"Mrs. Mathematics:"
Reminiscences of Broward County*

by Myra McIlvaine Marshall

GROWING UP IN TAMPA

I was born in Tampa, Florida, on June 23, 1892. My mother, Carolyn Maude Taylor, moved with some members of her family to Tampa from Helena, Arkansas, where she was born. After taking a boat down the Mississippi River, they reached New Orleans where they boarded a Gulf steamship for Tampa. There she met and married Victor Bledso McIlvaine, a native Floridian who was born on Cedar Key, Florida. They hurried their marriage in order to take the last train permitted to leave Tampa on August 12, 1888, because of the yellow fever scare. They honeymooned in Evinson, Florida, where papa's two year old son lived with his aunt, Mary Avery.

I am the fourth in a family of seven children. I marvel that mama and papa, a wholesale fish dealer, could do so well by such a large family. Mother was a graduate of the now extinct Mary Sharpe College in Winchester, Tennessee. She always was interested in music and supplemented the family finances by giving piano lessons. Her family had moved her lovely rosewood piano from Arkansas to Tampa. Later, a beautiful table was made from the piano and it now is in my sister Ruth's house in Tallahassee.

Papa's formal education ended in the fifth grade when he left his physical science textbook outdoors and it was ruined by rain. His family couldn't afford another. In spite of that, papa was a well educated man who was self-taught. Mama was always buying sets of books on the installment plan. One of my fondest memories is of papa reading and reclining in his easy chair, feet propped up on a hassock, while I or one of the other children combed and re-combed his curly hair.

Each of us who reached college age received a college education. I remember when my half-brother Eugene, called home from Washington & Lee University because of the death of a younger sister, received a telegram from his instructor in Real Estate Law telling him that he had received the university's first score of 100% on the law examination. How proud we were of him!

When I was in the 9th grade at Hillsborough High School, I decided that I would teach Home Economics. My early training was the result of conditions at home. My mother was somewhat of a cripple. Doctors later said that she must have had a slight case of infantile paralysis. As we grew up, the household duties became ours. One cooked, one washed dishes, and another made beds. Mama organized a sewing class for us and the neighborhood children. With the help of Mrs. A.L. Shaw, a kindly neighbor, we made most of our own and our mother's clothing.

I remember the first dress that I ever made for myself when I was seven or eight years old. Mama helped me with the cutting and assembly, but I pedaled the machine. Papa had to make a business trip to Punta Gorda and I was elected to go with him. We stayed at the home of our friends, the Browns. Of course I took my new dress. When I got home, Mama asked me when I had worn it. It had not occurred to me to wear it, although I had proudly shown it to Mrs. Brown and her daughters. We had an instructor for the heavily padded color embroidery that was so popular at that time. Recently, I came across several awards that I had received from the South Florida Fair Association held in connection with the Tampa Gasparilla. I had displayed ten little circular doilies elaborately scalloped and decorated with beautifully blended colors of lifelike roses, strawberries and ferns. I really wonder who did most of the work, me or my teacher? Later, I made use of this skill by sewing by the day for friends. I even earned part of my way.

*See "Behind the Scenes," inside front cover.
of my college expenses by renting a sewing machine and sewing for the other college girls; papa had died during my first year of college.

The date of my graduation from high school on May 20, 1910, is an easy one to remember. Halley's Comet was putting on a show as it streaked through the atmosphere on its nearest approach to the earth during its seventy-five year orbit. After high school graduation I had to wait two years before I could go to college. Sister Ruth was going to wait two years before I could go to college. Student. I rested, kept house and did some work at the Tampa Business College during the first year after graduation; but, during the second I taught the two upper grades in the Baptist Mission School in Ybor City. There I earned the large monthly salary of $35. I have at least one recollection of where some of that money went. I would walk from home to the car line and from the stop to the school. Then I taught all day and stood on a concrete floor. Every single month I had to buy a new pair of shoes and have the old ones half-soled. Although I did practice my home economics before I studied it in college, one of my greatest shocks was to receive a "C" as my first grade in sewing!

Some day we may have white and colored children in the same school here in Fort Lauderdale but, at that time in Ybor City, colored children were not allowed by law to attend even the private schools. One day, a dark skinned child enrolled. The missionaries were not certain whether she was white or colored. When we went to visit the child's home, a large black negro mammy answered our knock. We explained why the child was not permitted to attend the mission school and she was withdrawn the next day.

I received my Bachelor of Science degree in Home Economics in 1915 from Florida State College for Women [FSCW] after three years of work. In 1933 I standardized that degree and received a Master of Arts degree in Education and Psychology from the same college. You might ask, "Why not an M.A. in Mathematics?" After all, I had been teaching math since 1916. However, I had taken very little college math, none before 1915, and did not have sufficient background for an M.A. in that subject. But, I had accumulated enough college credits by attending summer school and by taking correspondence courses in order to get my teacher's certificate in mathematics.

I was very proud to have my mother attend my second graduation because she was unable to attend the first. The following spring, she died.

ARRIVAL IN FORT LAUDERDALE

After my graduation in 1915, I taught home economics for one year in Tampa, for one day at Plant City High School and for four days in the new Woodrow Wilson Junior High School, one of the eleven new school buildings that had been erected during the previous summer. Since I was the most recently hired home economics teacher, I was the one to be let go when the county authorities decided that they had expanded too rapidly. Through the efforts of Miss Agnes Ellen Harris, head of the Department of Home Economics at FSCW at Tallahassee, I came to Fort Lauderdale. I knew little of this area at that time. I knew only that a new county, Broward, had been created by the 1915 legislature from narrow strips of Dade and Palm Beach counties. The new county was named in honor of Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, the governor who had done so much for this section of the state by initiating the drainage of the Everglades.

By leaving Tampa at 6:00 a.m. I reached Fort Lauderdale at 10:30 that night. I had ridden the Atlantic Coast Line train north to a point thirty miles west of New Smyrna. There I boarded a one coach train on the East Coast Railway line to New Smyrna. I almost believe that the engine crew got out and collected wood along the right-of-way for the engine, so slowly did we cover those thirty miles. Coming on down the coast I worried about what I would find when I reached a strange town so late at night. Would the place be large enough for electric lights? Let me assure you that it was. Where would I stay when I arrived? The kindly conductor helped me on that point. He looked in his railroad guide and found that a small hotel, the Gilbert, was only a half block east of the station.

One thing that I did find in Broward and Dade counties was a certain amount of prejudice. Negroes who were driving cars were not permitted in Miami. Any tourist who brought his colored chauffeur had to get a white man to drive his car in Miami. For years after I came, no Catholic could teach in the Broward County schools.

SUMMER VACATIONS

During my years of teaching I attended various summer schools; Asheville's North Carolina Normal was one. Alice Woodward, a Delta Kappa Gamma, and I attended classes in the mornings. Then,
we and our husbands would explore the area in the afternoons. I took courses in personal home economics, psychology and penmanship. The next fall I was called to task because I had not taken classes along my particular line of work. I reminded the superintendent that I had consulted with him prior to summer school and, since he had made no particular suggestion, I thought that personal home economics might be of help to me. I could remember the teacher who was not rehired because her dress was not approved by the authorities. I did not want that to happen to me.

I had a nice summer at the University of Southern California. We were a part of the Moyers Tours that organized in Atlanta. There we boarded a special train that stopped at all points of interest along the southern route to California. We visited New Orleans, the Grand Canyon, Dallas, El Paso, with a side trip into Mexico; Los Angeles, with a trip to Catalina; and Yosemite.

Mr. Moyers would plan trips each weekend if we cared to go. Some were an evening in San Francisco’s Chinatown, a trip up the peninsula, and another to Stanford University. Coming home, we took the northern route and spent a week in Yellowstone, a day in Salt Lake City, with a swim in the great Salt Lake, and a day in Chicago. I remember that that summer I took a course in trigonometry that was taught by a Chinese instructor and was attended by several colored students. That was my first experience having colored people in my classes.

My most enjoyable summer school session was the one that I attended at the University of Colorado in Boulder. Catherine Boyd Fahrion and I had driven out to Colorado. During the summer we made weekend trips into the mountains, to the opera in Silver City, to Pike’s Peak and into Denver. We attended the rodeo in Wyoming and, on the way home, visited Carlsbad Caverns. We learned that World War II had started when we stopped in New Orleans for the night.

That summer in the cool air of Colorado was followed by four summers in the heat of Tallahassee. I carried my electric fan with me while I studied and did research for my master’s degree. I also remember the late hours that I kept that summer. I would take a nap after supper and then type until two or three o’clock in the morning on my sister’s front porch.

TEACHING AND MARRIAGE

The school to which I was directed on that fall morning of 1916 was way out on the eastern edge of town, the center of which is now the Fort Lauderdale High School plant. Now the school is right in the downtown section. This was the second year for the fine new $86,000 [$55,000] two story concrete building with its large classrooms, spacious auditorium and separate kindergarten building. This was quite a contrast to the small $75-$80 one room wooden structure that was occupied by the first school in Fort Lauderdale where Mrs. Stranahan taught. It was also a contrast to the second building located on South Andrews Avenue and SW 5th Street, where the Fort Lauderdale school was located until 1915. Grades 1 - 8 used the first floor while grades 9 - 12 were on the second. This was the only high school in the county.

Pupils were transported from Deerfield in the north, Davie in the west, and Hallandale in the south. Motor driven buses, open-air affairs, were used. The pupils sat on benches built along the sides of the body of the car. Contrast that to the fifty to ninety passenger buses in use today. I’ve heard Mrs. Otto T. Herbert tell how her father, Mr. Edgar O. Bras, provided the first transportation of pupils in our city from 1910 to 1915. He hitched a blind pony to a yellow spring wagon and brought the children to Fort Lauderdale from Colahatchee, which is known now as Wilton Manors.

The original Fort Lauderdale High School came into existence in the fall of 1911. Classes were held for nineteen pupils in one upstairs room of our second building. Miss Margaret Warner and the principal, C.B. Cummings, were the instructors. The first graduating class in 1915 consisted of five boys: brothers Martin and John Davis, Charles Crim, Dale Redman, and Raymond Russell. Their graduation sermon was held at the North Methodist Church [Park Temple]. The graduation exercises were out in the open on an improvised platform in Stranahan field, just east of the new school that had been dedicated on March 3, 1915. When I came in 1916 the high school faculty had increased in number to nine. The fifty-four students fairly “rattled around” in all those second floor rooms. I have been told that the entire population of Broward County in 1915 was 497 white and 96 colored persons [actually 4,763 total].

I retired to get married and to put my home economy into practice. Elias Ellis Marshall and I were married on July 21, 1919, in Jacksonville, Florida, at the home of my half-brother Eugene T. McIlvaine. Elias is the youngest of thirteen children born to Henry A. and Margaret Powell Marshall of Georgia. He was born in Jefferson County, Florida, on the family farm that is just south of the state line. He came to Fort Lauderdale in 1909 to assist his brothers in farming.

During the second month of the school term in 1919 I was persuaded to teach first and second year algebra. I had not looked in an algebra book since I was in the 10th grade, eleven years before, so I asked for a week’s time and I crammed! I managed, through the year, to keep one jump ahead of the second year algebra class. I wonder at my brass! During the following year I taught seven periods of Algebra I and II, and did I work!
In the ensuing years, along with mathematics, I have had classes in chorus, modern history, American history and civics, which were separate subjects then and, “shades of Robert Ripley,” even penmanship. During the First World War our cooking classes did quite a bit of canning after school hours, preserving surplus fruits and vegetables.

This was followed by a summer as a home demonstration agent in Suwannee County. I have even been the acting school principal! So many of our men teachers had been called into service that in 1918 I was asked to serve as principal for the closing month of school.

I signed the high school substitute list until I have taught at one or two at $1,500. The retirement system for Florida teachers had gone into effect in 1939. The teachers then in service were given credit for all the years that they had taught in the Florida public schools prior to 1939.

Some teachers are now required to pass the National Teachers Examination before they receive a continuing contract and the masters degree is recognized. I have been very fortunate. I have four certificates, two Graduates and two Life Graduates, and I have taken only one teacher examination, and this was on the United States Constitution. A number of hours in psychology and education were required for my first Graduate Certificate. Four hours in education were taught by Dean Salley. Poor Dean Salley! I know he must have tired of seeing me in his classes; four hours each morning for six weeks. Did that help drive him to the West Florida Hospital?

Like “Topsy,” the school has grown and grown until now the senior high school has entirely outgrown the plant. Next fall they will occupy a new, air-conditioned plant that is being erected on NE 4th Avenue, just south of Wilton Manors. In the early days, school was cancelled when the weather was cold because there was no heat in the buildings. I have the desire to remain on the county’s substitute list until I have taught at least one day in this new building. Superintendent Myron Ashmore has assured me that this can be arranged.

I remember being docked because I was ill for five days during the 1918 flu epidemic. It cost me $25 to be ill! In contrast, when I was sick in 1946 and unable to find the cause, I went to Johns Hopkins Hospital during the Christmas holidays and missed the first week after Christmas. Not only did I lose no school pay, but Blue Cross helped materially to defray the cost of the trip to Baltimore.

The examinations revealed no reasons for the recurrent fever. The doctors said it was probably nerves. I decided that, if nerves were the cause of my troubles, it was about time for me to leave the classroom. I had been in school at least part of every year since I was seven years of age. I made plans to retire and left the school system in June 1948. At that time the school population of Fort Lauderdale was 3,000. Compare that with the nine students enrolled in our first school nearly fifty years before.

**TEACHERS’ SALARIES**

Money problems have always been with schools. Way back in 1916 we had such frills as kindergarten, athletics, physical education, music, art, home economics, and manual training. I took metal work with the manual training class and made several hammered brass pieces that I value to this day. As money became scarce, these “frills” were dropped. Sometimes we are penny wise and pound foolish. While home economics and manual training were not being taught, the equipment for these subjects completely disappeared; when these subjects were put back into the curriculum in 1925, the laboratories had to be completely restocked.

By the school year 1927-1928, teachers’ salaries had reached the high of $215 per month, but they were cut to $190 during the second semester. In 1932-1933 we received a 28% cut over the previous year. At one time, our superintendent used his silver tongue to talk us into cutting our own monthly salaries to a low of $87.59 for a teacher with a master’s degree and ten years experience. At one time we voted to have our annual salary divided into twelve installments, but received only eight and a half months of pay. The school board mortgaged the high school property to a group of local businessmen in order to raise money for our salaries. Another time, when teachers were receiving $1,200 for a full year’s work, they were told that salaries could not be increased because of the lack of funds. The superintendent, however, was given a $1,200 raise.

By the time I retired in 1948, salaries had been raised to $3,300, plus $100 for a masters degree with ten years experience. Retirement was based on the average of the best ten years and I had to include one or two at $1,500. The retirement system for Florida teachers had gone into effect in 1939. 1940. The teachers then in service were given credit for all the years that they had taught in the Florida public schools prior to 1939.

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**MEMORIES**

One of my most rewarding experiences as a school marm was to have one of my former pupils with me as an intern teacher. Mary Louis Perfect, a Delta Kappa Gamma, was completing her college work in Tallahassee. She chose to return to her Alma Mater for the period of internship. She is now head of the Math Department at Stranahan High School. She is doing an excellent job. Recently she was chosen Florida’s “Teacher of the Year.”
I am still substituting in our county schools. When I first retired, the State Board of Education would not permit a Florida retired teacher to substitute. I wonder why? I have been asked if the children now are any worse than in the “old days.” I was in a biology class the other day and someone had opened the doors of the little cages so that the white mice could get fresh air and exercise running about the classroom. I remember when the fresh air of Fort Lauderdale High School was not so fresh because of the over-ripe sailfish that had been crammed into the overhead ventilator. Teachers and pupils were sent outdoors while a search was made.

I also remember when a boy was dared to jump out of a second story window. And, he took the dare! And I remember another boy who, also on a dare, drank nearly a full bottle of Tabasco sauce. Was he sick! My most embarrassing moment was when I discovered that my shoes were being passed about the classroom. I had kicked them off as I sat at the desk; my feet hurt!

We read of teachers going on strike. But, I remember when the pupils at Fort Lauderdale High School went on strike. Back in 1921, for some reason, the school authorities decided that we should have school on Friday following Thanksgiving. This day had traditionally been a part of the Thanksgiving holiday. At about 9:30 that morning, a large group of pupils decided that they would protest by walking out. And, they did. Some got cold feet and returned after an hour or so, but the rest

Smith Apartments

(Historical Commission, Nance Family Collection.)
stayed out all day. Punishment followed. There were five days of suspension and the loss of twenty-five points on each grade. Poor seniors! Some almost didn't graduate. That stunt was not tried again but, as I remember, we had a holiday the next year. I am told this was the start of “skip day,” the day when all seniors are allowed to “skip” school.

Natural hazards in and around the school grounds are not the only things children have to face. I remember when a canal was dug along the northern edge of the school campus. Narrow streets were on each side. This was supposed to furnish drainage for the excess water that we had experienced. But, it was a dead end that became a smelly eyesore. Eventually, drainage pipes were installed and the canal was filled. The blasting and pounding were so loud and continuous it was almost impossible to teach. Pupils and teachers recently have gone through almost the same experience in the building of the New River Tunnel. Not all the blasting was outside the school building, however. One of the boys was playing with his toy pistol in study hall and accidentally shot himself through the hand.

So many of our old downtown landmarks, such as the first two schools, the Gilbert Hotel and the Florida East Coast Railway Station, have disappeared. The Smith house on New River, home for so many of our teachers through the years, also has been demolished. The Tom Watson Hotel at the eastern end of Las Olas Boulevard has given way to a more modern structure. Recently, the W.B. Snyder cottage on Las Olas Boulevard, south of the school property, has been removed. I remember it particularly well because it was my home for the first three years when I was in Fort Lauderdale. School trustee Mr. C.A. Carrier and his wife felt sorry for us because we were having such a hard time finding a place to stay. They took six of us in to board during that first year.

THE 1926 HURRICANE

Speaking of landmarks being demolished, the 1926 Hurricane did its best to destroy Fort Lauderdale High School. The east and west wings of the school plant had just been completed the previous summer. The rail embargo made it difficult to secure building materials except by boat, so the second story of the east wing was built of the plain tile instead of the interlocking tile that was used in the remainder of the two structures. The hurricane wiped off the entire second floor of the east wing, lockers and all. The auditorium was so weakened that it had to be bolstered with those wide steel beams that make it difficult to see the stage. Water filled the auditorium to ground level and completely ruined the seats, which had to be replaced. On at least one other occasion those poor auditorium seats were ruined by high water.

Few people who were living here on September 18, 1926, were spared personal loss from the hurricane. We had had a close call in July. That hurricane did us no damage, but Palm Beach caught the brunt of it; and, October’s Hurricane had centered south of Miami. On the evening of the 17th of September, the “Fort Lauderdale News” warned that a storm would strike near here during the night. That meant so little to us. We hadn’t been through one.

The wind rose. How it rained. Our bed was only eighteen inches away from the window which I had left cracked open a half inch. Water drops were carried straight across that space to hit me in the face. Elias was up and holding the door shut. The screen latch would not hook if the door were shut. Finally, he tired of holding the door so he opened the latch on the screen. The wind immediately tore off the screen and carried it away.

We saw the bushes gettin whipped about. A small avocado that I had grown was bent to the ground, first one way and then the other, as the wind changed directions. Finally, as the was began rising and entering the roof whose floor was only three inches above ground, we decided that it would be wise to seek refuge elsewhere. A single story wooden garage was swept away between our house and an adjacent two story concrete building. We waded across the space and climbed the exposed stairway to the second floor apartment. Elias’ father was out of town at a Baltimore hospital and he was worried about his mother and his companion. We would make the trip between our two places to see how they were faring. On one such trip Elias narrowly missed being hit by the roof of our cottage as the wind ripped it off and deposited against the back buildings. Fortunately, that roof didn’t fall. However, although the screens in the front rooms were out, the large glass doors held and Mrs. Montgomery, who were also that night in the upper apartment, were protected. During the height of the storm we saw the large sheets of metal roofing tear off the two cottages to the south of us and fly through the air. The wind and tide brought the salt water quite a few feet, up to the window sills on our ground floor apartment, before the receding tide lowered it. The days following the hurricane were unusually bright and clear; it gave us the time to clear up the mess, dry out some possessions and rebuild the damaged structures.

The year of the hurricane was so the year when “individual instruction” was introduced into our school system. Estelle Montgomery and I had spent weeks during the summer making our plans and tests for the math department. The pupils were supposed to advance their own speed and take tests...
I rode this hobby of mine hard by building up the membership, securing more money in shares, making loans, sitting under trees to discuss loans, and visiting schools after pay day to make collections. Much of the material was done on a borrowed ditto and was decorated by the art work of Bessie Y. Cook, a Delta Kappa Gamma, who taught at Northside School for many years and now is retired. At first I kept the books in my school locker; but, when I retired from teaching in 1948, I later kept them under my bed. When the credit union had outgrown this method of operation we secured the use of the passageway of the Adult Education Department. We also outgrew this area and moved into a small janitorial room in the North Hall building. Because it had an outside door on the west side, we were able to have our own street address.

Over the years Mr. Henry Claywell of the Hillsborough County Teachers’ Credit Union has been a helpful advisor. Membership was wisely opened to the colored employees of the school board. As the credit union grew, staff workers were added. I am proud to say that, under the combined leadership of treasurer Muriel Lynch and assistant treasurer Don Wills, the 1962 report showed $2,513,901.05 and a membership of 3,701. This compares with my earlier report of January 1956: $431,936.05 and 1,256 members. I am especially glad to have worked with the credit union because, through it, I have set up my social security, a welcome addition to my meager teacher’s pension.

TEACHERS’ CREDIT UNION

I have never quite figured out how I deserved the honor of being asked to join Delta Kappa Gamma, which I accepted. It may have been because in 1946 and 1947 I had been the first president of the Broward County Classroom Teachers’ Association or because of the work that I did with the teachers’ credit union.

During the year when I served as president of the Classroom Teachers’ Association, we invited a group of Dade County teachers to have dinner with us at the Pioneer House and discuss credit union work. We liked the idea and, later, after securing a state charter, organized our Broward County Teachers’ Credit Union with about thirty members and $300 in assets. Our first loan was made to Jean Lloyd Berry, a Delta Kappa Gamma, who received a master’s degree from Columbia University. Jean is now dean of girls at Olsen Junior High School.

Time passed. The state bank examiner eventually came to inspect our books. He called for a group meeting and said he could make no examination because they had not been set up properly nor kept up-to-date, although the money was all accounted for. Some of the teachers urged me to act as treasurer of the credit union. I said that if Irene Mims, our bookkeeping instructor, would help me, then I would. The credit union became my hobby. I wanted to build it up to be self-supporting. I took over the job in the spring of 1947 and, by 1956, it was large enough to stand alone, and I retired a second time.

On the brighter side, naturalist and author Dr. Marston Bates, listed in “Who’s Who,” first showed his interest in the insect world by making a wonderful collection of butterflies while he was in high school. Dr. Bates did research in South America for the Rockefeller Foundation for fifteen years. Gertrude Boyd teaches at the University of Arizona. Colonel Truman Setliffe, a 1941 graduate of Louisiana State University, has been District Engineer, United States Army Corps of Engineers, Philadelphia District, since July 1959. Army Engineers, by the way, are restoring the New Jersey shoreline damaged by the severe storm last spring. The Delaware Valley Council and the Army Engineers plan to develop the water and land resources of Delaware River Basin.

Ruth T. Dichtenmueller and Ernestine Freiday, Ivy Berryhill, Ann M. Evans, all Delta Kappa Gammas, Geneva Rickard, Charles Packard and Harold Hayes all teach at Fort Lauderdale High School. Others include: Frank Clinton, principal at New River Junior High School; Paul Rogers, congressman; Boyd Anderson, Sr., for many years our county judge; Virginia S. Young, school board member; and Bill Hollard, postmaster. Many others have made their names in athletics: Katherine Rawls in swimming and Buddy Behrens in tennis. I could go on and on in telling of the successes of former students but, in conclusion, let me say that teaching Fort Lauderdale High School students has been a most rewarding achievement.
Pioneer Farming in Dania:  
An Oral History Interview  
with  
Minnie and Isidore Mizell*

CK = Cooper Kirk      MM = Minnie Mizell
IM = Isidore Mizell   EH = Ervean Hampton

Dania pioneers Minnie and Isidore Mizell were interviewed by county historian Cooper Kirk in the summer of 1981 at their home in Fort Lauderdale. Mr. and Mrs. Mizell were born in Hamilton County, Florida, in 1882 and 1894, respectively. In 1910 they and their two sons, Von and Ivory, moved to Dania when it was known as Modello.

Twelve more children were born to this couple after they had settled in southern Broward which, at that time, was in the northern section of Dade County. The names of their other children are: Murray, Ethel Papy, Ervean Hampton, Bernice Peck, Taft, Earl, Zeal, Gwendolyn Mosby, Lorenza, Guilda Bryant, who was named by Mr. John Bryan after his wife, Jacquelyn Andrews, and Isidore, Jr. The three oldest sons are deceased.

And, then, we came from Mr. Bryan’s grove to Dania and we lived there in Dania from then until 1963 when we moved to Fort Lauderdale. And we’ve been here ever since.

CK: How many years have you been retired from work? You’re ninety-nine now.
IM: Well, I retired . . .
EH: He retired when Ivory took over the property and the business and such. He really retired when he had an accident about five years ago.

CK: So, you worked up till you were past ninety years of age? And what kind of work were you doing back then?
IM: I farmed and worked with carpenters. There was a bunch of carpenters working there, and I worked along with all of them until the time would come to farm and we’d go back to the farm.

CK: Whereabouts in Dania did you farm?
IM: We were staying there in Dania and we worked on the farm until the boll weevil came and shut the farming down in Dania. We couldn’t raise any tomatoes; the blooms would drop off. So that’s when I got to working with the carpenters, building houses and shacks here in Dania for about thirty years. And, then, in 1963 we came to Fort Lauderdale, and we’ve been here in Fort Lauderdale ever since. But I haven’t been able to do anything since. My working days are gone.

CK: Well you worked long enough. What do you remember about Mr. John Bryan?
IM: He was the finest man I ever worked with in my life. He was a nice man. I couldn’t expect anybody to treat us as nice as he did. We stayed right there [c. 1917] until, he decided to go to the range up there in Kissimmee. He left us in charge of every thing, the house he lived in, and all. They didn’t move anything. They just left their stuff there in our charge. And they’d come back sometimes and spend a day or two, or a week, there and then they’d go back again to the range. But, Mr. John Bryan was a fine man. He was a good man. And he treated us just as nice as he could. We don’t want anybody to treat us any better than Mr. Bryan did.

CK: Did he work hard, himself?
IM: Mr. Bryan was a range man, he raised cattle. He brought a bunch of cattle down here but the cattle couldn’t stay down here because . . .

*See “Behind the Scenes,” inside front cover.
these glades got under water; there weren't any canals down here. There was nothing to take the water away. And when the big rains came, all those rains we had, the cattle would get under water, and he had to carry the cattle back. He did come back, but they couldn't live here at that time. There weren't any canals here. And there wasn't any way to get the water away from here; you couldn't pump the water off because there was nowhere to pump it.

CK: You say he took the cattle off, what did he do with them, take them up to Kissimmee?

IM: Now, I don't know what he did with them, but he loaded them in box cars and carried them back to Kissimmee; and I imagine he put them out on the range; but, I didn't go up there. He didn't ever carry me to Kissimmee, where the cattle range was, with him. But when he'd come back here, sometimes he'd stay a week at a time.

CK: Well, did you work with him out here, with the cattle, or did you stay just on the grove?

IM: I just stayed on the grove. What time I worked for Mr. Bryan, I was on his grove.

CK: Was he here when you came?

IM: Yes, sir. They were living out on the grove at that time and they moved and went to Kissimmee on a ranch where they were raising cattle and left me and my wife out there on the grove and we took care of the grove and they were raising cattle up there at Kissimmee.

CK: What made you come to Dania, to Modello, from Hamilton County?

IM: I had some friends who told me that you could raise a thousand dollars worth of tomatoes on one acre of land. And they said this was the best tomato land. They'd plant them in seven foot rows and they'd fill them rows up with tomatoes, just as pretty as you want to see. And you just set your bucket down and filled it up. They were the prettiest tomatoes I had ever seen in my life. And Livingston Blue was the name of the tomato seed that we were using at that time. And, from then on, Mr. [John B.] Gregory got to raising seed right there in Dania. And he'd have a bunch of tomato seed, and they called them Gregory seed.

CK: Did you know J.M. Holding?

MM: Yes.

IM: Sure. Yes, sir, he was one of the old citizens there in Dania. When I came there, there weren't but seven old citizens there: Mr. Roper, Mr. Holding, Mr. Frost, and Mr. Tubbs, and ... .

CK: You mean there were only seven families there when you came?

IM: Seven families, and it was Modello then; it wasn't Dania, it was Modello.

CK: What do you remember about Mr. [A.C.] Frost, the old man . . .

IM: Mr. Frost, the father, was running the store, and he had Mr. Martin Frost and Mr. Greg Frost clerking in it. And Mr. Willis had a store on the other side of the street. There were only two stores in Dania when I came here, and Mr. Frost was running one of them.

CK: Now, what kind of man was Mr. Frost, the old man? How was he to get along with?

IM: I didn't deal too much with the old man, but Mr. Martin C. Frost was a nice man to get along with. We rented a lot of land from Mr. Martin Frost, to farm on, and so I think the best acquaintances I had in Dania were Mr. Frost, Mr. Edge, and Mr. John Gregory. They were the best men whom I knew to help me out. They treated me very nice. They'd let me have land anywhere they had it to lend.

CK: How much would you pay in rent for an acre of land?

IM: Sometimes they'd charge us ten dollars, but they never did charge too much for the rent. Seven, and eight, and ten dollars per acre.

CK: Per year?

IM: Yes. The highest I know of was fifty dollars for five acres. That's the highest rent I ever paid.

CK: Who'd you pay that to?

IM: Mr. Martin Frost.

CK: Was it good land for raising tomatoes?

IM: The east side [east side of present Federal Highway] over there would make the best tomatoes that you'd want to raise.

CK: Do you remember when, in 1918, the canals were dug to drain the land? Or, do you remember any ditches over there?

IM: The first canal cut through there was in 1917 when they cut that little Dania Cut-off Canal. That's two years after we sent seven men to Tallahassee to get Broward County. They got up there and got them to divide some land off Dade County and some off Palm Beach County, and made Broward In 1915.

CK: You remember who those seven men were?

IM: I know some of them. Mr. [S.M.] Alsobrook was one from Dania. Mr. Martin Frost was another.

CK: How about Tom Bryan?

IM: Well, Tom Bryan wasn't a Dania man, so far as I knew . . .

CK: He was from Fort Lauderdale.

IM: Yes, sir, that's right.

CK: Do you mean that there were seven who went from Dania, or seven that went up there altogether?

IM: Well, sir, they had to be in Dania for me to be acquainted with them because we didn't get around too much. Nobody had any automobiles at that time. And then, Mr. Bryan had an automobile, one of about three. And Mr. Mulligan had one.

CK: That's when the county was formed?

IM: Yes, I don't think anybody else owned an automobile. There
were about three automobiles there in Dania.
CK: What do you know about Mr. Holding [first Broward County Superintendent of Public Schools]?  
IM: Well he had a grove not too far from Mr. Bryan's grove. And he came out there sometimes with some tangerines. Mr. Bryan didn't have any. And he'd give me a box full. And I thought that was mighty nice of him. I never did get too well acquainted with him, never did work for him, never had many dealings with him. Mr. Frost and Mr. Edge and Mr. John Gregory and Mr. Tubbs . . . there was a man who I was well acquainted with.
CK: Mr. Harry Tubbs was the mayor of Dania in 1925. Now, do you remember when there was a lot of building in Dania in 1925, 1926?  
IM: Yes, sir, I remember those houses they built and . . .
CK: Do you remember the Dania Beach Hotel? The president of the company that built it was A.J. Ryan from Chicago. And several of the people were from Chicago. Do you remember A.J. Ryan?  
IM: A.J. Ryan sold real estate. He was one of the Dania citizens, too. Mr. Labree was a bicycle man. He rented bicycles and I used to rent bicycles from him sometimes to go on a little trip. Mr. Labree was a nice man, too. I don't think he had anything but a little truck; I don't believe he had a car.
CK: Do you remember when Tegmentail Road was built?  
IM: I remember when they finished it. They had a little dike filled up there to go through on, but they finished that.
EH: Yes, it did have that. It used to go over like a little bridge.
CK: Did it cross a canal, was that it?  
EH: Yes, it's right between Griffin Road and Stirling Road.
CK: Do you remember Lercy Bryan?  
EH: [laughter] Excuse me, he raised Lercy Bryan.
IM: Now, Lercy Bryan was one of Mr. Bryan's boys.
CK: How many boys did he have?  
MM: Two.
IM: Murray was the oldest boy.
CK: I knew Lercy; I used to play ball against him. He's a tough little cookie. Let me ask you, what person did more for Dania than anyone else, to build it up, to improve it?  
IM: If I were to give you the best of my knowledge, it was Mr. Martin Frost. He sold the Dania
people all the lots they had in Dania. They divided the tract of land that their old man [A.C.] Frost had there, on the west side of the railroad, and they laid that off for the colored people. Well, they never squared them lots up, they ran them right by the railroad. One lot is nine feet longer on one end than it is on the other. The lots are not square in colored town. Mr. Frost is the man who owned the property and he sold them for little or next to nothing. Some paid ten dollars for a lot. And Mr. Frost would give them five years to pay it. And they needed every bit of it.

CK: Sounded like some poor people back in those days.

EH: That's right.

IM: And that's the way we bought the lots in Dania. We bought them from Mr. Martin Frost.

CK: Do you wish you had bought more land?

IM: Well, I'll tell you, I had a chance to buy forty and fifty acres of land, but I thought there'd come a day when I'd be sorry I bought it; that I'd be tax poor. Mr. Alsobrook owned a lot of land and he was tax poor. Mr. [Joseph W.] Young came down there and bought [Mr. Alsobrook's] land and built Hollywood. Now, Mr. Alsobrook had got to where he couldn't pay his taxes.

CK: Well, Mr. Alsobrook owned that land where Hollywood is now, is that right?

IM: That's right. He owned that land and sold it to Mr. Young. Mr. Young gave him a hundred twenty thousand dollars for that whole tract of land back in there. And Mr. Alsobrook came to me and asked me what he do with all that money. Mr. Alsobrook was surprised, he was so happy. He had one boy and the boy had one eye. And Mr. Alsobrook bought that land and sold that land to Mr. Young.

CK: Who owned the land where the two million dollar banyan tree was located? Was it [P.H.] Roper?

Where Brooks came in later, around the curve, there.

IM: Mr. [George B.] Hinkley.

CK: Right. He put in a lot of different kinds of shrubbery there. He had a nursery.

EH: Did any colored people own any of the land on the east side?

IM: Not that I knew of. If any did, I didn't know it.

CK: According to the newspaper accounts, Mr. Holding owned more land over there than anybody else. EH: I thought the Frost's did.

CK: Not according to the newspapers. But, Frost owned a lot. So, you would say that Mr. Martin C. Frost did the most for the people of Dania. Do you know his daughter, Mrs. Jeanette Eby?

MM: Oh, yes . . .

IM: Yes, I know Mr. Frost, his family, all of them.

CK: Do you remember I.T. Parker?

IM: I.T. Parker passed on to his sweet beyond. He's gone but I've been told that his brother [William S.] is living somewhere. Ervean, where's his brother?

EH: He's in a nursing home in Hollywood. Both of them were bankers . . .

IM: I.T. [Parker] is the one who started the bank. He started that bank in 1912 and there was none in Dania before that.

CK: Did you come up to Fort Lauderdale often?

IM: No, sir, about once a year.

CK: Up to the courthouse?

IM: After they made this Broward County I had to come to Lauderdale about once a year to pay my taxes. I stayed in Dania from 1915, the time when they made Broward County, until 1963, when I came to live up here in Lauderdale.

CK: How did you get money to send your children to college, like Dr. Von Mizell? Did he work his way through?

MM: We worked and helped him.

IM: Well I'm going to tell you, the colleges weren't like they are now. You could send a child to college for forty-five dollars a month, at that time; and I could get up forty-five dollars to pay one's board and keep one in school all the time. There was plenty of work there that I could get enough to get up to forty-five dollars. But, if you had a child now and you wanted to send him to college, you'd have to go somewhere else.

CK: Well what were you doing when you sent Von to college?

IM: I'd farm in the winter, up until the last of April. Then, I would go out and catch little jobs here and yonder, building and helping people to build things.

CK: How much would you get per hour, carpentering?

IM: We got a dollar and a quarter an hour.

CK: That's ten dollars a day. That was pretty good money back in those days.

IM: I thought I'd rather do that than to farm.

CK: What about the mosquitoes, what did you do when the mosquito season was here; how did you fight the mosquitoes?

IM: We had mosquito nets. We'd put a mosquito net over the bed we slept in. And, in fact, we had to fight mosquitoes all the time.

CK: What did you do when you were out working?

IM: The mosquitoes wouldn't bother you too much when you were working. I never saw mosquitoes when we were working. But at night, when you laid down to rest, they'd come in; they'd be so thick you could just catch a handful of them.

CK: Did you ever have smudge pots?

MM: Yes, sir. That's right, we had smudge pots. We would burn insect powder, too. Sometimes we'd just make a smoke out of rags.

CK: How about the churches? Did
you go to church?

IM: Yes, sir, we went to church; we were Missionary Baptists. We went to St. Ruth’s Church every Sunday.

EH: Tell him that you built St. Ruth’s Church.

IM: Oh, I built the church, I built it three different times. The storm blew it down one time and I built it back. Then they decided that they wanted a block building. That church is still there. I built that church from the ground up. I poured the foundation and went on up to the top.

EH: It might be interesting to know that he and another man [Joe Sidney] built the first black school. Mr. Martin Frost gave the land.

CK: Do you remember what year or about when it would be?

EH: It must have been ... Attucks was built in '26 and six years before that ...

CK: About 1920. I know it was being renovated in 1925, I got the school board records. And the colored school building in Dania was being renovated in 1925 when James S. Rickards was the county superintendent of the schools. Mr. Holding went out in about 1915 and Mr. Rickards came in and stayed in until 1928. Mr. Bennett came in in 1931 and stayed until 1952 ... Do you know where Dania got its name?

IM: Well, it was named Modello before. They changed the name to Dania after they found out that the Danes were the first people to come here.

CK: The Frosts were Danish. A.C. Frost, the father, came from Denmark to Illinois in the 1870s. Did you know Monty Smith? He wasn’t an old-timer. He was a policeman, a police chief on the sheriff’s department. I played ball with him for years and years.

IM: Well, I remember him.

CK: Were there any paved roads in Dania when you came [in 1910]? Or, were they all sand roads?

IM: No, they had rock roads.

CK: Incidentally, did you come down by train when you came in 1910?

MM: Came down by train.

CK: Where did you stay when you first came down?

MM: Mr. Bryan had a little house that we stayed in.

CK: So, the first work that you did was in Mr. Bryan’s grove and you stayed with Mr. Bryan for seven years ...

MM: Right.

CK: And you went into farming for yourself in about 1917. Did you ever go to the beach when you were young, back in those days?

MM: We’d go sometimes.

CK: We’d go down there sometimes when the church would have a meeting and they’d want to go down to the beach and then picnic. We’d baptize people in the ocean.

CK: You had to have a boat to get across the canal, didn’t you? There was no bridge back then.

IM: We had a bridge.

CK: Did you go to the beach regularly?

MM: No, just went on occasions.

CK: Did you ever go hunting?

IM: Why, raccoon and ‘possum would come up all around our house. And rabbits, you’d catch all of them roaming around the grove, there. We had rabbits and ‘coons and ‘possums.

CK: Were there any wild turkeys?

MM: A few.

CK: Did you have any contact with the Indians?

MM: I didn’t. They would come by and ask to pick oranges sometimes.

CK: Ever go fishing?

IM: We went fishing quite often. We’d go striking at night and kill all the fish that we wanted with a striking iron. The glades were all full of water and nice big warm perch would be out there. We had a torch that we’d hold up over the
That's right. They'd be down Collins' wife whom we associated with about five years ago. So, you didn't go to a hospital; Collins ran a store and Mrs. There were the Chambers and No, always felt poor, very poor. You could see them, easy. But, the mudfish and the catfish would be down in the deep water.

CK: So, it was clear water, then?
IM: That's right. They'd be down there. And there was one lady here, Mrs. Blount, a widow woman, who'd go striking, too. Lot of rights she'd be down there striking, carrying us some feed, and we'd be down there and we'd kill all kinds of fish, these would bite, you know, what they called a pike fish.

CK: I've heard of it.
IM: They lay right on top of the water. You could see them, easy. But, the mudfish and the catfish would be down in the deep water.

CK: Did you consider yourself, in relation to the other blacks in Dania, well-off, or average, or below average? How did you think about yourself? We all think about ourselves and, you know, how we fit in. Were you any better situated than most other blacks in Dania or, what do you think about it?

IM: I didn't think much about it. felt very comfortable. It was families, the [Leola C.] Chambers family, Miss [Mary] Chambers, and Mr. Collins' wife whom we associated with and . . .

CK: Well, did you think of yourself as being rich?
IM: No, always felt poor, very poor.

CK: Who were some of the blacks down there besides the Collins family?
IM: There were the Chambers and the Mac Smiths. There was Miss Jottie Taylor, a black in Dania; he's very intelligent, and Mr. and Mrs. Perkins.

CK: Were most of these people farmers?
IM: Yes, though, of the wives, Mrs. Collins ran a store and Mrs. Perkins was a maid. Mrs. Chambers was a midwife, a granny.

CK: So, you didn't go to a hospital; you had the granny, a midwife, here. How much would the midwife charge?
MM: I think the charge was three dollars. And it went up to ten.

CK: She finally went up to ten dollars. That was really an outrageous charge, ten dollars.

IM: That was terrible.

CK: Did the blacks ever get together and have a community picnic, or something like that?
MM: Yes, we had picnics. We would go to the beach sometimes and have a group picnic. Maybe one church would get together.

CK: But, did you have any group outside the church?
MM: Well, yes, if they'd want to come they'd be welcome. All they had to do was to bring their baskets of food.

CK: Did you have a baseball team?
MM: Well, we didn't have a regular team in Dania. The boys played ball.

CK: Your children grew up in Dania, of course. How old was Von when you came down here?
MM: He was about three years old.

CK: He must have been in one of the first schools that they had in Dania.
MM: Well, I reckon so. They had four months of school there. They started in July, I think it was. That's all.

CK: He must have done some studying at home, then. Did you encourage him to be a medical doctor?
MM: Well, we did.

CK: Where did he go to college?
MM: Morehouse, in Atlanta. First he went to Florida Normal, a high school, in St. Augustine.

CK: Florida Normal has been made into a college, Florida Memorial College, down in Miami. Of course you had to pay for that, too, when he attended Florida Normal.

MM: Oh, yes.

CK: Where did he go to medical school?
MM: Meharry, in Nashville.

CK: So he went from here to St. Augustine, to Atlanta, to Nashville, and then he came back here to practice. Do you ever go to this big center [the Dr. Von D. Mizell building] down here, about three blocks away, that's named in his memory?

MM: Well, I've been crippled; we had a bad wreck about five years ago. I was there for the dedication, but didn't go inside the building.

EH: All the school children went to the dedication . . .

CK: Did you have a car down in Dania when you were young, say, in the 1920s when the boom time came?

MM: I think we did. I think in the boom time we had a car . . . when did we get the first car that we owned?

IM: I don't remember, Minnie, the year we did get that car . . . it was a Ford. We used to drive that Ford up to Jasper, the county where we were raised, and . . . we never had too much trouble with that Ford car. I believe they were built better then, than they are now. I believe they were good cars, the Ford cars. Do you know one thing, the President of the United States, Mr. James Carter, wrote us a congratulations when we were married seventy years and I didn't even know he knew that we were in the world.

CK: When were you married? It had to be before you got here in 1910.
IM: Me and my wife left Hamilton County, and came all the way down here. We came from Genoa, Florida, to Palatka and crossed over there on the other side of the river and got on the [Florida] East Coast train, and when we got off, we got
off in Dania. We didn’t know anybody in Dania when we got off there. But, there was a fellow there they called Joe Young. We went to his house and asked if there were any boarding houses or any place where we could stay at night. And he said, “Come on in. You can stay right here.” And we didn’t have to pay him one penny, and we’d never seen the man before.

CK: Did you see him after that?
IM: Yes, I saw him several times, about two years after that.
CK: What kind of food did you have to eat?
MM: Plenty of green vegetables.
CK: Was your garden by your house or out where you farmed tomatoes?
MM: Out where we farmed tomatoes sometimes.
CK: What kind of stoves did you have?
MM: Wood stoves.
CK: Did you ever own a coal-oil stove, where you had burners on it?
MM: Yes, but I never really liked it.
CK: You liked the wood stove the best?
MM: Oh, yes.
CK: What did you do for air-conditioning?
MM: We didn’t have anything like that.
CK: What did you use, a fan?
MM: No.
CK: Keep the windows open?
MM: Well, when we had mosquitoes so bad, you couldn’t keep the windows open.
CK: You ever have much cold weather then?
MM: Oh, no, we wouldn’t ordinarily get the cold.

CK: But you still got cold enough that you had to make a fire at times, didn’t you?
MM: Not much.
CK: We used to put a chimney into every house we built. And, we’d have a fireplace in there. But, mosquitoes, after so long a time they got the mosquitoes killed off, they’d just come and spray the whole home and get rid of those mosquitoes. Got rid of them, quick. Now, you won’t find too many mosquitoes, here. You might find a few, but you won’t find too many.
CK: What thing helped you most when you were in Dania in the early days, say in 1910, 1915? What helped you the most to keep going? It was a hard life. What kept you going? Was it faith in God?
MM: Oh yes, I’ve always been a practicing Christian.
CK: In other words, as a Christian you had hope that God was in control of things, that He was watching out for you.
MM: Yes.
CK: Did you think about life getting better, that: “Someday, if we keep saving our money we can buy some land; maybe sometime we can retire!” Did you ever think like that?
MM: I never felt as though I would ever be able to sit down. But, I just prayed and asked for good health so I could be able to take care of myself.
CK: Did you have good health?
MM: Good health, both of us, always.
CK: If you had to change your life, in just one way, what would that change be?
MM: The only change that I have made in my life that I’m not too satisfied with, although I’ve accepted it, was moving from Dania up here to Fort Lauderdale. I had good friends. I didn’t give it much thought when I was moving. I had GOOD friends there, and I got along well with them. But, I’m up here in this area, and I haven’t been able to make the friends here that I had there. I’m just not able to get out and do it. You know, people will meet you half way probably, but you’ve got to do something yourself. And I’m not able to do this, and he is not able; so we just sit here on the porch.
CK: So, you miss your friends that you lived with for so long in Dania, you miss them more than anything else...
MM: Right. I miss the white and the colored. I had a good white friend there that I thought a lot of...
CK: Tell me about your father?
IM: Well, he was a good farmer, a good provider, and he raised ten head of children right there in Hamilton County.
CK: Where’d he come from?
IM: They brought him to Georgia to the sale block, and sold him to Mizell, and Mizell brought him to Florida. We got the name from Mizell who bought him off the sale block in Traders Hill, Georgia, and brought him here. There are a lot of Mizells here, now. They scattered all over the United States. But, my father and his brother were the only Mizells brought from Traders Hill, Georgia, and brought him here. He was a good farmer, a good provider, and he raised ten head of children right here in Hamilton County.

CK: How old was your father then?
IM: He was twelve years old when he was bought. Did your father live to be an old man?
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CK: How old was your father then?
IM: He was twelve years old when FREEDOM came.
CK: If he was sold as a slave in 1859, then he was six years old when he was bought. Did your father live to be an old man?
IM: Seventy-eight.
CK: You’ve out raced him twenty one years, so far.
IM: Yes, sir.
CK: Well, this has been a delightful time talking to you about getting this information. I know it’s hard to recall things over a long period, from around 1900 up to the present time. Thank you very much.