

Rachel Spilman

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Interviewer: Edward Woodward

Rachel Spilman was born July 1924 in Palatka, Florida. She moved to Tarpon Springs with her family in the late 1920s after the company that employed her father relocated to Miami (Track 4). Spilman talked about her maternal and paternal family ties to Tarpon Springs and Anclote (Tracks 1-2). Her Grandfather Wyatt Meyer was born in Anclote (Track 1). When Meyer was two, his father died of yellow fever contracted in Cedar Key during a trip to buy household supplies, Spilman said. As a widower, Meyer's mother, a school teacher and musician, raised seven children (Tracks 1 and 3).

Spilman recalled her childhood memories. She swam in Lake Butler, skated at night under street lights, and went to Wall Springs and Clearwater Beach (Tracks 5 and 8). Her family often picnicked at Anclote Key where her uncle was the lighthouse keeper; she recalled fiddler crabs and the smell of the Gulf of Mexico (Tracks 1-2). Nearby her Grandfather Meyer had a cabin on stilts above the water (Tracks 1 and 11). With poles they propped open large windows for a breeze, and lay down at night listening to water lap the posts below. She recalled hearing sponge boats returning to their docks at night, and fisherman on their boats strumming guitars and singing. When she and her family fished, it was for flounder, she believed (Track 2). The cabin, which Spilman estimated being built in the 1920s, blew up years later, possibly from combustion or a kerosene stove, she speculated (Track 12).

Spilman recalled other memories about her Grandfather Meyer. She rode with him to tend to his pigs in the woods. When he honked the horn of his Model A car, the pigs would gather (Tracks 9 and 10). Her Grandfather Meyer also had a large garden and a citrus grove near Spilman's present home on Meyer Lane (Track 9). He grew tangerines, grapefruit, oranges, kumquats and lemons. He also ventured into the sponge industry in the late 1800s as a seller, and helped build the lighthouse on Anclote Key (Track 3).

Spilman also talked about her paternal Grandfather Albaugh, a physician with asthma who relocated from Ohio to Tarpon Springs in the late 1800s for health reasons (Track 2). Spilman said her grandfather was looking for a place in the South that needed a doctor when he found Tarpon Springs. He wired his wife to come down because he'd "found paradise," said Spilman. He wore white linen suits and traveled as far as 40 miles a day by horse and buggy treating patients in the surrounding areas of Eustis, Odessa, New Port Richey and Palm Harbor (Tracks 2 and 13-14). Saw mill accidents produced patients as well (Track 13). On night calls, Spilman said her grandmother Albaugh would sit by a window and await her husband's return. In later years he used a mail ordered car that had to be put together (Track 14).

Spilman's Albaugh grandparents lived in town, where they had citrus groves on each side of the house and a grove in New Port Richey (Track 9). The Albaugh's housed missionaries through their church (Track 6). Spilman also recalled her family boarding tourists, one of whom she recalled knitting gloves by the fire.

Spilman was a charter member of her high school band formed in 1936 (Track 5). She played the clarinet and recalled her experience performing in the Orange Bowl (Tracks 5 and 8). Spilman lived many of her adult years elsewhere; her husband was an international hospital consultant and frequently traveled (Track 10). But she returned to Tarpon Springs during the summers, and she and her husband relocated to her hometown in 1980 (Track 10 and 12).