

Interviewee: Cain, Martha
Interviewer: Jackie Uhler
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Uhler: I want to make sure that you know you are being recorded?

Cain: Absolutely.

Uhler: And that's okay with you?

Cain: Absolutely.

Uhler: Great.

Cain: I just hope that what I have to say is interesting.

Uhler: Oh it will be. If we could first start out, if you could just tell me a little bit about yourself that way we can have some background.

Cain: Okay, I've lived in Tallahassee all my life and actually I'm very fascinated with Tallahassee history. I am close to retirement, I've worked for the State for thirty-three years. My mother's family is from Tallahassee, my dad's family is from Monticello. Actually my grandfather, who if he were alive, I was adopted so my parents were in their mid, their middle forties when they adopted me and if my grandfather was alive he'd probably be about one hundred and fifty. If my mom were alive she'd be in her nineties but we actually, my parents owned a two story apartments, just one apartment downstairs and upstairs, right behind the old Bill's Bookstore on West Park Avenue, like half a block off of, a half from Westcott. We were right across, up the street from all the sorority houses and the building's still there. That's where my mother was actually, she was raised there, my grandfather was actually one of the first undertaker's in the Tallahassee, in the city of Tallahassee. His name was Pope and he had a little grocery store front to kind of camouflage the little undertaker business that he had in the back of the store and he was actually here before the Cullies's and the old time families that have probably now been doing it for seventy-five years, you know the funeral homes that are in town. But anyway, then my mother's from Tallahassee, she actually graduated from Leon High School in 1929'.

Uhler: Wow.

Cain: I graduated from Leon High School in 1969 and my son should, if all goes well, graduate from Leon High School, what is this, 'on Eight, nine, ten, eleven, in 2011 and he'll be

a third generation Leon High School graduate.

Uhler: Wow, that's a legacy.

Cain: Yes, so I have kind of a little bit of Tallahassee history and my mother worked at what was at the time called the Lewis State Bank, it was a family owned bank, the Lewis and the Harrison family here in Tallahassee. So through my mom I've met a lot of the old time Tallahassee, the old Tallahassee families and stuff but I did not meet the Knott's, I did not meet Charlie through my mom. I met Charlie in the middle, middle-late '70s actually. So he was an old fella, still very active

Uhler: Now, he passed away in '85.

Cain: Yes, I met him because I know when I got married the first time in '81 I remember him giving me candelabra's for a wedding present. So I guess the last four, five years of his, well actually probably the last, after about eighty-two or three I didn't see him anymore, we just kind of lost connection because the way I got connected through him was through a girlfriend whose parents were also older the Fienbers family, they knew Charlie. Her dad did, her dad was older too, she was the last child so her mom and dad were older when she was born so they were old enough to be affiliated with the Knott children, which at that time Charlie and I don't know his brother and sister's name, but Charlie at the time I met he had to be seventy-five you know or close to it, I'm sure. But urn - the way we got to know him was that he asked Debbie had known, my girlfriend Debbie had known him as a child because he knew her parents, but them somehow, and I don't remember how, we got hooked back up with him, but he had gated horses out on a piece of property out Meridian Road, north Meridian Road, off a road called Roden Cove. And he boarded, he rented, I don't think it was his property, but he had two or three horses out there and Debbie and I've always loved horses and we got to talking and he said, "Well I've got these horses that sure do need to be exercised." So we started going up town to the old house a couple of times a week and he'd load us up in his old suburban, one of those big, huge long ones that look like a battleship. And he'd load us up, he'd put, he was such the Southern gentleman, it was just amazing to me as a young woman, I guess I was in my early twenties actually when we were doing all this. But he'd load us up, and he always would wear his little short brimmed hat and he'd drive us out Meridian Road to exercise his horses. Now his favorite horse was Black Jack, he had Morgans, they were gated horses. They weren't Tennessee Walkers, they were small Morgans but they were gated so that when you ride them you feel like you're riding a rocking horse, you don't feel a thing when you're riding 'em, you feel like your sailing "on a smooth sea when you're riding those horses. His favorite horse, a little black one, a little black Morgan, his name was Black Jack, and he loved that horse! He had another bigger brown horse that we would exercise for him to, just go round and round in the, in the coral, just to exercise for him, I don't remember that horses' name, but Black Jack was his favorite. He was kind of small and I think that's the trait for Morgan horses, they're smaller horses and they have small heads and stuff, but just beautifully gated horses. But Charlie liked to entertain, and of course he had gotten up in years and wasn't the social light like he was I guess in his younger

years but several times he would have Debbie and I come over for dinner. And he could cook the best smothered quail in the frying pan over white rice, just the perfect southern dinner and he'd serve it to us and we'd eat dinner at the big formal dinning room table. You know when you first walk in the front door and the batting rooms over to the left a little bit, well he'd set out all the good china and crystal, and the candelabras and he'd be in the kitchen cooking the quail in the frying pan with the gravy that he made. But another interesting thing and I don't know if you've learned this and I'm sure that they must have records of this there, he raised quail right downtown in his backyard.

Uhler: I think he actually raised them in the basement, that's what I was told.

Cain: Yes, yes. Well now later, when we knew him, he still had quail in pens out on the side of the house in the back. But now when we knew him those were actually his living quarters downstairs. He didn't live a whole lot up in the main house, his, he had like a little library, a little den type thing set up downstairs.

Uhler: Do you know why he did that?

Cain: I guess it was just because he was older and I think. he had his bed down there and stuff and it may be because, maybe he just had a hard time getting up and down the stairs. Because I guess downstairs it's pretty much still the way it is, the Parlor to the right and then the dinning area and kitchen to the left and there really wasn't any place that uh, I guess its just cozier down there to him. But I do remember one thing, I don't know if you really want this to be a part of it though, but they had a huge flea problem. [Laughs]

Uhler: Really?

Cain: Yeah, downstairs in the basement and I guess it was because, now I'm trying to think. I don't remember but I think he was an avid hunter at one time and he had hounds. I don't know if they were fox hounds type dogs, or beagles or whatever and I don't remember him actually having a dog this was like I said in the late eighties, and I don't think I remember him having a dog, but I do think he still had a few quail in the pen outside, and I guess maybe with the quail you could have the flea problems.

Uhler: I knew he used to raise the quails for his quail hunt, he was a huge quail hunter.

Cain: Yes, because he would raise those quail and then take them up, and I don't know which plantation it was, I don't know if it was horseshoe plantation, up right before you cross the Georgia line out Thomasville Road out 319, there's several plantations up that way. Urn but yes, he'd raise them for the plantations and then you know, I guess they come get 'em or he'd take 'em out and he'd let 'em go and I don't know if they were out there during the breeding season and then when hunting season came around and there were just thousands there to hunt.

Uhler: I think he breed them in his house so that when he'd, he'd have his little social parties where they'd go hunting and then - Would they take the quail with them? I'm not sure about that.

Cain: I think so.

Uhler: Is that how they did it.

Cain: I think stocked it so that when they got out there everybody - They would be sure to have quail, yeah that's interesting. But I do remember that and it was really funny because, it you know the late seventies, that actually wasn't that long ago and to be right there downtown off of Calhoun and Park Avenue, but to see these rows of pens, and there were shrubs along the sidewalks, so you couldn't, if you walked down the sidewalk you could see 'em, but right there, right downtown in the middle of town right off Park Avenue, just pens with dozens and dozens of quail in them. That was real~y neat.

Uhler: That is really neat.

Cain: That was a really neat thing about it. But he was such a southern gentleman, he was the type that he would tip his hat to the ladies, you know, he was just, he was, he was small, he had gotten small and thin you know in his later years, but when we'd go out and ride horses he'd get right up there and ride.

Uhler: So before you started doing the whole, exercising his horses, did you have experience with horses before?

Cain: Yeah, I've always, you know how little girls are, I always loved horses. I loved horses and when I was a child out Mission Road, there, so much of that area out there was just woods and pasture land and there were, there was a family, the Bramlett family that actually if you, if you're familiar with it, where Mission Road and Appleyard Drive ends, dead ends into Mission, where that convenience store and the mobile home park and all right there, that used to be pasture. And there was a fella, his name was Dan Bramlett, his family lived out, and that was all pasture land. His house was a little further up in that Lynnwood Manor subdivision and he had horses out there, and he'd rent horses out to ride. You could go out there and for however much, probably three or four dollars an hour, ride all in the pastures out there so yeah, I loved that. And then my uncles over in Monticello, there were several family members still left over there, so there were two or three farms that were in my family, my family is the Folsom family from Monticello and my uncle had a couple of horses. He had bought a horse especially for me when I was young so I -

Uhler: Every girl's dream.

Cain: Oh yes! A horse! Every girl's dream is to have a horse, yeah, absolutely. But-

Uhler: Did Charlie pay you for

Cain: No! It was just, oh no we never, I don't even think that the thought of money ever crossed our minds and I'm sure it didn't cross his either, it was just, I think he knew that we just absolutely loved the idea of going out there and riding those horses and is what it was. And we weren't kids, you know, we were in our early twenties, and of course we just adored Charlie, because like I said he was such a gentleman and had so many tales to tell. And that was so long ago I wish I could remember some of the tales. But one thing I do remember him talking about is friends of the family and I know he would talk about and I know you're probably too young to remember but two actors, it was a married couple Cliff Robertson and Dina Merrill. They were in movies and I guess they're both still alive, I think Cliff Robertson might still be alive, but his wife Dina Merrill would come often to Tallahassee to visit because, I guess that these two folks, if they're still alive they're probably way up in their eighties now, I'm thinking, I'm guessing. But his family was evidently well good friends with the Post family. Emily Post the etiquette lady and I believe that Dina Merrill, of course Dina Merrill was her Hollywood name, I don't know if her last name was actually Post or not but I believe that she, now this is just recalling and it might not be totally but she was from the Post family and um, I don't remember - the Post family and Vanderbilt family, they were, they had close ties with all of these families. Uh what was there, there was another family from over in Jacksonville and I don't remember but they had a, evidently back in the day would always have all sort of social engagements and get together and parties at the big house downtown.

Uhler: In the Knott house?

Cain: Yes.

Uhler: Wow.

Cain: Yeah from what I understand, and like I said they were a very social family I think. But we talked about how they would slip into town, Cliff Robertson and Dina Merrill would slip into town and you know come visit him and I think they'd slip out to the Capital City Country Club for cocktails and you know have some real intimate friends at the house when they were in town. And I don't know, maybe this is in the fifties or early sixties, or something like that I'm not real sure. Urn, but just a fascinating man, I don't know much about the rest of his family or his dad or anything, but it was just a few short years there, three or four years there that, that I you know had the association with Charlie and he was just -

Uhler: So was he just a fun, loving personality?

Cain: He was just a fun old guy, he was just a fun old guy. He could, he was very his manners were impeccable. Like I said he was the perfect southern gentleman. Now I heard rumors that he used to be quite the ladies man, not, not to the point of being a gigolo. But quite the ladies man and he really loved the women is what I've heard.

Uhler: You know I find it odd that he never married.

Cain: Yeah I know, isn't that funny, isn't that funny.

Uhler: With his stature and you know, everybody I talked said he was a nice, a nice man.

Cain: Oh such a gentleman and everything but yeah, he never married and I, now that I think back I can recall the way he talked about his mother. I think he and his mother were extremely close, now it makes me wonder, you know of course every mother would want her son, her son to marry and have a family and stuff but I just, I wonder how you know, what the deal was with their relationship because from what I understand ~e was so close to his mother maybe there was just never another woman that could live up to her

Uhler: What did he say about her?

Cain: Well he just, he - I don't remember him talking a whole lot about her but I think that probably even though his father was the comptroller of the state of Florida and was into politics and all that, it sounded to me like from his conversations with us, Debbie and myself, were that she definitely ruled the roost. She was the boss of the house. So I, I don't know a whole lot, he didn't tell me a whole lot about her but, but she was like a matriarch maybe.

Uhler: She seems like she's a fascinating woman.

Cain: I don't know anything about her and I'd love to know stuff about her cause Charlie's surely the only one I know anything about other than her, his dad's local political affiliation, you know being a comptroller at one time and all, but I don't know really much about his mother.

Uhler: Well I know that she went to college, she graduated from college which was really rare, especially in her

Cain: Was it here or-

Uhler: No it was, I think, if I remember, I can't think of it off the top of my head. I have it in my notes she went to Greensboro Methodist College in South Carolina and she was just a very strong woman. She was a part of temperance, her and her husband, you know her husband was involved in politics but she was in the Women's Club and all that in town.

Cain: Well that's it. And I think that like I said, I think she pretty much ruled the roost and the impression that I got, the little bit, like pictures in the house and the little bit that Charlie'd talk about her, she was very matronly too.

Uhler: Right.

Cain: Is what, I don't mean matronly that she wasn't sophisticated, I mean she wasn't doughty or anything like that, that I remember getting that impression in conversations with Charlie and all but I think she probably had an extremely strong personality, that's the impression that I got over. Now as far as his dad goes I, I know nothing about his daddy, I don't know a lot about that. But I'm sure that would be easy to find out stuff about him since he was in local politics and stuff.

Uhler: Now you said you work for the State right?

Cain: I work for the State, I've worked for the State for thirty-three years.

Uhler: Wow, you know Charlie worked for the State too, he was general counsel for Environmental Protection.

Cain: Was it Environmental Protection? I knew that he was an attorney.

Uhler: I'm pretty sure it was Environmental Protection.

Cain: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well see I met him way after retirement and all of that stuff.

Uhler: Now he was a good cook you said?

Cain: Oh, absolutely! Now with the, he could cook, he could scramble some eggs, but I remember him fixing the formal, and I mean he'd lay it all out with the good china and the cloth, linen napkins, and the candelabra's on the dining room table. But it was, and this is a very famous; southern dish is smothered quail.

Uhler: I've never had it.

Cain: It's quail cooked in a frying pan, smothered with gravy and I would imagine made with drippings from the quail and flour, you know, salt and pepper and that's a good southern recipe right there. But it's called southern quail, he cooked that smothered quail over rice and he sure didn't have to go to the grocery store to buy it, just go out in the back yard and I guess he'd kill 'em in the backyard, rung their necks or whatever it was that he did right there in the backyard, but he could cook smothered quail, quail and gravy over white rice, it was just - and he'd cook it in the frying pan on the top of the stove. Had a lid on the deep frying pan and that, the quail would be sauteing or just simmering in the real deep gravy and he'd cook a big pot of white rice and he'd make cornbread, he could make cornbread from scratch. And I think, if I'm not mistaking there was a black lady that was the cook in their home, that actually taught Charlie how to cook.

Uhler: Was she still the cook when you

Cain: No, uh-uh. I'm thinking this was probably when he was a young man, a way in a young man, so I'm thinking.

Uhler: Interesting.

Cain: Yeah, he was a fascinating, just the short amount of time I knew him, he was just a fascinating, neat man.

Uhler: Was he involved in the community at all, when yo;"

Cain: Not when I met him because he was older, if he did it was stuff that he never talked about. We'd always see him after work, you know after hours so go over there about five o'clock in the afternoon on a couple of week days, on a couple of weekdays and then ride out and exercise the horses and I guess it must have been summer time since it was that late in the evening and we'd get out there and we could exercise the horses for an hour or so and then get back before dark and stuff like that. But he was, he was way retired by then, I'm thinking that he had to probably be in his seventies maybe early seventies, I don't know how old Charlie would be if he were alive, I don't know when he was born. But to a young girl he was an old man. He was an old man in the late eighties, but he could still get up on those horses and ride around.

Uhler: Wow.

Cain: Yeah, it was really neat.

Uhler: He was born - I'm trying to see, I have it right here I don't know, I thought I had it. I know that his, you know his mother lived to be ninety-three and his dad was a hundred and one, so

Cain: Wow! Charlie could have been, he could have been in his eighties when I met him and lived up into his, his you know close to ninety or so, I'm not real sure. He was an old fella, he still drove fine, he still had his wits about him and like I said he was the perfect gentleman and whenever he, he would, you know, if- he'd always take that hat off, you know just the perfect gentleman, always dressed nicely. He would have slacks on and lace up shoes when he went out to ride and his urn, a casual jacket, from what I'm trying to remember it was like a tweed or a wool jacket with the patches on the sleeve, and he had his little narrow brimmed hat on his head and he just, you know the perfect southern gentleman up there riding those gated horses, just like you see in a horse show with Tennessee Walkers, you know on the Animal Planet Channel or something, he was just, he was but you could tell in just having a conversations with him and the way, and his demeanor and the way, he was a ladies man. He loved the women, I mean he was a perfect gentleman, and we were young girls and he just, he loved us to death, he was kind, you could tell he was kind and you could tell he was very, he knew a lot, he knew a whole lot about not just the, like you said he was general counsel, an

attorney and stuff like that, but he was very well versed in the south. He was such a southern gentleman, he was all about the south.

Uhler: Now you said that, have you been to the house since IRS opened as a museum?

Cain: I went and the day that I dropped or the night I dropped my name off was ten years ago during the Christmas celebration downtown and we had parked down, down Park Avenue that way and coming back my girlfriend's son who was in high school was in a stringed orchestra and they were playing out on the porch so we stopped there and when we stopped to listen to them play then we went inside and walked around in the house and stuff and

Uhler: How does it looked compared to when you —

Cain: When you first walk into the entrance of the door it looks like its pretty well reserved and stuff, you could tell that there's been some updating, back in the kitchen area and all that. And it looks like, and I can't remember there's a porch, an open air porch out to the back and I believe it was still there but you can see that they improved it some and made some repairs and all that. One thing I do remember is when you walked into the front door and it still could be that way, if they tried to keep it as authentic as possible, but when you first walk in the front door right down at the foot of the stairs there was this beautiful, big and I don't know what you call it, I'm calling it an umbrella bucket, but it was a big, and it almost looked like it had, like it was made out of cloisonne, that real pretty stuff that and it was like a floated type bucket, that's where he had his regular old black men's umbrella, you know, but I'm sure that that had been there since his mother's day, that that's where she'd set her umbrella when she walked in the door, it was right there at the foot of the stairs on the side. And then straight back was where the old gramophone was, and it was the kind that, let me see if I can remember, it may still be there, I don't know. It's an old, well you can't call it a record player because it was before the days of records

Uhler: I'm pretty sure that's there, but I don't remember the umbrella

Cain: But it was straight, just straight back there when you first walked in the door and of course the parlor, I guess it was considered a parlor, to the right and then to the left was the formal dining room and then back, back behind that was the kitchen. And I didn't go upstairs the night I was there, but I have been upstairs before and seen the bedrooms, I really can't remember exactly what they looked like other than the, I remember sheer curtains and lacy curtains on the front bedroom windows and stuff but -

Uhler: But from what you remember does it seem, does it feel like the same house?

Cain: It feels like the same house.

Uhler: It still does?

Cain: Yeah, it feels like the same house it really does.

Uhler: They try really hard to make it that way.

Cain: I think that they must have, because oh yeah, it's there because I can remember the furniture that old tapestry feel to the parlor area and it seems like I remember a lot of deep reds in the furniture, and is it still that way? .

Uhler: It's a real Victorian-

Cain: Yeah, absolutely. Tassels and reds and yeah, yeah.

Uhler: Did Charlie the, when you went when you were there, did he have left the poems that his mother had written attached to things or?

Cain: You know, now I had forgotten all about that, I don't know that they were attached to things but I can remember him showing us poems.

Uhler: Really.

Cain: I do remember him showing us poems, and I do, and I don't remember, but I don't remember if they were in leather binders or in a book or just stuff in the drawers, I don't, I don't remember how they were. I don't remember it being a real formal affair, pulling out anything real elaborate

Uhler: Because when she, when Mrs. Knott hosted parties she had written poems and she would tie a little ribbon to like the lamp and the -

Cain: I don't remember! I don't remember if that's the case or not.

Uhler: So that's what they've done now, you know they

Cain: That way! I don't remember, now he may have tried to, see he lived in that house for the longest time all by himself and I think that's one reason why he took up residence in the basement, downstairs. But I remember it was damp and cold down there is what I remember though, because it seemed like it was all concrete. He had it set up, it was very cozy you know and I think, I don't remember it being a lot of rooms. I just remember seeing, and I think there might have been a cot type or a small bed, and he had a table and one of the floor lamps behind the chair to where, there may have been a small desk down there. But I think that's pretty much where he hung and had it set up like just a little apartment type thing downstairs because I guess you know being by himself it was just and it could have been for utility purposes, you know not wanting to heat the whole big house it just being him or you know having so many lights turned

on, that may have been for a practical purpose like that. He just had, you know that was his Now when we came over we came into the main part of the house, you know like I said when he cooked we ate and he'd lay it all out like I said, formally with the linen napkins and the candelabra's and the good crystal and china.

Uhler: He had good etiquette.

Cain: Oh absolutely, absolutely. He was just the perfect gentlemen. But you could see that there was a little mischief in him though, if he had been thirty or forty years younger, you could see that little bit of, he had a good wit, he had a good wit, he had a real good personality but he was, he was definitely a gentleman.

Uhler: Did you attend the funeral when he passed away?

Cain: No I didn't. No I didn't. I didn't realize it, I think I read about it after the fact. What church, where did he have the service do you know?

Uhler: I don't.

Cain: I'm wondering, I don't know if he's Methodist or Presbyterian. Now I grew up in the Episcopal Church, well actually Christened at St. Johns Episcopal Church and when I was I guess maybe nine or ten or eleven years old, they built Holy Comforter out here behind the hospital and by then I was old enough to be confirmed and so I did my confirmation class. My mother and I grew up on Mitchell Avenue right up from the hospital, so when they built Holy Comforter we switched over there 'cause it was a little closer to home. And uh I just wandered, I don't know if Charlie was a member of 81. Johns Episcopal Church or what. I'm thinking Presbyterian or Methodist.

Uhler: I think he's Methodist because his mother was Methodist.

Cain: Oh that's right she went to the Methodist College.

Uhler: Now I don't know if her husband when they got married if he was Methodist, but I know she was.

Cain: Right, yeah. I'm thinking Presbyterian or Methodist and I don't know why, because I don't remember particularly ever having any kind of conversations with him regarding church, you know that type of thing, but he was quite, he was just a neat old guy, he really was.

Uhler: Well do you have anything else?

Cain: I could probably think of some things after you leave, but what I could do is get your email address or something and what I want to do, I've got a couple of pictures of Charlie

and the pictures that I have are of him standing by the stalls out with the horses and I think I have a picture of him sitting on one of the horses. I know I have a picture of him standing and standing watching us. He kept an eagle eye on us when we were on the horses, he you know didn't want us to let 'ern give 'ern their head or anything. We had to ride, when we exercised them it just had to be at that perfect gate, so he must have really loved horses and really been into it and I just wonder if he, he you know, if it was a life long thing, 'that he was into the showing or something like that, but I have a feeling it's the hunters that he was probably.

Uhler: I'm pretty sure its -

Cain: The hunters that he was into.

Uhler: He loved the quail hunt.

Cain: Oh yeah, he was a quail man I guess. [Laughter] Forget Doug, it was Charlie. [Laughter] Remember that?

Uhler: Yes I do. That's great Well I'll go ahead and shut this off. Just make sure that you know that its been on the whole time.

Cain: Oh absolutely, absolutely.

Uhler: Okay.

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