

Oral Memoirs
of
Cecil A. Tucker II

An Interview Conducted by

Stephanie Youngers

September 23, 2010

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 Cecil A. Tucker II is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on September 23, 2010.

Abstract

Oral history of Cecil A. Tucker II, conducted by Stephanie Youngers on September 23, 2010. Tucker served as County Agent for the Extensions Office in various counties in Florida. In the interview, he discusses growing up in Christmas, Cracker Christmas and Fort Christmas Historical Park, his educational history, the 4-H program, working for the Extensions Office in Marion County and Seminole County, agriculture in Seminole County, opening Tucker's Farm and Garden Center, and his wife and children.

Cecil A. Tucker II

Oral History Memoir

Interviewed by Stephanie Youngers

September 23, 2010

Sanford, Florida

0:00:00

Introduction

Youngers My name is Stephanie Youngers. Today is September 23rd, 2010. And I am interviewing Mr. Cecil [A.] Tucker [II], here at the Museum of Seminole County History. Mr. Tucker, how are you?

Tucker I'm doing great.

Youngers Good. We'll start with where and when you were born, if you're willing to give us that information.

Tucker Yes. I was born actually in Brevard County in Rockledge. May 26th, 1931. And we lived in Rockledge – my mother and dad and I – for just a few weeks. My dad was working for the state and the tick eradication and his job as a range rider was over in east Orange County. So he moved us to Bithlo. And so, I was in – actually, he was already working for the state and headquartered out of Bithlo when I was born. My mother went over to Cocoa, to where there was some of the family, to help when I was being born.

Youngers Oh.

Tucker We lived in Bithlo for about six months. And then we moved to Christmas.

Youngers Okay.

Youngers And that's another story.

Youngers And is that where you live now, is in Christmas?

Tucker Yes. Yes.

0:01:50

Growing up in Christmas

Youngers Okay. How – how was it growing up there? Obviously different from today, but...

Tucker You know, Christmas is a kind of unique community. In a lot of respects, there's some areas of it – we live a lot different today than it was when I was growing up, primarily because the people worked real hard to keep it that way and not let influence come in.

Youngers That's good.

Tucker But the community is — always had a — it's a real close-knit community. And people pretty much look after each other, and help each other out. And the [Fort Christmas] Historical Park in Christmas is helping to preserve some of this kind of history.

0:02:53 **Cracker Christmas and Fort Christmas**

Youngers And like, we talked about the Cracker Christmas, and that's one of the main events out there.

Tucker Yes.

Youngers And I know a lot of people don't hardly go to Christmas, but during that time of year, you'll find a lot more people out there.

Tucker Cracker Christmas is always the first weekend in December. That also is the time that we have the tree-lighting and carol singing. We have decorated a Christmas tree. A large, living Florida red cedar. We've decorated it every year since 1952.

Youngers Wow.

Tucker And we have the carol singing and tree-lighting. Tree-lighting and carol singing, always the first Sunday in December every year. So Cracker Christmas — that weekend involves usually the tree-lighting and carol singing, as well as what's going on at the fort.

Youngers And is it like crafts and things at the fort?

Tucker Yes, at the fort. Crafts and — it's a real nice festival. It really is.

Youngers I know most people that go to Christmas during Christmastime want to get their letters stamped from Christmas.

Tucker Yes. That's an interesting situation. When Mother became Postmaster in 1932, she found out how much people were interested to get their cards postmarked at Christmas time. So she created a Christmas tree cachet that could be put on the extra onto the cards.

Youngers The envelope?

Tucker Yes. Yeah. And so, she started doing that. And that was in 1934.

Youngers And everything is by hand too?

Tucker Everything was by hand. Yeah.

Youngers Wow. So how many people do you think, on average, would come through there?

Tucker Well, it started out, you know – it'd be 30 or 40 thousand a year. Now, we're probably somewhere between 300 and 500 thousand a year that have this done. But it's just for those extra, little special things. We don't get a whole lot of cooperation out of the Post Office Department. Because they consider this an extraneous thing. It creates more problems for them.

Youngers Right. But you all still do it out there.

Tucker Still do it. Yeah [*laughs*].

0:05:38 **Schools in Christmas**

Youngers That's crazy. Wow. Was there any other kind of events and things that you can remember, growing up?

Tucker As I was growing up, the school – the activities at the school pretty much centered – it was the activities in the community. We'd have school plays, and get-togethers at school, a covered dish dinner, and this sort of thing. All those kind of things going on all the time in Christmas.

Youngers Right. And the school is located not in Christmas?

Tucker Yep. Well, in those days, until 1969, there was a school in Christmas. It started out in the 19 – in 18 – probably the 1880s. It could have been a little before that. The post office – the church in Christmas was started in 1871, and shortly after that, the school was created in the church, in the building. But we've had a school in Christmas ever since, until 1969, when it ended up getting moved to Bithlo.

Youngers And that was all the grades throughout?

Tucker We had a, it was eight grades. My first eight years of school was in that building. First four grades – we called "The Little Room," and that was in the small room. That building has been moved to the fort, and is one of the preserved buildings at the fort. The larger room was grades four – five through eight.

Youngers And the high school?

Tucker Well, in those days, they didn't – we had a junior high, but it went from ninth grade on. And now they call it, well...

Youngers Now they have elementary school, middle school, and high school.

Tucker Middle school. Yeah. They call it middle school. So...

Youngers And which high school did you go to?

Tucker And then I rode a bus to Orlando and went to Memorial Junior High [School] in Orlando, and then I transferred in the tenth grade. I transferred to Orlando High School – OHS.

0:08:40

College education and 4-H

Youngers Okay. And after that, you went to the University of Florida?

Tucker Well, I went to Orlando Junior College, which was there in Orlando. It was in the early stages of junior colleges getting started. But I only went one year, because I had in my 4-H work. I had won a scholarship to the University of Florida. And that scholarship was fixing to expire on me, so I had to transfer out of junior college up to the university so I could get my scholarship.

Youngers We'll come back to your schooling. How long were you into the 4-H? I mean, what did you do while you were in there?

Tucker I was always very active in 4-H. In fact, when I got on up to – I stayed active in 4-H even when I was in high school. I drove my dad's cattle truck, and I would haul our dairy heifers to the various shows around. I carried Orange County heifers to Tampa – to the show.

Youngers So you showed dairy cows?

Tucker Showed dairy cows and beef cattle. Yeah.

Youngers Alright. And did you show any hog, or anything like that?

Tucker No. Never was very intrigued by hogs.

Youngers I can understand. So you won a scholarship through doing your shows and things?

Tucker Through the 4-H. yeah.

Youngers Well, good. Okay.

Tucker Wasn't a very big scholarship, but in those days, every penny counted.

Youngers Exactly.

Tucker I think it was \$100, or something like that.

Youngers Well, good. And that helped you get into the University of Florida?

Tucker Well, no, it just helped to pay some of the expenses when I did get in.

Youngers When you went there, did they have, like – was it still an all-male college, or...

Tucker You know, I need to do a little research on that. It was close. We did have—when I was attending there, it was co-ed. But it was pretty close to the time that it became co-ed, because I went there when—as I was active in 4-H, we used to go to what they called “Short Course.” And we spent a week at the university in the summertime every year. If you won that position in 4-H, you could go to Short Course. So I had been to Short Course, I guess, every year for five, six, seven years. And so I was involved there at the university as a 4-Her long before I got there as a student, so I knew some of the things that was going on.

Youngers And they already knew you. They were expecting you.

Tucker Yeah.

Youngers So is that what you went to college for was for the agriculture?

Tucker Yes.

Youngers Did they have a specific program?

Tucker I was going to major in animal husbandry. And did.

Youngers Okay. And you went for four years at the university?

Tucker Well, I actually went for four years, and I was thinking about going to vet school. And at that time, the only vet school was in Auburn, Alabama. And I applied, and the earliest I could get in, I would be already out of college. You had to wait two or three years to get in. So I decided I would back up and look at the feasibility of going into—I was interested in either extension agriculture, extension work, or in research. So, I ended up going toward a Master’s degree. So I got my Master’s degree, and had an opportunity to go into extension down in Marion County, in Ocala. And that’s what got me into County Agent.

0:13:27 Working for the Marion County Extension Office

Youngers So after you graduated, you went right into the [Marion County] Extensions Office? Wow. And you were the youngest, one of the youngest in the state?

Tucker Well, there were a lot of young assistant county agents my age. But when I became the full agent, I was the youngest at that time of that.

Youngers And had you—when you first started out with the Extensions Office, did you work there for a while, or did you just go right into the position that you were in?

Tucker I went right in. When I graduated from university, in Marion County, Assistant Agent position opened up. I applied for it, and received it, and went right into it. And so I was very fortunate, because Marion County was one of the most active 4-H counties in the state. They had numerous state titles, teams, judging teams

that won. And then 4-Hers that won positions and went to Chicago[, Illinois], or the national deal. And so it was a great county to go into for training.

Youngers What did you do at the Extension Office when you first started out there?

Tucker Well, I—my job was two-fold. As a—see, at that time, I had a Master’s degree in Animal Husbandry and Nutrition. So, I had a job in Marion County working with the cattle people. And then I had the job of being 4-H Agent. And so, as leader of the 4-Hers, I ended up training judging teams. We had judging teams in dairy, and judging teams in beef, and judging teams in poultry.

Youngers And you taught them, like, what to look for in the animal...

Tucker Right. In the area of poultry—I didn’t know that much about it, but I found somebody that did.

Youngers That seems like it would a little bit more in-depth.

Tucker Yep. But we had some good teams. Some great 4-Hers there.

Youngers So, when you say, working with the cattle there, like what types of cattle? What types of things did you do with them?

Tucker Well, it had to do with the cattlemen on their pastureland, and any problems they had with pastureland. And, of course, we had a number of purebred ranches in the area. Some of them were Brahman, some of them were Shorthorn, some of them were Hereford. And Angus. So it was a good training area for me.

Youngers It sounds like it. And how long were you with the Marion County office?

Tucker I was with Marion County for two years, and the, just before I left Marion County, the county agent of Marion County—he’d always been quite interested in the Sheriff’s Department, and in fact, he periodically would go on with the Sheriff’s Department on activities, and it became available to him to be able to get appointed as Sheriff. And so he took it. So I was appointed for a brief time as acting county agent in Marion County—big county.

0:17:39 Working for the Seminole County Extension Office

Tucker But at the time, I had already applied for the job of County Agent here in Sanford, Seminole County, because it had become available.

Youngers And it was closer to home.

Tucker And it was the closest one home.

Youngers Now, when you were up in Marion County, did you live up there?

Tucker Yes.

Youngers Okay. Good to know you didn't try to commute every day.

Tucker No, no. I lived there.

Youngers So once he took the position as Sheriff, how long until you got to come down here? I mean, did they find someone else?

Tucker Yeah. They found someone right away. In fact, I was just Acting Agent to take care of some things at the school. I wasn't in the county, just for – goodness, it probably wasn't for more than six or seven months.

Youngers Then you come down here.

Tucker Yep.

Youngers Okay. You want to talk about what you did down here, which was a lot?

Tucker The county agent that was here at the time – it was an interesting situation. He had – he had almost retired before his retirement. And some of it's understandable. During the [Great] Depression, they cut back drastically on salaries. In fact, one of the stories told is: one of the farmers said to him, "Charlie, I heard they cut back your salary. Cut back 25 percent." *[laughs]* He says, "Doesn't that bother you?" Charlie says, "Well, yeah. But no, I just set the lever back 25%percent." Well, he had done that. And he was fortunate that he was – had been in place for a long time. And the farmers were a little unhappy that when he first came in to the county, he did a tremendous job as county agent. I went through his files and things, and letters and all that he sent out, and he did a remarkable job. But after the episode with the salary and all of that, I think he was fortunate that he was real close friends with the director of Extension.

Youngers Goodness. So you came in about mid-1950s, into Seminole County?

Tucker In 1956, I came here. The joke in the community was that, well, if you want to look for the county agent, just go down to Roumillat and Anderson's Drug Store. He'll be down there in the coffee shop." So I says, "I tell you what. You won't find me in Roumillat and Anderson's. I'm going to go down to the other drug store."

Youngers Oh, goodness.

Tucker But Charlie had – Charlie had a good job. It was just there towards the end.

Youngers He was ready to go.

Tucker Yeah. And some of the old time farmers here, they pretty well understood. And so – but he was – the day came time for him to retire. It was pretty well fixed.

Youngers So when you came in, what types of things did you do down here?

Tucker Well, one of the first things I did was to begin to get the 4-H going. Because there wasn't much going in that area. And then I started working on the — bringing all of the mailing lists of the various farms — the citrus growers, the vegetable growers, the cattlemen — bringing those up to date. Charlie pretty well had a list, but he wasn't keeping all of it up-to-date. And that was one of the things I worked on.

0:22:41 **Agriculture in Seminole County**

Youngers So there was quite a bit of agriculture planting?

Tucker Yes. There was. In those days, we still was one of the more active vegetable producing areas in the state. And we had quite a bit of citrus here. We had probably 15 to 18 thousand acres of citrus.

Youngers And that was in the Sanford area?

Tucker In the Sanford area — Seminole County area. Now, the unique thing about that is, Seminole County is the fourth smallest county in the state in land area. So to have much acreage of anything is a little unique, because of the size of it.

Youngers I know the big thing that I've heard is, like celery and citrus.

Tucker Yes.

Youngers But I know there was maybe some other things in there, as well.

Tucker Well, in the — in those days, the nursery part of it was not — it was just beginning to come on. And in the '70s, we predicted that the nursery part — ornamental, horticultural, nursery — was probably going to outstrip the rest of it. And it has. But that's just one of those things of how an area changes to meet the needs of the community.

Youngers Wow. And what about like agriculture — beef and things? I know there's still quite a bit of it here, but not as much as it was.

Tucker No. In fact, the only thing that is as much as it was is ornamental horticulture. The vegetables has dropped way down. Almost nil right now. Beef cattle is still, over in the eastern part of the county is where most of the traditional pastureland was. And it's still a lot of it over there.

Youngers So that's like, Geneva?

Tucker Geneva. Yep.

Youngers Oviedo kind of area.

Tucker Chuluota. Yep. Kind of area. Osceola.

- Youngers** Chuluota. Osceola. Okay. Back in those days, was it more prominent? Did it come further into Seminole County, or is it just kind of always in that general area?
- Tucker** It's always been out in that area, although every area in the county had some cattle scattered in it. Not today, but back in those days.
- Youngers** No. Definitely not today. Now, when you were with the exchange office, you were telling me earlier about getting the new buildings, and even using this building, the county home building,¹ as an agricultural office. Could you tell me a little bit more about that?
- Tucker** Alright. Let me back up before that. I probably developed more offices for the county than any other department head. When I became county agent in 1956, we were in the bottom floor of the courthouse. I called it the Salt Mine Section of the courthouse. And it was just basically one big room, which housed my office, the home economics agent's office, and we had Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation [Service (ASCS)], the old AAA. That office was also in that area. And so, basically, and I was trying to develop part of the program that we provide in extension to farmers is information about agriculture. And some of the best information that Extension has available are the bulletins that they print on the various topics. So, I determined that we were going to have a – when I was working my way through college at the university, one of my jobs, I worked in the bulletin room. And we sent out to county agents all over the state. They would send in an order for so many bulletins of this, so many bulletins of that. And so I was involved in shipping those out to the various agents. So I was pretty well familiar with the – what was available in bulletins. And I determined, in Seminole County, we was[sic] going to have the best supply of bulletins south of Gainesville. And we did.
- Youngers** Wow. What kind of things did the put out for bulletins? Was it like that tell of, like maybe a pest type thing for plants, or...
- Tucker** Right. They would have a bulletin out on chinch-bug control. And a bulletin out on varieties of grasses. You name the topic, and they had it. In vegetables, there was a general vegetable production guide that gave how many pounds of seed, and how you would do for all the vegetables for growing a garden.
- Youngers** So being down here in Seminole County and making more offices, and making more of this information available, you were very helpful to more of the general population here, to help them with their agriculture.
- Tucker** Yeah. And that was part of the making information available. So when I came in to the – to the Salt Mine Section of the courthouse, it was a little bit difficult to do what I wanted to do with the – just that one big room. So, I showed – in those days, the [Seminole County] Clerk of the Court pretty much ran the county. And

¹ Old Folks' Home.

so, I was to see Mr. Herndon, and I said, "Mr. Herndon, I know we really need a little bit more office space. And the other day, I was downstairs here, on the other side our office in this big storage area down here, and I could regroup a lot of stuff that's in there, and make an office right there." He says, "Son, let's go down there and see what you talking about." So I went down there and showed him, and he says, "We'll think about that." And he agreed, as I recall. I don't think I even had to restore the stuff. They moved it around. And so we put an office in, and it was an all-inside deal. I didn't have any – if I'd had claustrophobia, I would have been in trouble, because there wouldn't have been any windows.

Youngers No windows. Wow.

Tucker But it provided more wall space to do what I wanted to do. And that was to put these bulletins available for people to see and pick up.

Youngers Right. And then did you all stay in that office, or did you eventually move out into the new one?

Tucker Well, we were there until the early '60s. The judges needed more room. And we had made our space into a pretty nice office area, over the course of time. And so they wanted that space. So again, I says, "Mr. Herndon, there is an abandoned county building. It's a good building. It has a potential. And what I'd like to do is for us to create a[sic] ag[ricultural] center and move all the agriculture people we've got – we've got soil conservation, plant inspector, we've got ASC here, and put all of us in one area for the farmers just to come into one spot. To see all these things." And so, he says, "Well, we'll think about that." Well they appointed a committee, and I was on the committee, and we created the Ag Center at the Stockade building down here.

Youngers And that's where everybody moved with you.

Tucker They all moved with me.

Youngers Wow.

Tucker Yeah. So then they wanted more space for the road department. And that was shortly about the same time that the county home had moved out of here. And so I said again, "I know where there's a place that would really work out better for us, because we're a little bit crowded here for all the people for the Ag Center." And they agreed to it.

Youngers So you made this entire area here?

Tucker This entire building became the Ag Center.

Youngers Wow. And how long was that office here?

Tucker From the middle '60s until 19—I think Frank [Jazzen] moved over into the new Ag Center in the mid-70s.² I had already left as county agent at that time.

Youngers And how long were you County Agent?

Tucker Thirteen and a half years.

0:33:54 **Growing watercress and managing dairy**

Youngers Wow. So what did you do when you were done being the county agent?

Tucker I had an opportunity to go into a farming operation growing watercress down in Oviedo. Went into a watercress-growing enterprise, another young fellow and I. And after a couple of years, well, we ended up merging with Don Weaver and his brother-in-law, and created B&W Quality Growers. That grew into a pretty sizeable watercress-growing operation. We were the largest in the eastern part of the United States. And we had farms in Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Florida. Later on, I got out of that.

And Joe Baker, who had Baker's Dairy over here, was interested in my coming to work for him. In fact, when he found out I had gone into the watercress, he says, "Cecil, you, uh, I didn't know you was[sic] available." I said, "Joe, I probably wasn't available for anything except what I did." Because it was a good opportunity that I got into. Anyway, when I got out of the watercress deal, I went to see Joe. He says, "Yeah. I'm still interested in you." And he says, "When can you start?" I says, "Well, I got a couple of things I got to finish at home. I'll need a couple of weeks." He says, "No. I need you to start Monday."

Youngers Alright then.

Tucker So, I managed Baker's Dairy here for a couple of years. And then, well, let's see. I got out of Extensions in 1969. And then I was in the watercress business for a couple of years. And then I managed Baker's Dairy for I guess it was about a year and a half on each one of them. In 1972, I opened my own farm and garden supply store in Sanford. Tucker's Farm and Garden Center. And we ran that as a family operation for the next 30 years.

Youngers And it's Myer's now?

Tucker Yeah. Horstmeyer [Farm and Garden]. Horstmeyer. Yeah.

Youngers And when did you sell that there?

Tucker Well, I sold it to my son in 198—1983. That's when I moved to Christmas. Let's see, '83-'84 — somewhere along in there. And he sold it to his friend, Horstmeyers[sic], in—about 15 years later.

² Correction: November 1980.

Youngers So during the time that you lived – or that you worked – out here in Seminole County, did you still live in Christmas?

Tucker No. I've always lived in – from the time I came here as County Agent, I've lived here in Seminole County. I didn't move back to Christmas until I sold the store and moved back to Christmas in the mid-80s.

Youngers So you lived in the Oviedo-Chuluota area?

Tucker No. Always right here in Sanford. Actually, over here is what's called Citrus Heights. That's where we lived.

Youngers The whole time?

Tucker The whole time. Yeah. Well, I shouldn't say the whole time, because I bought a house on Rosalia Drive, and we lived there a few years, and then I lived out her. [*laughs*].

0:38:20 Tucker's wife

Youngers Now, during all this time you met a lovely lady?

Tucker Actually, I met her and courted her while we were in college at the university.

Youngers So she went to University of Florida too?

Tucker She went to the university for a while. Her mother had to have an operation, and that was money sending her to college had to be used. And so by that time, she and I had gotten pretty serious, and she got a job working for an orange packing company in Orlando. And after – I don't know – a little over a year we ended up getting married. And then she came back to the university.

Youngers How'd you win her over? Did you do anything special? Or did you just say, "Alright, woman..."

Tucker We need to make that a continued story. I'll be right back.

0:39:15 RECORDING CUTS OFF

0:39:15 Tucker's wife

Tucker Now then, you was[sic] wanting to know about my wife.

Youngers Yes, sir.

Tucker Well, during the year that she was – I knew her – knew of her – before we got to university. I doubt if she knew too much about me beforehand, but we – I was a member of the Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity, agricultural fraternity there, and I would invite her every guest night to come over to the fraternity house and eat

with us. And so they got to be pretty – and by the way, you’ll want to put Ms. [Mart Albritton] Tucker on your list as one to do an oral interview.

Youngers I will do that.

Tucker Because she is an old-time – as an Albritton, old-time Florida family. But she’s been active here in Seminole County. She helped me in to get the store going. She’s active in the cattle operation. In fact, when I was running the store, she did as much of the cattle work as I did. We had a – a pet at the store. It was a wild pig that became pretty well-known in the community. She used to take it on a leash downtown when she went to make the deposit at the bank. She’d carry the pig with her.

Youngers What was his name?

Tucker Pete. Streaky Pete. Pete the Pig. And he grew to be about 700 pounds. But anyway, that’s another story. But she was active in the [Seminole County] Farm Bureau – in the women’s deal at the Farm Bureau. She was active in 4-H, doing some of the judging, and some of the 4-H activities here. And of course, when we were opening the store, she was part of that. So she’d be another one.

Youngers And she – so you all married before you graduated?

Tucker Right.

Youngers So she went to Marion County with you?

Tucker Yes. In fact – well, let’s see. Before I got my Master’s, she was expecting my daughter. And she typed my thesis. And then when we moved to Ocala, uh – trying to remember at what point – my daughter was born before then.

0:42:55 **Tucker’s family and cattle**

Youngers And you have one daughter?

Tucker I’ve got one daughter and two sons – twins. They were born on my daughter’s second birthday. And then, we have an adopted daughter, as well.

Youngers And you all have always had cattle in your family?

Tucker Yes.

Youngers Put your boys to work?

Tucker We’ve had cattle in our family since as far as we can tell, going back into the 1700s. And that’s another thing I’m researching, because one of these days, that’s going to be a part of my book too.

Youngers Wow. That's a long time. Okay. As far as the cattle in your family – the history – that'll be good?

Tucker Yeah.

0:43:47 **Challenges while working at the Extension Office**

Youngers Do you have anything else that you want to add to our...

Tucker Well, let's see. Well, there's a lot of things we could go into and talk about [laughs].

Youngers We could always come back and talk about different things, if you wanted to.

Tucker The problem of being able to have – to build a program when the county didn't have any funds, it was a problem. I needed – and of course, I was always on the low-end of the pay scale. If it wasn't for the fact that this is where I wanted to be, I'd have gone somewhere else. In fact, when I left to go into the watercress, I was offered a job paying me twice as much I was in extension. And he couldn't understand why I wouldn't take it. Because my opportunity that I was going into was better [laughs].

Youngers Right.

Tucker Well, let me look here. See if there's anything – this is interesting. When I came to the county, the phone number for the county agent's office was 470.

Youngers 470? That's it? [laughs]

Tucker [laughs] 470. That's it. But we went through the medfly infestation, we went through the fire burning the [Sanford State] Farmers' Market down, and having to help get things going for it to build back up. We had, in '57 – late '57, early '58 – a severe freeze deal that actually we had cattle dying, because there wasn't enough hay, and we brought in hay for that. We had – one of the projects that I worked on was the eradication of screwworms. And my dad was involved in that. That was one of the miracles of using atomic energy to eradicate the screwworm fly. The female fly mates only once. And so they found that if they would raise screwworm flies and eradicate them with atomic energy deal, it sterilized the males, and they put these male flies out in the area, and they mate with the wild females, and the eggs wouldn't hatch. And by continually doing that, they lowered the population of the screwworm fly to completely eradicate it.

Youngers Really? So it's gone for good?

Tucker Yes. Yes. it's gone.

Youngers Wow. That's amazing.

Tucker And my dad was involved in that. He was an inspector. And in fact, some of the first pastures that they put the medfly – I mean the screwworm fly – out in was his pasture. So, when I was County Agent, of course I would make contact with the cattle people, and pass along the information to him about what was going on, and if there was an outbreak somewhere, they'd get on top of it.

Youngers Did they still have the technique of doing the cow dipping?

Tucker Yes. Now, the cow dipping – this was to eliminate the cattle tick – the fever tick. And in the early '50s, they was[sic] still – in fact, my dad worked with that. There's still a lot of the, uh, dipping going on. Getting rid of the fever tick. And that lasted until, I guess, the early '60s.

Youngers Right. Is that something that they were able to just control?

Tucker They were able to control it by dipping continually. They were able to eliminate the fever tick. After they wiped out a bunch of the deer who was perpetuating it. And some of your family was involved in that.

Youngers Yes, sir.

Tucker Oh, let's see. We had a fire ant infestation that came into the county and we almost got it eliminated by flying [Boeing] B-17s [Flying Fortress], and putting out Myrex, until the do-gooders got involved and killed the program.

Youngers And we still have fire ants.

Tucker And we still have fire ants, and we'll always have fire ants. But we came about within two flights of eliminating them.

Youngers Wow. Now, did that have any – the chemicals used, did it have any effect on people? Is that why people got involved?

Tucker The problem is it could create some problem in the water and affect fish, and that sort of thing. But we could have eliminated that. You know, by staying away from those areas. Anyway. Well, let's see.

0:51:17 **Closing remarks**

Tucker Any other questions?

Youngers No. Not if there's anything. I mean, I have lots of questions. I know you're big into the rodeo, and you've done a lot for 4-H, and different things like that, but we can come back maybe and talk about that another other time.

Tucker Well, what do – yeah. Make a list. And we'll do it. And like I said, I think you need to interview my wife, because I think you'll find that to be interesting, as well.

Youngers Absolutely.

Tucker There's a lot of little ins and outs of what went on here in the county.

Youngers Well, I'll definitely schedule a day with her, so she can come in and talk to me.

Tucker Good deal.

Youngers Well, I appreciate it very much.

Tucker And I appreciate your being on board to help do these things.

Youngers Absolutely.

Tucker We want to look through the list of people and be sure that we get some – thing of it is, we're five years late on a lot of people that passed on. Joe Baker, he – would have been great to be able get his. And I want to set up Don Weaver.

Youngers Okay.

Tucker Don Weaver and his family was – they came here from Pennsylvania. But they are pioneers in the watercress industry in the United States. And he lives down in Chuluota, on the south side of Lake Mills. And we'll work out getting that set up. Anything else?

Youngers No, sir.

Tucker Okay.

Youngers Thank you.

End of Interview