Oviedo Photography Club.¹ So we have some good records of it, and that's not the original downtown. The original downtown burnt down at one time, as well. So that was kinda, uh, "version 2.0" I'll call it. So now it's time to launch version 3.0, you know, for Oviedo's history.

0:21:28

Oviedo chickens and peacocks

Thorncroft Alright, so in a little bit of research for this interview, I saw that in 2013 you were asked to conduct an investigation in Oviedo chicken population.

White Yeah [*laughs*].

Thorncroft Uh, what was your reaction when you were asked to do that investigation?

White [*laughs*] Uh, a little embarrassing [*laughs*]. Probably asking myself, *Why me?* You know, *Why did I get charged with this?* I think having grown up here, uh, they probably said, uh, "You need to handle this," and, uh, animal control duties fall under emergency management duties as well, but it was more to, uh, kinda appease the crowd out there. It was beginning wondering what's going on, but the, uh – the chickens have always been a part of Oviedo's history. I suspect they'll survive the growth, as well. There's still plenty of land and pockets of land and so forth for them to survive. They, uh, have lasted all these years, so I think they'll – they'll, uh, migrate through the next decade or longer, as well. So...

Thorncroft So you think they'll just kinda migrate up to new Downtown Oviedo?

¹ Correction: Oviedo Photo Club.

*A RICHES Project: Regional Initiative for Collecting the History, Experiences,
and Stories of Central Florida*

University of Central Florida

White Uh, they kinda move on their own and – and set up a new habitat. Uh, they're a little bit territorial. Uh, usually, if you try to relocate 'em to a certain location, uh, they move from wherever you create a habitat. They create one on their own. So, uh, their population numbers go up and down. The research showed a little bit of, uh, just a normal cycle where some other wildlife were, uh – well, it's just the chain of life, you know? They were getting to the chickens, eating the eggs before they would hatch, and so forth, and, uh, I think some of that has, uh, tempered down a little bit. We're starting to see another rise in the chicken population, and we understand there's a group out there that likes to feed 'em and kinda maintain 'em a little bit. So I think they're doing well.

Thorncroft What is your earliest memory of seeing an Oviedo chicken, because nobody knows...

White [laughs].

Thorncroft Exactly where they came from?

White No, there's a hundred different stories, depending on who you ask. Uh, it was an agricultural community, so chickens were very common. Uh, they were common at residential homes, as well. People would just use 'em for harvesting eggs. We had them on the horse farm we had, because it was known that chickens would often contract, uh, a serious disease before the horses might contract it or the cattle. So the farmers, uh, horse owners, cattle owners would, uh, use that as a gage to – to bring in the veterinarian before that could spread to the other crops and – and animals and so forth. So there was a[sic] actual purpose behind having chickens, but I think they were just part of the, uh, typical farming community.

Thorncroft What about the, uh, peacocks that I typically see kinda wondering through Oviedo? Do you know anything about them?

White Now, that's probably the bigger question. Um, I don't know where they came from. Uh, nobody really does. It's likely someone acquired 'em at some point in time, and became tired of 'em, and just turned 'em loose, but, uh, we don't really have any historical knowledge of – of how they came about. They're pretty to look at, but they're pretty destructive too, and[?], uh...

*A RICHES Project: Regional Initiative for Collecting the History, Experiences,
and Stories of Central Florida*

University of Central Florida

Thorncroft Have there...

White Scratch cars and so forth. So...

Thorncroft Have there been any incidents involving them, like accidents or...

White Once in a while, we'll get a citizen complaint, uh, that usually goes to Animal Control² for them or for aggressive roosters, certain times of year. Uh, they are just, uh, protective of themselves. So they'll scratch you or peck at ya and so forth. A few complaints now and then where they damaged cars and things like that, but other than that, they're – they're pretty quiet.

0:25:17

Closing remarks

Thorncroft Alright. Um, well, is there anything else you'd like to share with me today about the history of Oviedo, growing up there, or anything?

White Well, it's been a great town. I—I think our growth has been pretty well managed. Uh, Traffic is always a problem in any town, and it's always a catch-up type thing you're never really completely prepared. The city doesn't have a lot control over some of that, 'cause they're [Seminole] County and State [of Florida] roads and things of that nature. Uh, I've watched a lot of dirt roads get paved, uh, watched a lot of subdivisions come in to town, and that's been – it's been fun. I'm glad that people have enjoyed the hometown feel like just like I did, and that's what you see a lot on social media and so forth – is folks really love this area.

There's a lot of, uh, civic organizations in here just doing some wonderful things, uh, so many groups, uh, A lot of hometown spirit, uh, A friendly rivalry between the two high schools. It's been healthy. it hasn't been destructive, so that's been good. Uh, Seminole County has a top of the line school system. I think that's attracted a lot of people to this area. It's still a little bit rural. We've got the river that runs through – the Econ[lockhatchee] River that runs through our town. People get to enjoy that and paths, and parks, and trails. Oviedo, uh, has some wonderful recreation, parks, facilities.

And I like to pride ourselves on our [Oviedo] Police [Department] and Fire Department. Uh, the police do community patrolling where they're

² Seminole County Animal Services.

*A RICHES Project: Regional Initiative for Collecting the History, Experiences,
and Stories of Central Florida*

University of Central Florida

well-connected with the community, and, uh, our philosophy, in our department too, is a hometown fire department, and we treat every person, every contact, as if it were a family member, and that's our—our philosophy in our organization is serve with, uh, excellence, uh, serve with honor, serve with respect, and, uh, I think that's a throwback to the beginning of the volunteers. They did that, as well. You just—you entered into this career, 'cause you wanted to give back something to the community. Although we're paid to do it, it's, uh, more meaningful than that, and, uh, I think it's been a—a good career for me and a great town to grow up in. So that's what I would add to the conversation.

Thorncroft Alright, and I guess my last question would just be how did you get, you know, so interested in history and involved with that?

White Well, knowing that the town was growing, knowing that we were going to lose the downtown area, and, uh, just being a part of Oviedo's history. I think it's important when folks come to town, you need to know where the community came from. Every time I hire a new employee in the fire department, they learn where this department started, that it was on the backs of a bunch of dedicated, volunteer firefighters, and, uh, it's important they know that. So, uh, being involved in the historical society, and our Lawton House and [Oviedo] Farmers Market and things like that, I—I think it's important we share that message. Uh, you learn from your past so you don't make the same mistakes in the future. That's a, uh, certainly historical, uh, uh, perspective that our, uh, elected officials and military leaders follow, and I think it serves well even for a hometown.

Thorncroft Alright, well, thank you so much for your time today.

White Thank you, Sarah.

End of Interview