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Interview with Cora B. Evans

Cora B. Evans

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Interview with Cora Evans

November 2006

Recorded by Walker Hamby
Great nephew & Rollins student

Transcribed by Ann Hicks Murrah - April 2014

My name is Cora Estelle Boyett Evans. I was born on Terra Ceia Island, Florida on April 23, 1914. I am the oldest of five children. My brothers were John Marion Boyett and Charles Arthur Boyett Jr. John died in 1992 and Charles Arthur, who was called CA, died in 2000. I am survived by my sisters Gwendolyn Boyett Button and Grace Aileen Boyett Maugans.
Pictured: Charles - Cora holding Gwendolyn - John



Parents' Families

My mother's family came to Terra Ceia in 1896. They had come from Georgia by way of Cassia, Florida. Cassia is near Deland, Florida. They had been wiped out in the Civil War. My great grandfather had been a member of Robert E. Lee's army and had made the march with him to Appomattox. My mother's father was a Custer. Her grandfather was a first cousin of General George Armstrong Custer and they had come to the Orlando area from Pennsylvania by way of Des Moines, Iowa. They had migrated from Pennsylvania to Des Moines after the Civil War and my grandfather's mother had died there. Of the six children, four of them had died there. And so then his father, my great grandfather, and my father, John Custer, and his brother - the two young Custers were in their early 20s - and they came on to Orlando, to Orange County. They were being financed by my grandfather's brother, who was a lawyer in Fort Sill, Indian territory. And he had bought property here and I have letters that he wrote in 1883 advising them how to set out citrus and all that kind of thing. So that is what they did.

Meanwhile my mother's family had settled up at Cassia. and my mother's mother and her father had gotten together and were married there. Probably in the 1880s. My mother was born in 1893. In 1896, after all their citrus groves had been wiped out by the big freeze in 1895, they loaded up their wagons and went to Terra Ceia Island, which is located at the mouth of Tampa Bay and the Manatee River, just north of Bradenton, and where they would never have any more freezes, they thought.

So meanwhile my father had left Wakulla County. Somebody had come up there with a round trip ticket to Tampa. They had come up from Terra Ceia Island. And he was at a Fourth of July picnic and this person that had the ticket wanted to sell the return half of the ticket. And my father bought it and he and a friend got on a train. They had never been on a train before, but they got on the train in Tallahassee and they came to Tampa. At that time transportation between further south was by steamer. My father had some cousins there and so he stayed for a few months doing anything he could there. He talked about going down to the boats one day. The freighters came in, loaded with bananas, and he talked about going down there one day and buying a whole **5:33** stalk of bananas for 25¢. To get back home he had to go back through Ybor City and when he got up near there the little children ran up and they all grabbed bananas off his stalk of bananas and when he got to where he was going he didn't have anything but the stalk. And he always told us that and laughed about it. He also talked about catching crabs and holding them over where the steam pipes went out under the city there and steam them and then I guess he sold them on the street and things like that.

Moving to Terra Ceia

But then he had always heard about Terra Ceia and so one day he got on the boat and headed south to Terra Ceia and there was a doctor on there who was from Ellington. And he talked to my daddy and he tried to get Daddy to get off at Ellington and stay there. The boat went to Ellington before it went to Terra Ceia. But Daddy told him Nope, he was going to Terra Ceia, and that's what he did. In those days all the development on Terra Ceia was down on the bay front, on the south part of the island. There were big docks that went out in the bay and on the end of the docks would be the loading places. And the farmers mostly who raised grapefruit and oranges and whatnot, they would bring their produce out there in boxes all and and those steamers would pick that produce up and take it to Tampa, where it could be sent by boxcars on freight trains to the New York market. And also the people there on Terra Ceia got their supplies and all that way.

The railway comes

But in about 1913 or 1914 the Seaboard Coastline Railway - I guess the Atlantic Coast Line Railway, they were combined then - but anyway the railroad came in to Terra Ceia in the upper part of the island, about a mile from the bay front. And everything moved from the bay front. For instance at that time the Post Office was in a residence that was built out over the water on the bay front. And another little grocery store, the Hubbard store, they were pioneers, and their store was built out over the waterfront. My uncle John Boyett had a dock out into the water. And you went out on that dock and there was his two-story building. And down on the first

floor was his general merchandise - mostly grocery store, and upstairs was his living quarters. And there was one house across the road there and later on part of that old store was moved over and added on to the back of that house. And that became a very nice two-story house. That's where the Maugans lived, in that house. But when the train came in, up in the upper part of the island, everything moved up to that end, to the railroad. The post office, and they also had a bank. I think that was built in 1912, the bank was. And there was a big watering trough out in the middle there, ...sort of in the middle of the road there, above the stores, and the water on the island was artesian wells. And they flowed constantly. And that well flowered all the time, and you could take your horse and the horse could drink. Or you could lean over and get yourself a nice drink of cool artesian water.

Q: How did your parents meet?

9:58 My great grandparents had come there about 1896, when my mother was three years old. Anyhow, Grandpa Harp bought the southwest end of the island from Tampa Bay up to the Indian mound. There was an old Indian mound there. And John Custer - he was further up in the island with his farm - his wife, my grandmother, died when she was thirty years old, in childbirth. And she left a baby and she left my mother who was about two or three years old and my mother's brother, who was six years old. Well my grandfather and his father, William Amos Custer, who was General Custer's cousin, they lived together. They stayed down there. My mother's brother stayed with them. But Grandma Harp and Grandpa Harp had already raised their family. They were in their early 60s. But they took my mother and her baby sister. My daddy used to say that the first time he ever saw my mother, she was about 8 or 9 years old. And she was standing up on a field box in the back yard. Great Grandpa built a real nice two-story house there on the end of the island, with porches all the way around downstairs and upstairs. A beautiful view of the bay. But Daddy said the first time he saw Momma she was standing up where she could reach the scrub board, doing the family laundry. Grandma would keep her home on Monday to do the washing and Tuesday to do the ironing. And this two-story house there, the family lived in it, my grandparents and their youngest son, who was my daddy's age, he was a young man. And then my mother and little sister. And then they had some men that worked on the farm that lived there too. So they all lived in this big house. And my mother did most of the work from the time she was a little girl.

Life on Terra Ceia

Anyhow the school there on the island was an ungraded school but apparently a manner to being at least through the eighth grade because my mother went there through that eighth grade. And the things that she studied and the poets that she

memorized and all that would indicate that she was getting at least a junior high school education. She was always real good at those things and spelling and all that kind of stuff.

My daddy had rented the house and a farm right next door to the VIA hall, VIA meaning Village Improvement Association. It had been organized in 1900, I believe, by a group of some women who were from New England and had had that kind of experience. And they organized it and not only that, they started a library in one end of it, next to this house there. The house, my daddy rented it first, and then he bought it. It was called Boyetts Corner. It was a little one-bedroom house with a living room, **14:13** dining room, bedroom and back porch. And then porches all the way across the front and on the sides. And that's where all of us children were born. *Photo: Cora at 2.*



When I was about 12 years old they moved that house to the back of the farm there which was about three acres back there and they built a beautiful four-bedroom house with bathrooms upstairs and downstairs and oh it was really a very lovely home. And by that time there were five of us children. My sister Gwendolyn, my sister Ailene, my brother John, my brother C. A. Jr. My mother and father, my father had gone only through about the third grade in Wakulla County. Their schools were ungraded and they had school only two or three months out of the year. He had had very little formal education and he had become a very good farmer and he also had worked for the Manatee County Growers Association which was a vegetable growers cooperative in Manatee County and with two big packing houses there. He managed two big packing houses there, just across the water from Terra Ceia. And then they had big packing houses in Ruskin and he managed those up there. He was what they called a field manager. He advised the farmers and all that kind of stuff. And in addition he had his own farms. *Photo: Cora at her 8th grade graduation.*

The importance of going to college

So always the ambition of my mother and father was that all five of us children have a good education. And they succeeded in getting four of us through college, all except my brother C.A. And when he graduated from high school it was during the worst part of the depression. My brother John was at the University of Florida. I had graduated, in about my first year of teaching I guess. And my brother C.A., he was in the upper third of his high school class and all. I think there were about a hundred

in the class. And he insisted to my mother and daddy that he really wanted to go to work, that he didn't want to go to college. But we know now that he knew Daddy would just have had to borrow more money, just to get him there. But anyhow later on he went to work for Cudahy, the meat packer, up in Tampa. And he really went in to the grocery business. He had a couple of restaurants up there in Tampa for the shrimp workers. He had a wholesale place in Lakeland. He ended up moving to Lakeland. He married and moved to Lakeland and raised his family there. And he had a restaurant at the farmers market and all that kind of thing. He did well and he worked awfully hard.

Q: What about your education?



I graduated from the eighth grade there at Terra Ceia grammar school, it's called, and went on to Palmetto High School and I graduated there in '31. And of course I had looked forward to going to college. But in the fall of 1931 Daddy told me one day that he had just not been able to borrow the money to send me to college. And of course that was a great great disappointment. And we were all out on the porch after dinner that day **18:57** and talking and I went in to the kitchen and cried. But when I finally came back out on the porch my brother John offered me all the money he had saved up. And my brother C.A. did the same. He gave me all the money he had saved up. And my mother emptied her coffee can where she had all the gold pieces Daddy had given her and we ended up with about \$250 and I got into college that year. And then in '32 in February - I was a freshman - the banks closed. My roommate, whose father was a banker, didn't get to come back to school. But I was fortunate enough to get a 4H scholarship which gave me \$50 a semester. They only gave one of those scholarships. I got that but the thing was that along with it the college gave a dining room work scholarship. And at that time, times were so hard, they were only giving those to Juniors and Seniors. So they made an exception and gave me one as a Sophomore. And that's how I got back to college. It was then Florida State College for Women.

I had been a 4H club member since just before I was 10 years old. I had been a 4H club member all those years. I said I didn't want any more of that and the one thing I did not want to do was major in Home Economics. So I declared my major as English with a minor in Spanish and the Dean remarked it was good to hear someone who *knew* what she wanted to do. But I surprised myself and him by changing my major to home economics at the end of the first year. And I graduated in 1935 with a bachelor's in home economics.

First job

And that summer I went home and started looking for a job and I thought I'd teach in Bradenton and live at home. But the school cut out home economics. A lot of schools were calling it a frill course and cutting it out. So late that summer I finally got a job, at Macclenny, and well, really, they called me from Ocilla, which is a very rural town up near Tallahassee that I could come there to teach, but before I could accept that, I got a phone call offering me a job at Macclenny, which is 30 miles west of Jacksonville. And I had heard about Macclenny. And I had met a young preacher from there. On a bus trip, and he had told me all about Macclenny. So I decided I had rather go to Macclenny, and I accepted that job.

And my daddy and my brother John took me up there, in August, to the teachers' boarding house where the out-of-town teachers lived. And it was right next door to the county school where I was to teach. And it was the wonderful lady and her aunt who ran it. They were from Alabama. And she had her three little girls. She was a widow. And they had about twelve of us people at the table every day. Wonderful, wonderful food and all. But anyhow, it was interesting, there was a commercial teacher there named Ross Evans, from Lake City. And he had been there a year. He had graduated from the University of Florida in '34, the year before I graduated. And he had gone there to teach that year. **23:22**

Meeting and dating Ross Evans

But anyhow, that summer, before I went to teach there, he [Mr. Dugger, the Principal] had seen Ross Evans who had already taught there that year. He had seen him on the campus down at the university. They both happened to be there during the summer for some reason. So Mr. Dugger, when he saw Ross and they talked, he said, "Well, Mr. Evans, I'll show you the picture of the new home economics teacher I have just hired. I'll show you her picture here. But I want you to know that I'm going to have the first date with her." He was a bachelor. He was 32. Never married. And so he showed Ross the picture and Ross said, "Well, where is she going to live?" "Well," he said, "I'm going to recommend that she live at the Poltridge [sp?] house" (that was the boarding house). And Ross said. "Well, I'll be there before you pick her up and I'll be there when you bring her back."

Anyhow, school started the latter part of August. When I got there that day - Daddy and John took me up. Ross, of course, he was there. And I met him. And they had an old piano downstairs. And they found out I could play the piano. So I was playing the piano and they were all singing and all that kind of thing. Of course Ross wasn't because he never could carry a tune. But anyhow, you know, he was friendly and

all. And so he...Two or three weeks later was the first football game at the University of Florida and Mr. Dugger right away invited me to be his guest. He wanted me to go to the football game with him. And I accepted. And so then this old maid school teacher who had taught there for years, and of course she was very friendly with Mr. Dugger - Miss Tyler. And she came to Mr. [Dugger] and told him she wanted to go to that game. So Mr. Dugger went to Ross and he said. "Mr. Evans, you're going to have to go to this football game and be Miss Tyler's escort. She has told me she wants to go, and I'm going to have to take her." And he says, "I'm taking Miss Boyett as my date but you're going to have to go along and sit in the back seat and take care of Miss Tyler." So of course Ross told him he'd do that.

Well, Mr. Dugger and I had a real good time. We all had a good time. He loved to sing and I'd been playing the piano at school for him to sing. So he and I sang that night coming back. We had the best time. And Ross and Miss Tyler were in the back seat. So we took Miss Tyler home. And then he brought Ross and me back to the boarding house. And as we were going up the stairs - it was a tall thing of stairs - to go in, as Ross and I were going up the stairs, Ross said, "Miss Boyett, I'd like to invite you to go to all of the football games the rest of the year with me." And, like a ninny, I said, "All right."

Coaching basketball!

27:00 And so after that he was always wanting me to come out and sit in the big swing in the yard and do something with him. And also he was down at one end of the long building there and I was at the other. And I was the youngest woman on the faculty and the only one who could get out there and do anything active. So I had to take charge of the girls on the playground and all that. And Mr. Dugger was a good basketball player. And he coached the girls but he made me the girls' basketball coach. But he coached the boys too. But he really did the girls coaching but he always wanted me out there when they practiced. And I had to go on all the trips with them. But I don't think I ever even figured out all of his plays. But I was officially the girls' basketball coach. But Ross went to all the games because he took care of the receipts and the money and all that kind of stuff. We really had some trips out through those woods on the school bus. We'd come to an old wooden bridge and they'd stop the bus and we'd have to get off and stand while they got the bus safely across the bridge and then we'd walk across and get back on the bus. And you know it was such a rural area and the girls that I taught...I was 20 and some of them were 21. And I was teaching. And you know I had four old oil stoves to teach on. You can't imagine what it was like! But I guess I did a good job anyhow.

Engagement and weddings

At Christmas time Ross was already really smitten and we were having a state teachers meeting at Lakeland [*correction: Orlando*] after Christmas - that was when they used to have the state meeting. And I was going to it and he was going to it. And so he asked me to - we made arrangements - and we didn't stay at the same hotel, he stayed at one hotel and I stayed at another. But he was with me all the time during the meeting and we'd go down and sit on Lake Eola and all that kind of thing. And we got on the bus to go back together to Macclenny. And on the bus I think he proposed to me. And all the way back he'd beg me to agree that I would marry him and I finally told him I would. And so we would get married when school was out.

And of course he was saving up his money, all that he could save, so's that he could go ahead and get his master's at Columbia University. So school was out in April I guess or May, and I went on home. And of course Momma and Daddy I remember - he came up and got me, and I told him on the way home. Well, he said, honey I wish you would just wait a year. Just wait a year. I've got a lot of things I want to do for you and I'd like you to have a nice wedding. And he said it hadn't been a very good year for me and I'm pretty heavily in debt. And if you wait a year I can give you a much nicer wedding. Well I know he and Momma just didn't want me to get married that soon after getting out of school. But anyhow, we went ahead and got married anyhow. In six weeks, no, just a few days, no that was when Allene got married, Daddy had a big heart attack. We were going to have a big garden wedding. Daddy had his heart attack and we had to have him downstairs in the sewing room because he couldn't go up and down stairs. **31:36** So I went over and asked our doctor who was taking care of us all our lives if it would be all right if I had a garden wedding for Allene and could invite everyone on the island. And he said well you can if you want to but you'll have a funeral the next day. He said your daddy can't stand that. If you want your daddy to live you'll have to cut it all out and just have a very very simple wedding and so forth. So that's what we did, we invited just a few relatives. There were about twenty of us there in the living room for your grandmother and granddaddy's. [This was Allene's wedding.]

But for my wedding, we got married in the living room. Daddy was all right then. We had this minister come over from Palmetto. We got married in the same place in the living room. We had a big archway. The dining room was a big room and the living room was real big. And we had an archway in between and that's where I stood. I didn't have a long dress or anything. I had promised your grandmother, her best friend had got married when she was 16 or 17, and I had promised her that if she

would go on to college and get her college education, when she got married I'd see to it that she had a beautiful wedding. And she held me to it.

Your uncle Ross and I - in '47 he was teaching at the U of Florida that summer and we couldn't get a decent place to live. It was a dump. We had an apartment in the terrible old house there. It was just awful. And we got a letter from your grandmother, she was a Junior at FSU, and she said that her roommate Jeannie, the one that lives in Plant City and was very much in love with Sonny who went to school with her from Plant City. Anyhow, a bunch of them were coming there for the spring frolics, the big dance. And she was going to come with them and she had a blind date. They'd gotten a blind date for her. She was going to stay with me and of course I was thrilled to have her. And I went ahead and made her dress for the big dance - a pink taffeta dress and it was beautiful. And so when she got there, late that afternoon, and we picked her up, and that night at the supper table all she could talk about was Jesse, Jesse. That was Sonny's brother, who was at FSU with her. And she had tried to talk herself into being in love I think, with Jesse, because her roommate was in love with his brother. And so she said, "I saw my blind date when I got off the bus. He was standing out in the edge of the crowd. I saw a little short little guy. He would be the guy to pick her up and take her to the dance. He was a member of Scabbard and Blade or something. So that night your grandfather came to pick her up in his uniform. It was cream colored satin with a dubonnet thing over it - anyhow and away they went to the dance. And then the next morning, I guess that was Saturday, I'm not sure maybe it was Sunday. She announced to me that her date wanted her to go down to Leesburg with him that day. **36:16** He made up his mind that night. I think it was love at first sight. And he took her down the next day to meet your grandparents. And she said that when he got her there and introduced her to your great grandfather he said well Joe, we Maugans men have always known how to pick out the beauties.

Married life

After Ross and I were married, that first summer we went on to Columbia University where he worked on his Master's degree in Business Administration. I took one course but there wasn't enough money for both of us to be going to graduate school. And he went on and took a semester off and went back and got his Master's. For those next three summers we were in New York City. And then in 1940 we went to Rock Hill, South Carolina and he taught at Winthrop College for two years. During that time I did some work helping with the war effort and that kind of thing. I guess I did not work regularly. Then from there we went to New Orleans where he was with the 6th Naval District. And during that time I worked as a special dietician at the Southern Baptist Hospital in New Orleans. Then after 15 months we

were transferred to Atlanta, Georgia. Ross was Cost Accountant - it was the same job - but he was at Firestone Tire & Rubber Company. We were there when the war ended. And Firestone Tire & Rubber Company wanted him to stay with them and they were going to send him to India. And the Civil Service that he worked for, he'd gotten up to a high ranking, and they wanted him to take a job with the Civil Service Administration and he didn't want to do that. And so he had an opportunity to go to Puerto Rico as a visiting professor. And so in '47 we went to Puerto Rico, to the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras.

I wanted to settle down somewhere and he told me if I'd - we'd been married for about twelve years and never had had our own home and all that kind of thing. But he said if I would do that then we would come to Winter Park - we chose Winter Park - that we would come back here and settle down.

Coming to Winter Park and Rollins

And we did that. We came back here and bought a lot out here in Forest Hills, a mile back of Rollins. And we had saved up \$10,000 and we built ourselves what we could afford for about \$12,000. We built our home there. And we lived there until 1965 and Ross went on the faculty in 1949 as Professor of Accounting and I got involved with the Rollins Women's Association.

Ross had given up teaching and was thinking he wouldn't teach any more and then his good friend Dr. David Bates was teaching Accounting at Rollins and in '49 he decided to leave and he asked Ross would he like to take his job and so Ross went back to teaching Accounting at Rollins. And at that time I guess that's when I joined the rollins Women's Association and I went to it. **41:16** And it was a real wonderful thing, a wonderful group. It had been started there quite a long time before that. And Mrs. Darrah, whose husband was Dean Darrah over there at Knowles, they had just come to Rollins too. Nene Darrah and I were the same age. So I had always counted on the two of us getting old together. But Nene let me down. She died at 62 with cancer. And I really have missed her. She was truly a wonderful person. But anyhow Rollins was a wonderful place to be.

The Wagner episode

Ross was the first person that Wagner hired and he was the first person he fired. No one seemed to know what was going on and then as it turned out, he was firing a third of the faculty and I don't know that it's a big mess and he was trying to do something about Rollins through the legislature and there was a meeting over at the student center. Everybody went to this meeting and it was decided something had to be done. And I'm not sure what it was that Wagner was trying to have done to

the college through the local state senator, Andrews, but there was something on Andrews' desk that they had to keep him from signing and he didn't understand what it was about. And so these faculty members got on the bus and rode all night to get up to Tallahassee to keep this bill - whatever it was - from being signed. They succeeded. And then what was told and all was that the college offered Wagner \$50,000 if he would just leave. But there was not to be any information given out about that. That he would just take it and leave. And he took the \$50,000, according to what the report was, and that evening it was the headlines in the evening newspaper, the *Sentinel* at that time was putting out an evening newspaper. He had turned it all over to the newspaper to publicize. But at least he was gone. And then that's when Hugh McKean took over.

Q: What was your impression of the students when you first came to Rollins?

Well, the students, as far as I'm concerned, were always wonderful. My husband always had a wonderful relationship with them. He was considered an extremely hard professor but a very good one and he spent untold hours, hours there with his students, always willing to help them. And of course in a subject like Accounting, he felt that those papers that they turned in every day had to be graded and given back the next day so's they could know what their mistakes were and all. And so I would go on to bed at night around 10 or 11 o'clock. And he would get there some time but he would never go to bed until he got all those papers graded. But he dearly loved the teaching and the students.

He could tell so many funny stories. One of the funny ones, he said that one day he was giving back the Accounting papers. And the girls had done so well on it and the boys had all flunked it. And so on one side of the blackboard he put up the girls' names with their scores. **47:23** And so on the other side he put up the boys names with their scores. He was trying to make the boys ashamed of themselves. And so after class this boy came in, sat down by him at his desk, and wanted to talk to him. And he said to Ross, "Professor Evans, I believe that you like girls better than you do boys." And quickly my husband says, "Well don't you?" And the boy said, "Well yes, yes." And Ross said, "Well, what's your problem?" And the boy got up and walked out and didn't say any more.

But anyhow he really loved to teach and he said he had a girl he taught an 8 o'clock class and he said this girl was always late. And he said one morning when she came in late and she had also missed some classes, and he said, "Well good morning, Miss So-and-so. I've been missing you." And she said, "Well I've been missing you too." And he said, "Well why don't we make a date to meet here at 8 o'clock every morning?" Well she said, "All right." And he looked around and he

said, "Well, now there are 25 students in here that all have been witnesses to what you have said. So I'm going to expect you here." And she never missed another class and she never was late.

But anyhow we used to have his Seniors over toward the end of the year - we'd have them come over and I'd fix a good dinner for them. Those old boys, most of them were boys, they'd come in here and give me a funny look. And I got to thinking about it. And then I found out what he had said to the class one day. He went in that morning to teach and he was trying to explain some difficult concept or something in Accounting and he put it all up on the board. and he said to them, "Well now you all ought to understand that. I explained that to my wife this morning before coming over and even she understood it!" Well what he meant was I had no accounting background but I understood it. But I wondered what those old boys thought gave me a funny look.

Rollins Women's Association. Every year we had an Animated Magazine which means famous speakers came from all over. We had it on a Sunday and if the weather were good we had it out of doors there back of the administration building and had all the chairs set up and all that. But it seemed like every year it rained and had to be moved into the Knowles Chapel. But what the Rollins women did, they served a luncheon for these guests and they served it in the Cornell Center, it was called the Morse Museum of Art at the time because that's what it was. And we would set the tables up and have this wonderful meal for these guests. It was a good bit of work but we really enjoyed it and we enjoyed meeting these stars. And one year one of them was either Lillian Gish or Dorothy Gish - there were two sisters who were famous movie stars. And I had to wash my hands and I went in the little rest room there in Cornell - it really was little - and both of us were jammed up in there trying to wash our hands. **52:23** But I felt like I had really touched a famous person. And she was such a lovely person and so friendly. And one time Jimmy Cagney was the main artist that was there. And another time, the one that my husband thought was wonderful, was Norma Shearer. And she had been a famous screen star when he was growing up. And she and Douglas Fairbanks were the famous combination. And so the faculty had to march down to the front in Knowles Memorial that day and Norma Shearer marched with them. And she went up to the podium and all to talk and Ross was truly thrilled. That was one thing that really impressed him. And so we did have a lot of famous people who came and we were able to entertain them and so forth.

Q: What else did you do with the Women's Association?

Back in the old days we had a fiesta one day in the spring. And the students would have a parade down Park Avenue. And then out in the soccer field and all they would have booths set up and then over there back of the student center and all they'd have booths set up and food and all that and so we used to - Rollins Women's Association - I remember one year we had a chuck wagon and we had it set up with, we made hamburgers and hot dogs and we had all this cabbage slaw. And all that day it stormed. It rained. And the darn thing leaked. And I remember we had to take our food and get down underneath that wagon. And we were down underneath trying to dish out cabbage slaw and hot dogs and hamburgers. It was quite a mess. But we had a lot of fun.



And then another thing that the Rollins Women's Association did, the day of the first faculty meeting at the beginning of school, out in front of the student center, we set up a refreshment place with something cool to drink, and I guess we had cookies. And we had the faculty come, and we would serve them refreshments. Things like that. And then early in the school year we would help with a faculty reception over at Morse Museum. for the faculty. We had various things that we did during the year to help out.

Q: What about teaching at Winter Park High School?

Well in January or February of '49 we were here and they needed an extra Home Economics teacher. They just had one, and the department was too big. Anyhow, I had not planned to but I went back to teaching at the high school and I taught off and on for ten years. I taught. Well, I really enjoyed it. But when I decided I wasn't going to do it anymore, I went in to tell Mr. Wilson who was a wonderful man and he had been stationed here during World War II and he had fallen in love with this woman who was Dr. Hamilton Holt's daughter-in-law. I think maybe she had married his son and they had divorced. She had a couple of little boys. But she and Mr. Wilson got married **57:09** and he came on the faculty over there when I came on and he and I had a a real good relationship. And when I decided that I was going to quit teaching and I went in and told him he said, "What's the matter? Is Ross making enough to support you? Finally?" And as it was I was teaching and we were saving all of my money. We weren't even using it to live on. That was his little joke. I went ahead. I guess I quit in '59, finally. I quit in '49. And then in '53 they were desperate for a teacher and then I went back, and then I quit in '59. And that's the year that Ross took a year off, a year's leave of absence, so that we could travel.

[Cora in 1950, from the WPHS yearbook]

Travel

Of course we had gone to Europe five or six times for two months in the summer. But he wanted to go for four months. And then the rest of the year, in the spring, we were going to go to Japan. We'd never been over there. We never did go. But anyhow, that's the year we took off and we went by freighter from Tampa to Lauderdale and then by bus to Stuttgart, picked up our car and then traveled all the way across Bergen and put the car on the flat car at the railroad and brought it back over the mountains. We had driven it up to the top of one peak and then down to a fjord and then up the next one and then down to a fjord until we got to the other side. We also went as far south as Anzio. We went to Rome and Anzio and all that.

And we were gone 4 months. We had planned....We came home just in time for Christmas and then we were going to start out again in February sometime and go to Japan. Well, we didn't do it and then we were going to do it later that year. And then Daddy dropped dead with a heart attack May 16 That was 1960, so we never did get to. And then I kept the road hot going back and forth and trying to get my mother to get out of those woods. She never did succeed until she was 80 years old. It's been an interesting life.

Q: Any interesting individuals at Rollins - professors or presidents - that you met?

Oh yes. [referring to photo of Dr. Holt in a wheelchair] I can't remember their names now....They were oldtimers. That accounting professor had retired that year, and they were entertaining for Dr. Holt. That was the year that Dr. Holt left. He left just before we got here, I mean he had given up and Wagner came come in. And so this accounting professor and his wife, they were old friends of Dr. Holt, they had this farewell party for him in their house. And since Ross had just gone on the faculty, we were invited. And that was the only time I ever saw Dr. Holt. I think he had to have his leg amputated by then. He was in a wheelchair. But he was a brilliant man. And so I was glad that we got to shake his hand and meet him. That was the only contact we ever had with him.

Q: Any other presidents?

Well, Hugh McKean came on as president. Of course he had been a faculty member. And his wife, Jeannette Genius McKean, was the Fairbanks Morse heiress. That's where all the money came from. She really did a lot for the college. And of course Hugh was, as far as I'm concerned and a lot of us concerned, he was wonderful. But they some some young faculty members in there as the years went by and I think they sort of ganged up and didn't want him. Maybe he was ready to

leave, too. He was president for nineteen years. Do you remember? But he was a wonderful person. You know, he was good to everybody. And Ross was on some kind of administrative committee and the college had yacht over at Vero Beach, that was parked over there, that they had inherited from somebody. And so Ross was on this presidential committee. And Hugh invited the members to bring their spouses and come over to Vero Beach for the weekend at this Driftwood Hotel over there. And then he would take us out on that yacht. And so he did. And that was a real special thing. We felt like we were real special people, we got to go over and stay at the Driftwood and go on on the college yacht. But he was always thoughtful and nice and kind.

Morse Museum

And then when they moved the museum down on Park Avenue they had the great opening on the Fourth of July. I guess it's been about, I've forgotten how many years ago, now. Within the last 10 years they bought this big building on North Park Avenue that had been owned by the citrus company, the Fosgate company, and they converted it into Morse Museum. And the museum had been over on Knowles Avenue - just a small one - and they moved all this Tiffany stuff over there. And then of course there's quite a history, you probably have heard, how he and his wife collected all that Tiffany glassware and all. As a young man he had gone up there in the summertime and worked for Mr Tiffany. He had gone up there in the summertime as a student and worked there and lived there, at Laurelton Hall. That was where it all started.

And then the thing caught fire and burned and was wrecked and all. And all this stuff was just up there. And he and Jeannette bought that, lock stock and barrel. And went up there themselves. And they had all of that packed up and brought back and stored over here. Well, it ends up in the Morse Museum on the campus. But I remember my friend Helen Watson who was Dean of Women with Hugh when he was President And she said Hugh came into her office one day and said - her office was there in the administration building - and he said, "Helen, I want you to come see something with me." He led her over to Knowles Memorial and then down into the basement. And he took her down there where it was all dark and musty. And he took her down there and started opening all these boxes and here were all these Tiffany treasures. That they had brought, and that was where they had them stored **1:07:00** before they put opened the Morse Museum. And she said he was just so thrilled with all of that. And so that's how it all got saved....It's the biggest Tiffany collection in the world. Now we've loaned some of the special stuff

to the Metropolitan, up in New York City. And my friend Ann Hicks works over there, as a volunteer there. I guess all during the week, she works there every morning until noon. *[This refers to the transcriber, Ann Hicks Murrah, who is a museum docent and occasionally gives tours there.]* And she's very active in it. And she lived up in New York City and was next to the administrator of this real famous girls school up in New York City and she loves to go up there and she goes every so often and has something to do with all that.

Rollins Women's Association - Chat and Sew

So. What else? Rollins Women's Association. Well, it's been a good many years ago, I'm not sure how many, twenty-five or thirty, the Rollins Women's Association was sort of dying out, wasn't very active, and so we decided that we would divide it up into interest groups and have smaller groups and maybe it would spark some interest. And I was on the committee that helped do all that. And so we had one that was just interested in book reviews. Barbara Carson, Dr. Carson, who is now head of the English Department over there at the college, she was one that was head of the book review group. And then we had one that just wanted to play bridge. And then we had different ones. But anyhow two or three of my friends and I decided we'd just like to get together and chat, and bring along our sewing if we had any to do. And so we called it Chat and Sew. And so we organized a Chat and Sew group. There are about of twelve of us and we meet once a month and we meet on the first Wednesday, for two hours, at somebody's home. And always have something good to eat and all that. That group is still in existence. We still have Chat and Sew. It's still an active group. Ross used to say when they'd come here, of course when they'd come here he'd get out of the living room and go in his study. He'd say they were real good at chatting but he never anybody do any sewing. But we had one member who did special needlepoint, and then Polly Seymour would bring Dr. Seymour's socks along and she would darn his socks. And I usually had some patching or darning to do. *Who's Dr. Seymour?* He's the ex-President. You've got to know him! Thaddeus Seymour. *Oh yes.* And he's an English professor over there now. I hope you'll get in his class sometime....He would want to know about you. Allene didn't want me telling anybody about you before you got here, but...

Rollins Development

Oh, you know who's supposed to come here today? Mr. Cummings is supposed to come here today. The Director of Development. His office is in the Administration Building. *How do you know him?* Well, he's interested in people giving money, in development and all. I've known him for the last several years, in fact since he took the job. He's a brilliant lawyer. I guess the kind that do research or something. He's from Michigan. And he's right next to Duncan over there I guess. But he has always

enjoyed coming over here and talking with Ross and me and all that. And of course he has charge of the **1:12:13** gifts to Rollins and all that. And we have one. We got a scholarship. We also have one of those things, something we have put money in to and it goes on and the money it makes and all, out of that so much is given to Gwendolyn every month. *Mutual fund? Trust fund? What about the scholarship?* We have had a scholarship there for years. It finances one student at Crummer. That's the one I was telling you about. We've got one at the University of Florida and one at Florida State University.

Q: Any students that you remember vividly?

Well of course Mike Strickland. He's chairman of the Board of Trustees. If you haven't done it, you should read the letters [compiled by former Ross students on his retirement (?) and presented in a book]. He's one of the special ones. As a matter of fact, you remember all those seven that gave that reception for your uncle Ross? One of them is Bob Showalter, who's head of the Showalter Air Service. I went over the other day to the Rollins Historical Association. I have a broken left shoestring and I need a new black shoestring and I keep forgetting and I don't go shopping. I got to have a pair of new shoestrings! The other day with Ann I went over to the Winter Park Historical Association. They had an afternoon reception over on Genius Drive. It's the oldest house in town, I think. There's a real well-mown lawyer here, Harold Ward, who has charge of all the Genius Foundation and it's where Harold ward's mother and daddy were born, lived there in that old house. And now it's been restored. That's where we were having the party. And as we, Ann and I ,were going out I guess, Bob Showalter and his wife were just stepping out the front door. He gave me a big hug and standing there, he looked down and saw my shoe. And he squatted down on his haunches and tied my shoe! I felt like a royal fool. So I got to buy new shoestrings. You were asking about this.... But that whole group, and this guy that they are really prosecuting, Alan Keen, well he was one of the group that had that party for him. *[refers to protest of Keen-led development on Morse Boulevard and then the Post Office site]* Alan Keen, Bob Showalter, Mike Strickland. But Mike Strickland wasn't here when they had the reception, he was at Dartmouth, persuading Dr. Duncan to come here as President. And Guy Colado is our friend who is president of the bank over here. He's the one that looks after me. And Bieberbach.

Alright, what else do you want to know? I got to Winthrop and we got out of there. That's when we went to New Orleans. After when we left New Orleans we went to Atlanta. Then we went to Gainesville. Then we took off from Gainesville. And then we came back here in '48 and settled down.

1:16:48

Q: Looking back over your Rollins career, how do you view your experiences at Rollins?

I think it has been very much of a blessing, very much of a blessing. Ross was completely happy there. He was there from '49 to '84. And of course if you want to know the whole truth you read his story of his life that he wrote. And the title of it is something about *The Story of My Life - So Wonderful that if I could live it over, I would not change a thing*. So I guess that says it. And as I think back I really don't know how I could have been any more blessed. I always said that if I didn't have anything special happen to me after I was twenty-one, I had been so blessed with my mother and my father and my upbringing and living at Terra Ceia Island, it had been all such a wonderful experience. Going to FSCW. At the time I went to FSCW it was considered one of the three most outstanding women's colleges in the United States. Right up there with Smith and Wellesley and Vassar. And the people I knew over there. I mean people like, I had known Helen Watson at college. She was a prominent woman on campus. I at least knew her. But then here at Rollins she came as Dean of Women. I renewed my acquaintance with her, and we have become lifelong friends. She and I now are both in our 90s, and we're getting to be some of the oldest ones around and we're still good friends. It's just been a wonderful place to be. When I came it was called "The Rollins Family" and I hope they never quit calling it the Rollins Family, because you really do have that feeling. I've had the feeling that Dr. Duncan is fitting in so well, and especially his lovely Paula. They are both just carrying on the good things that have been going on all these years and I feel real grateful.



Above: Cora in March 2014

This is Walker Hanby with his great aunt conducting this interview.

*Note: Numbers is bold, e.g. **1:16:48**, identify points in the recording. I inserted near near the beginning of the page before I inserted photos.*