

**Interviewee:** Crocker, Carrie  
**Interviewer:** Robin Sellers  
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**Sellers:** Carrie, are you aware that we're tape recording this conversation?

**Crocker** I am.

**Sellers:** We have your permission?

**Crocker** Yes.

**Sellers:** Why don't you start then by telling me a little bit about where you were born and grew up?

**Crocker** I was born in Holmes County, Florida, out in a little community called Bethlehem. I was born there February 18, 1919, to a family that lived out in the rural part of the county. I grew up there, moving into what would be called the town at that time, Bonifay, where I went to school through the sixth grade, at which time I returned to the home out in the country and completed my education there at the consolidated school known as Bethlehem High School.

**Sellers:** How many students were there in the class with you in high school.

**Crocker** A great many [chuckles]; I think there were twelve of us. That was in my senior class.

**Sellers:** Did your school encourage you to prepare to go to college?

**Crocker** No, ma'am. People there did not go on to college much.

**Sellers:** Why did you come to FSCW then?

**Crocker** Well, I had always just in my mind figured I was going to college. It was during Depression years, I graduated in 1937. But my people were not monied people. My father worked for the railroad and my sister taught school at that time and was paid by due bills (a term used for the payment slips given to teachers in Holmes County during some time of the Depression. The check could not be cashed by the bank until a future date. In the meantime, certain people would cash the check, holding out a percentage). So you can understand there was not much money in the family. So I stayed out and I did little odd jobs that year and worked

at the NYA. (My present family was asking me what that stood for and I said, “You know, I really don’t know what the last A stood for). But then my sister began to make plans with me for me to enter FSCW.

**Sellers:** Where had she gotten her teaching background?

**Crocker** My sister graduated from high school. She is nine years older than I, and she had graduated from high school with a certificate to teach. That would have been — I don’t know exactly what year, you’d have to figure back then, but after that she would go to the University of Florida in the summer and do school work. So that’s how she kept her certificate. You took an exam and were qualified to teach at that time.

**Sellers:** So she went the standard route at that time. So she started getting you ready to come to FSCW?

**Crocker** That’s right; I give her lots of credit.

**Sellers:** Why did she go to the University of Florida in the summer instead of FSCW?

**Crocker** You know, I don’t know. Because probably the other teachers were doing that, too. I never thought to ask her.

**Sellers:** You said in what you wrote that you graduated as valedictorian. Did you always have this literary bent?

**Crocker** I always liked to write and read, yes I did. Since actually my exposure to the world was limited, probably that helped me to enter into the world just a little bit better, because I did read a lot. Then I had not all the advantages of world news that we have today, but I pretty much took advantage of what I had available.

**Sellers:** When you applied for FSCW, how did you do that? Do you remember?

**Crocker** Not really. I guess we wrote for papers. And when my granddaughter Sylvia was going through my book of memorabilia, she came across a letter which had been from my English teacher to the lady at FSCW, recommending me for entrance. So I suppose it was a process we went through. I’m just not remembering real well right now.

**Sellers:** Had you been to Tallahassee before?

**Crocker** Not really.

**Sellers:** So you weren’t familiar with the campus?

**Crocker** No way.

**Sellers:** Tell me about arriving here and being part of a freshman class.

**Crocker** As I remember, my sister brought me and I had this huge trunk, which all the little girls had – this trunk – and after you got your things out it was stored somewhere. I still have that trunk [laughs]. It was a very inexpensive trunk, but it followed me around a while.

Going there, you know, I don't remember all those little details. I guess I was later getting my application processed, because by that time the dorms were all full and I was relegated, along with other girls, to a house right off campus. I lived there for the first quarter and at that time places opened up in Reynolds and Jennie Murphree for us to go there. I've never thought about why those rooms opened up till I was talking to my roommate (prior to my first talking to you the other day) – it was after I had gotten the magazine from the Home Ec Department – and she laughed and said, "Probably those little girls had gone there thinking it was going to be a breeze and found out it wasn't and went home." So that was why there were rooms open for us to move into. I moved into Reynolds with — when I went to FSU, I did not go knowing anyone; I had no acquaintances. But the girls that I met are still my friends, many that I have kept up with over the years. In fact, I had a roommate the first two years there. She was getting her two-year degree to teach. After that, I had the roommate which I had already met, and she was my roommate the following two years. Both of them are still living, they're well into their eighties, but we correspond and occasionally talk over the telephone. Both of them traveled around the nation during the wartime and actually lived in other parts of the nation after the war. But they're all back in Florida now.

**Sellers:** Tell me a little bit (you say in what you've written that you took psychology and Spanish); what do you remember about your professors?

**Crocker** Well, I kind of put in the writing I gave you, but I will have to correct that on Dr. Liddell – it was not psychology, it was philosophy.

**Sellers:** Yes, Dr. Liddell is famous around here for philosophy.

**Crocker** You know, I only had that one course with her, but I can still see that little lady standing up there in front. She was this little tiny lady. And I don't remember a thing she said.

**Sellers:** But you remember her.

**Crocker** I remember her. Probably had not thought of her in sixty years till I sat there writing, and I was amazed that I thought of her name. Of course, I mentioned I think it was Dr. Kurz that was my botany teacher, Dr. Campbell was my Spanish teacher, and Miss Blanding (I'm not sure if she had the doctor in front of her name or not) was my English teacher. And when I went back and looked at my grades, there was a couple of Cs there. So apparently my little school had not perfected all that Holmes County drawl I had and the words that I used – my

grammar wasn't up to date. But anyway, it was a nice course.

**Sellers:** You say in what you wrote, too, that you wanted to be a journalist. Did you take some journalism courses?

**Crocker** I did. That was my first major. I took it under Dr. Vance. I was talking to my son (who is the one who went on and got his Ph.D. in entomology and he has worked for the university in Texas), but I was talking to him last evening and he had Dr. Vance, too. He's sixty-one, so Dr. Vance stayed there a long time. And in reading your book, a number of those people stayed there a long time that knew had been there a long time. But anyway, I was in journalism for a year, and I began to think that this little country girl probably wasn't up to the brash world that was out there and maybe I better get another major, I better select something else. And since money is always what you sort of look at above sometimes what you really love, I chose home economics. Went through – did the commerce. Now then there's so many different things, but we knew it as commerce. You are familiar with what went on back then too, so I'm not telling you anything, but things were much simpler then than they are now. My math has never been my greatest thing, so I got out of business and that's when my little story that you have, that I wrote about home economics shows.

**Sellers:** Tell me your memories of Dean Sandels.

**Crocker** Well, as I wrote in the little piece that I did, I just saw her mostly as a figurehead there, not coming in contact with her closely. It was when she was conducting the process, and I don't exactly remember how it was done, but anyway, you had to have your face covered and I just never liked my face covered. So I didn't stay calm enough for it to read that thing correctly to get my metabolic rate. But she just smiled and took it in stride. I didn't get demoted or anything. But that's what I most remember about her – she was a very nice lady, very attractive, and just part of the school.

**Sellers:** You came in the Fall of '38; were you a dining hall girl your freshman year?

**Crocker** No, I worked at the library under the NYA program that, as I remember it paid \$109. Whether that was for the whole year or for a semester, I do not remember. But I would go down and my primary duty was to open new books, and the first thing when Dawn [Randle] brought me the book the other day, while she was talking to me I found myself opening the book, pushing the pages. That and putting up books, just minor jobs. But that was my NYA job then. Then the next year, of course, I became a dining room girl. It was one of the choice jobs. It was never a problem to go in, you would set that table up, bring the food to the table. I did that my sophomore year. Then since I had changed courses a few times, I thought I better go to summer school. I wish I could remember the dietician who was over the halls themselves. I can see her right now but her name has just flown the coop. She chose me to be in charge of the dining halls; I think there were two of them open in summer. I led the prayer and saw that things were right. Then my junior year, I had the freshman hall. I was the head usher over the freshman hall. Then – and I have the little slip of paper from Dr. Conradi asking me to come to

his office, just a very simple little note. So I went, not knowing what I was going there for, because I knew nothing of the scholarships that were available. One other girl who was a working girl went, we went in, and he kidded us a little about having to come before the president. Then he presented us with the Gilchrist scholarship, which as you probably know was one of the nicest scholarships that paid your room and board according to what the interest brought on the money that been put in there. It did – it covered about all my room and board my senior year.

**Sellers:** So you did not work then?

**Crocker** You did not work for that, no.

**Sellers:** Your freshman year you lived off campus and then you moved into Reynolds —

**Crocker** Only one quarter, only that first quarter.

**Sellers:** Right, and then moved into Reynolds. For your sophomore and junior years, where did you live? Because if I remember correctly, Landis was a senior dormitory.

**Crocker** That's right. That was the privilege of living in Landis when you were a senior. I lived in Broward, and I tried to remember did I live in Broward the two intervening years? I think I must have.

**Sellers:** When you got into Landis Hall, it would have been your senior year, so that would have been the Fall of 1941?

**Crocker** Correct.

**Sellers:** Tell me a little bit about living in senior hall, as it was called at the time.

**Crocker** Living in Landis was no different to me than living in the other halls. You still went down the hall to brush your teeth, use the bathroom, to get a shower.

**Sellers:** So it wasn't that big a deal?

**Crocker** No, it wasn't. Margaret and I shared one of the front rooms with the three nice big windows. It was a large room, plenty of room. We shared one desk. I just have a mental picture of Margaret sitting across over there. Margaret had her heritage from – her father came from Scotland, so Margaret had some of those little Scotland things. As roommates, we never – either one of my roommates, we never had any conflicts, we never borrowed each other's things. It was always just an inbuilt thing that we would respect the other person; we never bothered them. The one occasion – we were sitting at the desk, and I was sitting across from Margaret, we were doing our work – and I was eating an apple. And Margaret said, "Carrie, would you

please quit eating that apple?" I must have been chomping, maybe with my mouth open? I don't know [laughs]. But that's the only time I ever got a reprimand from Margaret.

**Sellers:** And was she your roommate just your senior year?

**Crocker** No, junior and senior.

**Sellers:** What was her last name?

**Crocker** She was Margaret Davidson, and there's a little story – after we graduated and we met up in the terminal in Jacksonville. We worked out a Camp Blanding, but that's another story.

**Sellers:** Tell me – some world things went on while you were in Landis.

**Crocker** Well, I can tell you that the year before I went to Landis, I got married.

**Sellers:** You got married but you still lived in the dorm?

**Crocker** I married – I had met my future husband at Gainesville before I ever went to school. We had corresponded; he had come up to see me. We finally decided that we would get married, so we did. He by that time had graduated from the University of Florida, was working as a chemist at Mulberry in the phosphate plants. I just went down there, we got married, and I calmly came back to school. There were other girls that got married, too. When I lived in the home management house, I think there was at least one other one who was married.

**Sellers:** Did this have something to do with the war?

**Crocker** Not when we got married. We'd just been dating all those many years and we just decided to get married. Looking back now, I guess it was a strange thing; nobody ever worried. I just came back as a regular girl except my name was changed. They had me down as Crocker instead of Forehand.

**Sellers:** What did your parents think about this?

**Crocker** They just let me do what I wanted to. They always had; I'd never been a problem to them, so they just accepted what I did. But see, I was a year older than a lot of the girls, too, although I wasn't ancient at that time like I am now [laughs]. But I don't know, looking at it now, it probably was a little strange thing to do. But it was just something that I did. I came back to school. There was no problem at the school, I never had a question raised, they just changed my name and address.

**Sellers:** When your husband came up to visit you, did you still have to follow the

restrictions that they had in the dorms?

**Crocker** I signed out, which you had to do, you know, any time you went any place you had to sign out. And it didn't go on that long because he was called into service pretty soon.

**Sellers:** So you got married in the summer, and Pearl Harbor happened that December. Tell me about what was going on on campus that Fall of your senior year. Was there anything in the air about the war coming?

**Crocker** Not that I was aware of, because we were not keeping up with the news minute by minute. We really were not. You heard that the nation was calling up certain men, they would sign up for a year. But this was before the automatic draft went in. It wasn't affecting us in any way. That is not why I got married. My first involvement was when I looked out those windows and saw the fellows running up and down, saying "Extra! Extra! Pearl Harbor bombed!"

**Sellers:** Where were they running?

**Crocker** I've tried to picture that. I guess on the street; I don't know exactly.

**Sellers:** That would have been on Jefferson Street?

**Crocker** I guess. I probably didn't even know the name of that street, or if I did, I've forgotten it. But that's where they were.

**Sellers:** So your dorm room was in the front, you looked out and you could see the Sweet Shop.

**Crocker** Yes. And by the way, I was not a Sweet Shop participant. I didn't have money to do that. I knew where it was. My outing was to walk up the street to Bennett's Drug Store.

**Sellers:** So you walked up College Avenue to Bennett's.

**Crocker** We would go up to Bennett's; that's where you went to get your drink or something, have a little outing. But all of my friends, beautiful girls, wonderful girls, they did not have money to spend on casual things. But then I never had had, so I never felt a lack of anything because I had never been a spender. In fact, I still am careful.

**Sellers:** What happened to you then? The war broke out, your husband went into the service – you corresponded with him?

**Crocker** Yes. He was sent to Camp Blanding —

**Sellers:** And you stayed here and graduated?

**Crocker** I stayed and graduated. He came for my graduation – and slept through my graduation. I stayed in the dorm. He slept through my graduation. But I forgave him. But after graduation, I took the exam to certify as a teacher and then he said, “You’ve got to follow me.” So I wasn’t trained to do anything kind of book work, any kind of work in an office. So I went to Jacksonville, enrolled in a business school there so that I could learn shorthand and to type. When I got there in that big terminal, who did I see but my roommate and another friend. They had decided to pursue — one was going to work out at Camp Blanding; she had gotten her degree in what we called commerce. So she was employed out at Blanding. Margaret, who was in art, was going to take some art courses in Jacksonville. We found a house together and lived there and Margaret and I commuted to our classes about a week and Peggy came in one day and said, “Would you like to work at Camp Blanding?” After that, we rode into Camp Blanding six days a week from early in the morning, we came in late, the forty miles on a school bus until I left there in January and followed my husband who by that time had gotten his shavetail – he was a 2nd lieutenant by that time. I stayed with him then for the duration of the war, mostly in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, where he was at Camp Shelby. He was in limited service in that one eye was not functional. So that’s it in a capsule.

**Sellers:** When you worked at Camp Blanding, what did you do?

**Crocker** I recorded page after page of products the fellows wore. The shoes – I learned that some fellows wore size 13 and some were special order shoes. My hours were such, I was so sleepy. I had never been a Coca-Cola drinker, but there was one out in the hall and they would be frozen, and I’d go out and get one. We had a thirty minute break for lunch and I would just try to close my eyes and get that little bit of sleep. It was not air conditioned (nowhere was then).

**Sellers:** Did you get to see your husband?

**Crocker** Oh, yes. He would come out – since we had the house in town, and he had leave. He got \$21 a month to take care of me!

**Sellers:** Boy, you did some high living then, didn’t you?

**Crocker** That’s why I went to work [laughs]. Anyway, he came in. Then he was chosen to go to — Gainesville had a school for the limited service to — he had graduated from Florida with ROTC, but I don’t remember the details of why he could not go in as a lieutenant. But he did go over there and got his gold bars at Gainesville in a special school for limited service. I went to his graduation, and then after he was moved to Camp Shelby in Mississippi, I went and lived in Hattiesburg.

**Sellers:** Tell me a little bit about that – did you work while you were in Hattiesburg?

**Crocker** I didn’t at first; I did some sub-teaching, and then I got a job out at Shelby in the

property department – that’s where I worked, in the property department, and I worked there until — we had been married about three and a half years when I found out I was going to have the child. So I quit my – I just was a stay-at-home Mom then.

**Sellers:** So you were pregnant and had a baby during the war?

**Crocker** During the war.

**Sellers:** Did you go on base for your medical treatment?

**Crocker** No, right there in the hospital. All the girls were going and having their babies out at camp, but I didn’t – I had mine in town. And at that time, you stayed in bed for ten days. After maybe five days, you would swing your feet over the edge of the bed. Then you came home in an ambulance on a stretcher. We had a nice little cottage right by some very nice people who were my lovely friends that I made there. They brought me in – I was so weak, when I went to the bathroom I almost fainted. At the camp, though, they were getting the girls up early. But by the time I had my second one, my husband, after he got back, did not want to go back to being a chemist. It wasn’t as glamorous as you might think. So he finally decided on becoming a veterinarian. Then we went to Auburn and put in four years at Auburn where – I will brag on him a little – he was the first to come out of there with straight As. The last I heard, he was the last one. Then I had my other two children while he was at Auburn.

**Sellers:** You came back to Florida?

**Crocker** We came back, and he loved to farm. We would go down in south Florida, and it just depressed me, coming from where there were hills and trees. But Monticello needed a veterinarian and we came here to this lovely little town. It was very kind of rundown looking then.

**Sellers:** It’s not a big place now.

**Crocker** No. It has gone through a metamorphosis since I’ve been here, though, and gradually they tore out some of the ancient buildings and it was a prosperous little place. Then Tallahassee had to go have all those malls and all the commerce started going to Tallahassee. So one by one we lost our stores and things. But now we’re becoming a town of antiques. It’s a lovely town. I have met wonderful people here. Many of my friends aren’t here anymore, but the one that I wrote about in there, Josephine Anderson, was a freshman in my dining hall. So when I came here – and we found a little house; you couldn’t find houses in Monticello. It had been sort of a closed community; no progress; they didn’t allow the train station to come in. We finally found a little house, though. Of course, by that time we had no money – we’d gone through school.

**Sellers:** He was able to use the GI Bill to get his veterinarian training, right?

**Crocker** Yes. I think it was \$90 a month, but we had some savings. Anyway, when Josephine saw this lady over there – and at that time my hair was long – and she thought, “Oh, dear, there’s that woman from the dining hall.” She is one of my very dearest friends.

[some casual conversation not transcribed]

**Sellers:** Is there anything else you want to put on the tape?

**Crocker** I think not.

End

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**Abstract:**

Carrie Crocker grew up in Holmes County, Florida. After graduating high school and working for a year, she enrolled at Florida State College for Women. While at FSCW, she worked in the Library and in the dining halls. She was the recipient of the Gilchrist scholarship, which paid her room and board for her senior year. Crocker married in 1941; she discusses her Homefront experiences during World War II at Camp Blanding and Camp Shelby.