

Fairhope Single Tax Corporation Archives

FMH-A0007b Transcription of Audio

Helene Williams Payne interview, a continuation of FMH-A0007a which reviews a poem by W. A. Dealy. Two unnamed ladies ask questions and make comments.

Approximately 31 minutes.

1982 when another interview with her took place.

The interview, dated April, 1982, begins with part of a W. A. Dealy poem with Mrs. Payne's comments. After that, the other ladies ask her questions.

Then Myrtle and Bill fell into line, Leonard and Hazele went up to Chai to get themselves hitched with an Illinois tie. We were married in Chicago in 1915. August of 1915. Came down to Mississippi on our boat on our honeymoon, brought it down to Fairhope.

And Gene and Jim Spencer bought, got them a wife, oh both got them a wife, but Gene's hit the rocks. It was plumb full of strife. Gene married Overton, an Overton girl that Walter Overton ran the Fairhope, the Colonial Inn and he married his sister and it didn't work out.

"Axel and Nettie, they fooled us all. We thought their engagement was only a stall." That's Axel Johnson? Yep, Axel Johnson.

Next, Jim and Piney a sailing went down to Weeks Bay just to live in a tent. But mosquitoes and chiggers appeared too soon and brought to an end their sweet honeymoon. Jim and Piney spent their honeymoon down on Fish River on our boat that was anchored up there.

Next came the marriage of Leah and Max, who were quite filled up on this single tax. We can't stay single, we heard them say. to have a big family, we'll show them the way. That was Leah Gaston. That was Leah Gaston, married Max McGill. And when they were married, they went out, they lived in Colorado somewhere for a while. But eventually they came on back to Fairhope, and then he opened his studio in Mobile.

And then there was Ed Roberts. He took a long time to get him a gal that he could call mine. Ed Roberts was a gay fellow. He married one of the Wee Man girls, twins from Mobile. Then they adopted that girl. They adopted Phyllis. Phyllis.

And there was Selena, who got married too. But things went wrong, so another she drew. Dick Parker, the skipper, a little hotshot. That's not the, is that the second one? Oh, Selena, no, Selena married Scott Minnich to begin with and had one boy with him

and it went on the rocks and then she married O.K. Cummings, the real estate man, that was her second marriage.

Who's the other? Well, Dick Parker, the skipper, a little hotshot could sail a ship when others could not. Dick Parker was here with the boys for a short while. Lived out on the farm, ganged up with them. I don't know where in the world they put all of them, but they ganged up somewhere. He married someone away from here. I never did know her.

There was old Jackson who couldn't dance, but it wasn't because he had ants in his pants. Jackson was a fellow from Mississippi and he was helped on the Courier. He worked in the Courier office. He was a gay fellow with everybody, but he didn't get serious with anybody.

And Ralph Mershon too settled down by marrying a gal from New Orleans town. Go ahead on Ralph Mershon. Ralph Mershon was the son of Uncle Arthur Mershon, was raised here in Fairhope. And I think he was an engineer. He worked away from here, and he met this gal evidently in New Orleans. I don't think he ever came back here after he married her. He lived in New Orleans.

Well, all these weddings ain't changed Pete a bit. He's one of those guys Dan Cupid can't hit. He's saved all his money, now owns half the town. But there ain't no gal that can bring him down. Pete Baldwin. That's Pete Baldwin. He finally did get married to... He married Mildred Titus.

Spider and Cornie both got them a wife and seemed mighty happy with married life.

Oh yeah, the town clerk, I forgot to tell, was always so busy that she never fell. But cheer up, Gladys, there'll come a day when somebody else's all your bills will pay. She never married. Gladys who? Gladys what? What was Gladys' last name? Gladys Lowell.

You may wonder why I'm writing this stuff. Do I hear a cry that you've had enough? But at this time of year, our kids take us back to our childhood days and the old home shack. That's why these memories I've jotted down about when we were kids in the old hometown. Now we hope we've not overlooked any friends in sending our greetings before this ends. So we will close, but say right here, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the Dealys.

End of Dealy poem

You know, those things are wonderful. You bring them back. They don't mean anything you might say to you and to the younger generation. But now, of course, I'm about the only one left of that older bunch like that. But they just mean everything in the world

when they bring all that back. Those were the good days of Fairhope. And on the back of the card, it shows a picture of the boat that was your husband's and yours. picture of all the different men on it with the famous crews to New Orleans that they took in 1916.

That was on the Wilah. And the boat's name was Wilah, W -I -L-A-H, named after the members of your family. She was a 50 by 17, good sized boat, flat bottom with a center That must have been a wonderful honeymoon for you. It was. It was. Even though you had his brother along with you, didn't you? Yep. He didn't bother us too much, though.

Now he's got the names of the men here on this cruise. There's Dick Parker, Axel Johnson, Bill Dealy, Captain Ed Roberts, Hank Payne, Paul Molyneux, Kurt Smith, Uncle Nath Mershon. He was a chaperone. He was much, much older. I was surprised he even went. He was so old. Ernie Swift and Captain Lynn Payne. I think that was the highlights of Ernie's life. He'd never been much, and he was held down, so he really had a time.

Tape stops here. Restarts with other people.

There was a Bible class called The Clover League. Do you remember who was in your name about it? I had a picture of a group, didn't I? Was it a sweet picture? I don't know. Who taught it? I don't know a thing about it. I just know it says underneath the Bible class, 1915, and Mr. Tuveson. And Ms. Tuveson's been on the back. No. I don't remember the call. I think I remember that there was a class. Well, I can't remember who was in it. I think Ms. Burton was in it, and Ms. Brown. Well, she was Ms. Brown, Daphne Brown, I think we recognize those, too. I would think Ms. Sweet, but I'm not sure. Ms. Sweet? I never heard of her.

Miss Tuveson said there was only one church in town. Was that the Christian church? Uh huh. In 1915, maybe. Actually, look at the money there. Oh no. I know. I'm trying to know. We had all over the place. In 1915, you lived upstairs and Mom and Daddy lived downstairs. Yep. Did you have any lights? Mm-hmm. You did have lights? Mm-hmm. 1915, electric lights? Mm-hmm. Well, I didn't know that. What, you had running water? Yep. Yes, I remember we had running water because the washer got loose and it started running run in the sink and it just kept running and running and Leonard came home from work and he was so dead tired it was about the only time I ever saw Leonard mad. He had to cut the water and fix that washer. He was a wild man but he kind of got upset over that..

Old Mrs. Oberg ownend that house. Who was it? And there was two bedrooms upstairs and she put her things all in one bedroom and there was a bunch of the wood on the back porch all stacked up on the screen porch for a wood stove and wood fire. And the, she put all her things in that bedroom and shut the door and locked it and let us have one bedroom and the wood was stacked up on the screen porch, racked up, and she'd

come up about once a month and count the sticks to see if we'd used any of them. You were teasing. She was a male What was her name? Your daddy and mother lived downstairs and Helen was a baby. And every time Helen would just start to walk, and once she'd hit the floor, she'd take the door. Your mother would say, "Here's Helen, hit the floor." Who was that Mrs. Oberg? Your daddy would come home from the country, waiting on people, and they didn't have any money to pay him. and they pay him the vegetables and chicken and stuff. And, uh, Laura would come up the back stairs to sell the vegetables and stuff and people go out home and share with us. What, uh, what old bird was that? Huh? What old bird was that? Laura, I don't know. Was that the one that lived out in the country? I don't remember her name. No, she lived by herself, and she had kind of a scarred face, and she was mean as a devil. I don't know where she lived after she rented this house. She owned this house because we rented the upstairs. Your mother and father must have rented the downstairs. Right there next to the bridge. It's still there now. It's still there, yes.

Who did you think built my house on the hill? Was it Dr. Boris? Dr. Borscht? No. Uh, uh, Bertha Steele built that house. I didn't think Bertha did. I thought she bought it already. And Mr. -- for Dr. Moore, remodeled it. That was good. Well, there was a Dr. Borscht who lived there, and he had two or three boys. He didn't stay here long while he was a doctor. I'm like, "Oh, no." There's a picture of him and his brother, I think, out of the picture of him in front of this little car called Sally Jane or something.

Tell us, I think when you were young, I think you all had more fun. I think you all played more, laughed more, and weren't so concerned about playing. Sure, we didn't have TV to keep us stirred up. We had to make our own amusements and our own pleasures. Well, y'all, has it seemed to, I mean, you were always, I mean, you walked down to the port, you walked down to Point Clear, you danced all the time, and you fought even all the time. We didn't have cars and things to run around with. We didn't have cars, huh?

I know there was a party down at Battles one time, and a bunch of them took the baits, and Leonard thought he'd be smart, so he hired a buggy from Russell, who had the livers table. We hired a horse and buggy and we drove down. We were smart. And they sure did rag us, so we never could do that again. Where was the livery stable? On the corner of Fairhope and Bayview, where the old Social Security House used to be. On the southwest corner, right across from the park. I remember Russell had the livery stable, the first living stable in Fairhope, and he had horses, but he didn't have to charge them. And you really don't know what the people want, do you remember? No. I said, "I'm not." Well, I know in those days it would be good for us because I thought after that, I heard the buggy driving out of it. And the roads were so rough, boy, they were so runny up and down, up and down to go to Battles. Battles had the best dance floor on the beach. Was that the place that looked like a Chinese pagoda or something? It was right on the water. Yes, it looked kind of like a Chinese pagoda. Do you remember? It

seems like I remember some place like that. I can't remember where. I don't remember. I know it had a floor of pine, the floor was made of pine. The scripture was not long. And all the huge screws were slated. I think it's broken, isn't it? Mm-hmm. They walk the beach and dance all night, and we walk home. They walk the beach and get out the weeks and get the chicken and the boys go out and come and steal the chicken and put them in. And they're still alive, practically. They're thrown in the hot pan and they're still kicking. They turned them over two or three times and taken out and made them. And someone didn't kill us. I've got a lot of this on the tape already. Yeah. I didn't turn that back. No, I mean, in case you want to write down later, if you miss anything, you can listen to this again.

I was teaching school one day. I was teaching school, and we took a children on a walk on the beach, and here were all these chicken feathers floating up on the beach. We had a chicken fried the night before. The boys had taken the feathers and all the stuff and buried them in the sand. Tide came in and it had washed them out. The kids were going, "What in the world were all those feathers doing?" It was a big commotion. "Boy, I didn't take the kids to the beach anymore." I

have to report that. Any more questions? Um, what about Darrowl, one of the lawyer that wrote, didn't he? Clarence Darrow? I did. In a little bitty house. I remember Bill and I used to stop and talk to her. She was deformed. I mean her face was defund. But they said she was very brilliant. She could talk to Clarence Darrow's sister. Bill and I used to stop and talk to her. She lived in a little house next to the baby house. I don't think of her. Her name was Darrow? I don't know anymore, but it's just her parents. She wasn't running for Duncan.

I want to ask about Winifred Duncan, too. Did she live here? Yeah. Do you remember Winifred Duncan? Yes, she was in the middle of the hall. She did live here, huh? She lived in Fairhope. She had a baby buggy and she took the sides off of it and just had the frame in the bottom and she'd go to the town and buy her groceries and went on back home and she lived in that house right down from the hall in this new building, right back of where that big, big house that's been built down there. That was the same as a spider woman? Uh-huh. Yeah. Oh really? She was a spider woman. They say she'd go out at nights around the woodpiles with a flashlight and find spiders and look at them and write about them. And they say she'd go out running around without clothes on. That's what they told me. That was the tale. I read one of her books, but she didn't say that in it. Did you? They say her book was beautiful. You heard the library. The library has her book. They say her book is beautiful. I don't know if they'll let you check it out anymore, but it's there. It was so dirty and they said people who had been in her house, her house was the dirtiest thing that ever lived. But they said her book was full of spider webs. And she was one of the people's. Yeah, those people usually are. They say she'd been a dancer, longer than that troupe. Was it a dancer? A dancer? I don't know. Well, I had that book

on her, on Isabelle. Is it, is it? Is it spelled okay? It has a little book on it. It's just paperback. And I've been trying to get around to reading it, but I haven't got a tooth roll.

Oh, yeah. I don't know. I don't know. Clarence Darrow never had any relatives that lived here, huh? Yeah, he had a sister. That sister was coming. What was her name? You don't know. We always called her Miss Darrow. I don't know her first name. She lived in that little house down there across from the park. She lived in my house. She was, I don't know whether she was a victim or some kind of disease. Her face was all twisted and her body was twisted. And she'd go to the library. I was working in the library that summer. She'd come up with a sack and she'd get the deepest books anybody ever would want to read, on law and all sorts of things. And they'd be so deep, I'd just be surprised that she couldn't talk. And it was pathetic, that's all. She evidently was very, very intelligent with the books and things she read. But they said her house was terrible. Well, I guess you saw him up the ring, though, for the same thing. Nearsighted. Nearsighted. Not farsighted. She couldn't talk. She just didn't care, probably. She talked so you could hardly understand her. We used to talk to a girl and I talked to her. Did you talk to her? Yeah, we talked to her. Uh-huh. She talked hard. Yeah. She couldn't understand her. couldn't understand it. I couldn't understand it. That's what I thought. You know, in the library I couldn't understand it. But we made a, we made the effort to be friendly to her and Bill would talk to her. You know, I don't know if he understood what she said, but he, my son was a little boy. Yeah. Talked to her.

Um, I know I did read that book that he wrote on that. Didn't he write a book on some... he did something, he took a case, didn't he? Duncan? A law case. Oh, he had the monkey case up in Kentucky. What monkey case? What was that about? Oh, Evolution. And Clarence Darrow hadn't stolen before they'd taken the stand on the monkey case.

And we all had homes here. Mrs. Ives had that home here right down here. That two-story house on the big front. And he had five children and they all went to organic. And those three men were from Chicago and they were lawyers. One of them was a criminal lawyer and I don't know which one was the criminal. But Mrs. Ives would have coffee once in a while down at her house, and she'd ride a bunch of us down there. When those three lawyers were all here on vacation, they'd have a table over in the corner of the cup room, and they'd have their coffee by themselves, and they'd have a bottle of whiskey in the middle, and all the coffee was laced with bourbon. And they'd sit there and talk for themselves, the three of them. and the rest of us would just vibrate around.

Judge Stone and Ives and Darrow, they were all big supporters of Wizard Jones?. Very friendly with him, he would visit school. What about the Cummins? O.K. Cummings and his first wife. OK Cummings and his first wife. She started, she started, she was, he started. He didn't have the one wife when he was here. OK. Because, uh, she married her last lady. And she didn't marry her when she didn't marry him yet. Okay, okay,

Cummings had a wife, and then when she died, she married Minik. That's right. He died first. Wait a minute, you're speaking of the young old kid Cummings. I'm speaking of the old kid Comings, I'm speaking of the Mr. Comings in an entirely different family that was supporters of Mrs. Johnson School. Oh, I see. That's the old Comings. You're speaking of the younger one. Yeah. He died before Selena. And he married Selena. That's right. He married Selena. But he got a wife before that. Well, he did have a wife before that. Yes, he did. Because he had two sons. That's right. He was one more wife. I have one song last night. All the floors and

I can't tell them anything about the tree house. That was down south section. I've got that already. I've known her for many years. She'll stop me right now. The trees were all close together and she built this house up in the trees and a ladder on that. We kids were in school and we'd go down, walk down to school, you know, and look at it, and she'd come out and she'd say, "You stay there. You stay there. Don't you come across that line?" And she'd have a line around her house and things. Would let us come across. We were just down with curiosity. But, uh, I don't know too much about her except that she built this house and she looked up in the theater. Was it Trycadia Lodge? What? Trycadia Lodge? I don't know. That's what this picture says. It might be the right, but I don't remember that thing. But it was down south section. It was far down. In those days, it was way down in the woods. I'll show it to you later. We've already got a lot of this on tape. That's a wonderful book, too. There's a picture of her with us standing here halfway up this house. It says, "Tri-Kadia Lodge, early day." What is this, sir? There were some lovely pictures of that place. Stewart, put your pictures. I remember the pictures. I just wondered about it, because everybody-- I also wondered, what did she do with all her garbage? Do with all her-- She had chickens down below the house, didn't she? Uh-huh. She had chickens down below the house, didn't she? I don't remember. I don't remember. Well, she'd have to empty her. She had an outhouse somewhere up in the street and down below or something. I don't remember anything about that. I just remember that house was a few things up there. It wasn't practical. Oh, really?

Do you have anything about Aunt Ellen? Any questions? Who was Aunt Ellen? Tell us about Aunt Ellen. Oh, Aunt Ellen, she was an old slave. She lived up on the hill where Buck had his house, I think. I mean, where Paul had his house. That was the highest point on the land. Aunt Ellen had that place. And she lived there and the walls were all papers and newspapers. She had about two rooms or more. In the early days, all the young folks had to find something to do. So the boys would go out the day before, steal chickens, take chickens and flour and grease, and make some biscuits and things up to her. And Sunday, we'd all gang up on the beach down here at the Magnolia Tree, and we'd all walk the beach up to her house. We would climb up the hill and she had a table, big long table spread in the middle. And we had fried chicken and biscuits and gravy.

And that was a big breath. The boys brought the stuff and she'd fix them for us and they'd all pay her for it. And then we'd walk back down and wait. That was a diversion for a Sunday. And she was an old slave. and they come to the end. I don't know what her name was Aunt Ellen, that's all I know. There's a picture of her in that one of the houses. Yes, we have it. Yeah, see the picture. She showed me the picture. It's on the highest peak they set up there, and I think for Paul had his house, up in that direction. Yeah, on SeaCliff. Everything was newspapers. They'd carry newspapers up to them. She'd pass to her house with them and table to stop her with them. Of course they all put on charcoal pots and things in there today.

Do you have some more questions? Um, I've gotten all of that. Yeah. Bill Dealy was the instrument of all our time. He was always showing up something. There was always something going. He never was quiet. What did he do? He was a surveyor. And then he left here and went to Chicago and took a course, I believe, in an engineer or something and worked up at Muscle Shoals. And the dam was up there for years. I believe he was going to walk there one time, just came overnight. He saw the engineer. He was here after he retired then? He what? Was he retired when he lived here? No, he lived here before he was even married. Oh, that's right. When he was all young. He'd always get tight lots of times and he'd always tell about the time he came home at night and unhitched the horse and put him in the chicken house. Yeah. So, my husband. Well then later he came down here after he retired. Yes, he came back after he retired. Then he left here and went to Chicago and he studied this and got this engineering job to study for. And they lived up there for a while and then they came back and retired here. But they were going for a long time. When did he leave here? She came down here to visit some friends one time. I knew mother down here. She was a client of us, a little girl. And Bill was just a bomb raiser. I don't know how they ever hitched up. But she stayed with him. They had a career after that. Maybe Johnson and I just put down a lot to take the lights and get down. where they lived out in the country across, out there, Fairhope Avenue, out in the North. Is it Bancroft? Do you remember the Bancroft? Yes. They had a home out there, out there this year. Where's the house out there that has all that fancy, who has that now?