

**Interviewee:** Kurz-Cringle, Rose  
**Interviewer:** Robin Sellers  
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**Sellers:** Ms. Kurz, are you aware that we're recording this interview?

**Kurz:** Yes. This is Rose Kurz-Cringle, and I am aware that this is being recorded.

**Sellers:** Lets start out then by telling me where you were born and where you grew up.

**Kurz:** I actually was born in the Johnson Sanitarium in Tallahassee, FL. That building— it was the only “hospital facility” in the area—and that building burned down probably when I was still in grammar school, and all the records burned down with it. So one of the sidelights of my birth is that it was not recorded anywhere else. Mary Lou Norwood had the same experience. So that when I went to get a passport, it took some doing, because I got a letter from the Florida Bureau of Vital Statistics saying my birth was not recorded, and somehow or another the clergyman had neglected to put the official stamp on my baptism certificate, [laughter] and on and on it went. But eventually a nice passport clerk decided I was born. And then my parents rented a little house—my father was on the faculty then. I was the third child; my mother and father had a stillborn girl, and then they had my sister Flora, and then me. And we were all sixteen months apart. And we lived in a little house behind the Three Torches Tea Room, which I think is no longer there. It was on the corner of Copeland and Park Avenue.

**Sellers:** Actually, the building is still there, it's a Mexican Restaurant now. It's been a number of things.

**Kurz:** Anyway, that was my earliest recollections, and they're fairly vague, my early recollections of living on Park Avenue and in that house.

**Sellers:** Stands to reason, you weren't that old.

**Kurz:** In 1931, we moved over to Palm Court. Palm Court is still there. It's a little cul-de-sac where the old city cemetery road comes through, and it's between Park Avenue and Call Street. And that's where I lived— actually, that's where my father lived until he died, in this home that they built. The house is still there. My sister and I visited it the last time we were in Tallahassee. Of course, that whole area is pretty run down now, but it was a very nice area and it was inhabited primarily by faculty members. Ezda Deviney lived across the street, Louella Richie lived next door to her, Olga Larson from the math department – golly, when I was still in grammar school, I think, built a house next door. It turned out that she had bought a lot that my father thought was part of his property. She bought a lot adjacent to that one, and she and my

father split the lot in the middle, which gave us a nice sized yard. And I could tell you stories about what a character she was. [laughs]

**Sellers:** [laughs] I would love to hear some of them!

**Kurz:** Ad infinitum. But she, I think, probably died just a few years before my dad did. She did things like she had a shotgun, and the squirrels were eating something off her tree, the fruit off of, I don't know what —

**Sellers:** Probably a fig tree

**Kurz:** Okay, the fig trees I remember being along there. She would wear these old fashioned slips (we called them) that had the built up shoulders —

**Sellers:** Oh, shades of the '40s! [laughs]

**Kurz:** And '30s! [laughs] She would walk around in her yard, in her slip, with her shotgun, shooting squirrels. [laughter] And one thing I do remember is that one time she accidentally shot a brown thrasher, and my father was just furious with her, as you can imagine. In order to be a math major and graduate, I think you needed to spend time at her house, because she always had math majors there, helping her grade papers or one thing and another. She also was one of those people who, like those famous brothers up in New York, she still had the first newspaper she ever got, and the house was really, you know, just stacks of magazines, stacks of papers. At any rate, if you ever needed anything and the stores were closed, Miss Larson had it. I remember getting acquainted as a child with math majors.

I started school and went to kindergarten in what was then the Demonstration School at FSCW. I was very jealous when Flora started school and I couldn't. And I really was, as it turned out, "socially immature." I was the little girl who was going to skip grammar school and go to high school, and I ended up having to repeat kindergarten. [laughs]

**Sellers:** Wow! You've got to be the first person I ever ran across that repeated kindergarten.

**Kurz:** Yeah. But there was no question even then that I was intellectually ready to move on, but —. And one of the stories I remember telling, which got repeated umpteen times, because, of course, my father knew the kindergarten teacher, they served us graham crackers and milk in the middle of the morning, and one morning I poured my milk in my saucer, and picked it up (the saucer that the graham crackers were on). The teacher told me that I was not to do that, that was not polite. And I said, "Well, my daddy does it every morning with his coffee." So that cured him of drinking his coffee from a saucer. But some of the things I remember about my childhood, too, were — actually, I've been thinking about it a lot — well, some pictures that he had taken that I sent to the herbarium recently brought it to mind. He had a darkroom in the ground floor of the History Building, and he used to develop his own pictures, and that was great

treat for me and my sister to go with him. You went kind of down a hall that then circled around, and another hall. And the walls were black, and when you turned the lights out it was pitch dark in there, and you could see the negatives coming up and you could see the prints coming up from the negatives. I can remember that being one of the special treats that my sister and I enjoyed.

Of course, those were Depression days, and so we didn't have a lot in the way of toys. We did a lot of creative things to make our own toys, which I think children don't do enough of today. The other thing that I remember was going over to, as we used to say "school" with Daddy while he had work to do in the evenings. They had in the lab, the botany lab, they had colored chalk, and I was allowed to use the colored chalk on the blackboard while Daddy worked at whatever he did. That was a big treat. And the other thing I was allowed to do as I got a little bit older, I guess, was to play with the typewriter. And that was the most fun of all. I remember that.

**Sellers:** Did your father have a secretary, or was it his typewriter?

**Kurz:** No, it was a college typewriter. What he had – there were these special Depression problems – there were students (I'm trying to think of the name of it now), but it was a federal program —

**Sellers:** Oh, it was a work program, yes.

**Kurz:** Yes. He had student assistants who were paid through this government work program, and they did his secretarial work. He was not a typist. [laughter] And he didn't insist that his daughters learn typing, either. Now, my sister did on her own. Flora took typing one summer. But I took a correspondence course when we were in high school; I took a correspondence course in English that summer which then enabled me to finish high school in three years.

**Sellers:** That made up for repeating kindergarten.

**Kurz:** For repeating kindergarten, right. So that's how I ended up graduating with Flora and Mary Lou. The other thing I wish we had, but, you know, hindsight is always 20/20 – my father was scrupulous about "what belonged to the college, belonged to the college." I wish we had his professional correspondence, et cetera. He would keep nothing at home, college stationary or anything like that. That way we don't have, you know, the kind of personal files —. When I first retired, I tried tracking down his files. I thought they may end up in some basement store room. But (I can't remember her name now) there was a secretary who was there who had been there when Daddy and Ruth Breen had been there. And she didn't remember anything like that being kept.

**Sellers:** That's too bad.

**Kurz:** Yeah. My mother died when I was ten and Flora was eleven, and Daddy was supposed to read a paper, probably at the Florida Academy of Science meeting, and Mother was too sick, she had metastatic cancer. And so he wasn't going to leave her. Jenny Tilt, who I think was a chemistry teacher, was going to read this paper for him. Mother really had a lot of relatives but no family, if you know what I mean. But my father came from a very close-knit family. And his mother and a couple of his sisters and one brother had come down because Mother was so sick, and Grandma had wanted to be there. A cousin about our age was there, and the three of us had gone over to the school that night with Daddy. He was going over the slides and stuff with Jenny Tilt, and I was playing with the typewriter when one of my uncles came to tell my father that my mother had died. That's a, needless to say, a very vivid recollection.

**Sellers:** I can imagine.

**Kurz:** That was, you know, a real turning point in our life. Our mother was a really talented seamstress. I could look at a picture in the paper of a little girl's dress and she could make it without a pattern. P.W. Wilson (and I think that store is still there on Monroe Street) —

**Sellers:** The building itself is there. P.W. Wilson was there when I was in school here in the '60s, but it's gone now.

**Kurz:** But I thought I remembered seeing the building, it's kind of been preserved.

**Sellers:** Yes. The building is still there, yes.

**Kurz:** They would have remnant sales, and Mother would buy stacks of remnants so that whenever we needed a dress for some special occasion or something, she would run it up for us.

**Sellers:** That was probably a big help, with professors' salaries what they were then.

**Kurz:** Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Because they were — I mean, just buying the house was a big deal. Of course, I remember during the Depression that — you know how things change — chicken was much more expensive than ground meat. You could get spare ribs cheaper than chicken or ground meat. So chicken was a real treat. Was it Norman Thomas who ran for president as a Socialist, and his motto was "A Chicken in Every Pot?" That was back during the Depression.

**Sellers:** I remember the motto. That was Herbert Hoover, wasn't it? Was it "Two chickens in every pot?"

**Kurz:** Was it? Okay, I'm thinking it was some Socialist —

**Sellers:** I don't remember now. It could be.

**Kurz:** — who maybe ran against him.

**Sellers:** That could be, too.

**Kurz:** But at any rate, that was significant because in those days chickens were a real treat. We ate an awful lot of spare ribs and sauerkraut, which to this day I love. Being a German family, a lot of, you know — my mother was Irish, but she learned — quickly. And you know, because of Daddy's teaching schedule, we spent several weeks every summer either in Iowa, which is where he came from, and during that time my mother got familiar with German cooking. Actually, she apparently said to one of my aunts at one point that she never really felt like she had a family until she married my father. So, she was, you know —

**Sellers:** Yes, I understand that. I've kind of been in that situation myself a couple of times.

**Kurz:** We also spent, you know, long periods of time up in Iowa in the summer. You know, when you're a child, time, I don't know, three or four weeks is a long time. We also took some wonderful trips out West. My father had an Overland touring car and a lean-to tent.

**Sellers:** You were roughing it.

**Kurz:** Yes! Indeed, we were. And here my mother was with, you know, a three year old and a four year old, and a Coleman stove, cooking — I can remember her cooking bacon and eggs in the morning on that stove. [laughs]

**Sellers:** Oh, my goodness. What a brave woman. [laughs]

**Kurz:** Yeah! And I can remember her washing clothes in a mountain stream. And this was a girl that grew up in Chicago, in the city. But she was very adaptable. And after Mother died, things were really never the same. My father remarried shortly after Mother's death, and it's understandable in some ways — here he was with a ten year old and an eleven year old and he was like 50 or 51, I guess. He, I think, wanted a mother for us. Unfortunately he married a career woman. She was teaching there at the Demonstration School.

**Sellers:** What was her name?

**Kurz:** Her name was Myrtis Tureman. She was an FSCW graduate.

**Sellers:** I've not run across her name at all.

**Kurz:** She wasn't there very long before she and my dad were married. And they had the nepotism law so that she could not — she wanted to teach at the college level, and she had her masters, and right after she and my father got married she started taking — I remember her

taking German, which would be one of the things required for her doctorate. Then when Dr. Dodd was sick, you know, out on leave of absence or something, and she was able to be like a substitute teacher in the English Department. But then, I don't know, 1940-'41, somewhere along there, she went up to University of North Carolina during the school year to finish up her Ph.D. in English. Daddy and Flora and I, we got along fine, the three of us. We continued, of course, at Florida High School, which was an extension of the Dem School. One of the things I got to thinking about recently, because I still have this big old pot used for canning, was the victory gardens during the war.

**Sellers:** Oh, I'd love to hear about those.

**Kurz:** Of course, my father dug up the whole back yard, practically, and had the biggest victory garden in the neighborhood.

**Sellers:** Now, was that private or did the students come and help with that?

**Kurz:** No, that was private. And I remember Ezda Deviney had a little plot in her yard, and the Richies – it was Louella and her sister, they were both on the faculty, I can't remember the sister —

**Sellers:** And she was the Business College lady.

**Kurz:** Yeah, and the sister was in Home Ec. And I cannot remember her name. Is it Helen, maybe?

**Sellers:** Oh— Helene, Helen, Harriet? It began with an "H", I think you're right.

**Kurz:** Yeah. Anyway, they had a victory garden, and Daddy had this enormous garden, and we had more tomatoes and string beans that we could eat. And we had things my sister and I had never eaten before — actually Daddy had farmed, you know, so he experimented with things that didn't grow in Tallahassee like kohlrabi and things like that. We did a lot of canning, my sister and I both remember that. We canned tomatoes, we canned string beans, we made pickles. And that was, you know, our contribution to the war effort, but it also was a lot of fun for us. That was something that the three of us did together.

**Sellers:** Now, when you canned the things, did you keep them for yourselves or did you give those to some people, too?

**Kurz:** Well, I think both. I think we had more than we could eat. And actually we had one of the few basements in Tallahassee. Our house was built on a slope, and so it was like half of the lower part of the house was a basement. And that was laundry room, furnace, and then what would have been the crawl space – Daddy called it the dungeon – that was where we kept the canned goods. He had a cement slab poured there.

**Sellers:** In like a cellar.

**Kurz:** Yeah, yeah. I'm sure Daddy gave especially the pickles away. We made too many of them. The other thing I remembered about that was Coyle Moore raising chickens. He wanted to teach his son how to be a businessman. So they raised – this was during the war, and they raised chickens – you know, laying hens. And he sold eggs. He and the boy would come around on Saturday with the eggs, and that was where we got our eggs. I don't think he had a garden, I think he had a chicken yard.

**Sellers:** Did he have that house up on, I guess it's Mission Road?

**Kurz:** No, they were still living over there either on Pensacola Street or Jefferson Street.

**Sellers:** Okay, so there were chickens right in the heart of the community, practically, the university community.

**Kurz:** Yeah! And in those days that was okay. I got — because Ann Thistle asked me what I could remember about the arboretum, I got the maps out and talked to Flora, and we were sort of retracing where our recollection was that it was. I think it was where the current Circus program building is now. You know, I think Pensacola Street – was it Jefferson that ran parallel to the campus at one time? At the edge of the property, and then Pensacola came after it?

**Sellers:** Yes, uh-huh.

**Kurz:** Yes. Well, there were houses along on the north side of Jefferson street. Gilchrist was kind of the last building, Gilchrist dormitory. Then while I was still in Tallahassee, Landis was built.

**Sellers:** Okay, so that would have been '39.

**Kurz:** Is that when Landis was built?

**Sellers:** Uh-huh, it was WPA building, it opened in '39.

**Kurz:** Oh, okay. I thought it later than that. But there were several houses along there that the college owned and rented to faculty members. The first house heading west was – at the time I was a child, it was occupied by the Eymans.

**Sellers:** Okay, Dean Eyman and his girls.

**Kurz:** Yeah. And he had a boy, too – Robert.

**Sellers:** I've heard stories about the wild girls.

**Kurz:** Oh yes, yeah. Robert actually was – he was closer to our age. Jean was a beautiful girl – the daughter, Jean.

**Sellers:** She was the wild one, wasn't she?

**Kurz:** Well, yes. My stepmother referred to her as “unconventional.” But my sister and I just were enamored of her, me in particular. And I was willing to do anything that she did. You know, like, I mean walking down the middle of College Avenue. You know, that's really no big deal, there wasn't much traffic.

**Sellers:** You didn't ride your bike on the roof, did you?

**Kurz:** No. Did she do that?

**Sellers:** Yes.

**Kurz:** Okay. But she also was May Queen. Because she really was a tall, slender, beautiful young woman. My sister and I made her crown out of crepe paper and flowers. And that was a tremendous amount of work. We put in a lot of hours, and neither one of us think of ourselves as particularly talented along those lines, but it really turned out very nice, and we were very proud of it, and she was very pleased with it. We were freshmen and she was a senior, because she was a few years older. But then of course when we got — well, 1941-1942, Dale Mabry Field became an Army Air Force post and the soldiers invaded Tallahassee [laughs] from Dale Mabry Field. Now Daddy was very strict with us, he wouldn't let us socialize with soldiers. They had a USO in Tallahassee —

**Sellers:** Did they? Where was it?

**Kurz:** It was over by where the old Cherokee Hotel was. I think it was next door, like south of the Cherokee Hotel. And I know that the woman who was running it, her last name was Henry; she was one of the Whitfields. Let's see, Louise Miller – Lou Miller – taught English at the university, and this woman was her sister. And I cannot — but Louise Whitfield Miller was the one who taught at the campus, and then this was her sister who had a son our age; he went to school with us at the Dem School for a while. She was in charge of the USO and she specifically asked Daddy to let me and Flora come there on Saturday nights. I don't know whether college Girls were not allowed to come or —

**Sellers:** They were not, very early on. The campus was completely off limits and anything to do with the military was off limits to the students.

**Kurz:** Okay, so that's why they were trying to get highschool girls.

**Sellers:** Yeah, they needed warm bodies. [laughs]

**Kurz:** But that just, you know, having soldiers walking up and down the street and that sort of thing was a big change for us. And there was this — out on Lake Bradford was a pavilion, like a commercial beach that had been set up — it was before you got to Camp Flastacowo. You could go and, you know, for a small fee they had a bath house and they had made a sandy beach, and they had made a diving board, I think, a diving platform — I'm not sure about that. But then they had this, what was called "The Pavilion," and you could buy sodas, and I'm not sure whether you could buy beer there or not. I bet you could, because the soldiers —

**Sellers:** Well, I'll bet once the soldiers came, you could.

**Kurz:** Yeah, yeah. And the soldiers hung out there, and they had a jukebox and there was dance music on Saturday nights. My father left me and my sister by ourselves one summer. You wouldn't do that with teenage girls in today's world. [laughter] But we were there with the dog, and left to our own devices. A woman who had been a very good friend of my mother's would take us out to this Levy's Pavilion at Lake Bradford —

**Sellers:** Because Levy had originally owned most of the property that became the Reservation, too. And he sold part of it and donated part of it to Conradi, which is where it came from.

**Kurz:** Okay. Then that fits because it was Levy's, which would be what— you know, "We're going to Levy's" would be the expression. So we would go out there on a Saturday night and drink cokes and dance with the soldiers.

**Sellers:** Now, when your Dad was away you did this. Could you do it when he was there?

**Kurz:** Oh, no. No, no. And we had quite a system with— Mary Lou Norwood's mother chaperoned things, and, you know [laughs] — that's what Daddy was told. She was prepared to say she had. The other family that was — was the Fairbanks. He was a policeman. And their daughter Elaine — and I don't think Elaine went to college; I don't know whatever happened to her. But anyway, they were also people who chaperoned parties, picnics and that sort of thing.

**Sellers:** Chaperoned for real, or chaperoned "wink wink"

**Kurz:** "Wink wink" But I do remember the only time that we really made any commotion when we got home. There was a place called Moon Sink? Or Blue Sink?

**Sellers:** There's a Blue Sink —

**Kurz:** Blue Sink, okay. Our class, our senior class, was having a picnic at Blue Sink, and we had a jug of some kind of cheap wine which all of us were drinking (probably not my sister).

**Sellers:** You were quite the high livers for —

**Kurz:** Oh, I tell you. You know, talk about wild. [laughs] For Tallahassee. And I remember Mary Lou and I, after it got dark, going swimming in this sink hole. And I can't — there must have been some kind of shore you could get up on because I wasn't really that good a swimmer, and it was really kind of a foolish thing for me to do. But anyway, that was kind of a place where, you know, young people went to have picnics and stuff. And have you heard of Lake Hall?

**Sellers:** No. Hall? H-A-L-L? No, I haven't.

**Kurz:** That was out Jackson Bluff Road. Wasn't it Jackson Bluff Road that went to Midway?

**Sellers:** US 20 that goes to Midway? It could have been; Jackson Bluff could have gone on around, yeah.

**Kurz:** Yeah. Anyway, this lake was kind of halfway between Tallahassee and Midway. Tallahassee as it was then, you know, ending just a couple of blocks west from Woodward. But this lake, I guess it was natural that it had a sandy beach, because I guess, you know, some of the soil around there was pretty sandy. When we were small children, Mother would take me and my sister out there to swim because it was close. There were some other children, and I can't think now who it may have been, but from time to time there would be other children out there with their mothers. And then of course we were allowed to swim in the college swimming pool certain times, and we did take swimming lessons there. I don't know whether it was the faculty members' children or whether it was open to anybody in Tallahassee, but I can remember taking swimming lessons in the summertime at the pool.

**Sellers:** Did you have to wear those wonderful bathing suits? Or could you wear your own, do you remember?

**Kurz:** I think we wore our own, but we had to put — those towels, the two that were sewn together and that you put over your shoulder?

**Sellers:** The angels, yes.

**Kurz:** Yeah. I think as children we were allowed to wear our own. But lets see, am I running out of things to say? Have you got any questions?

**Sellers:** Yeah, I've just been kind of having a wonderful time listening. What kind of relationship did you have with other kids in town, other than maybe seeing them at the lake or something like that?

**Kurz:** Actually, a very good relationship. Faculty members were accepted into old Tallahassee society, and so we had — and of course some of those children that we grew up with, they started out at the Demonstration School and then they, you know, moved to Caroline Brevard or Sealey, and of course a lot of them went to Leon High School. That was sort of the thing to do. My father being in Kiwanis was very much an entre. my mother was very socially active, too. She was one of the founders of the Dames Club, which was the faculty wives' club. She also was in King's Daughters, and she was on the Girl Scout Council. So that, you know, she had friends in the town who were not connected to the college. Then we went to the Episcopal Church. So we were friends with the Lewises, again from early childhood. And the, well the Pichards, not so much, but Kenneth Pichard was a classmate of ours. But I'm trying to think of who some of the families were — the Lewises and — you know, who had children our age. There was the Knapps, Mark Boyd, was he the malaria researcher with the Rockefeller Foundation? He had offices there on the campus, but he was not paid by the university.

**Sellers:** What was his name?

**Kurz:** Boyd. B-O-Y-D.

**Sellers:** Okay, I've not run across him that I know of either.

**Kurz:** Oh, you haven't? My thinking is that he was doing malaria research, and that it was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. But I think he's got a grandson there in Tallahassee, who's name is Mark Boyd Strauss. He had three daughters, all of whom I think are dead now.

**Sellers:** I wonder if that's a Buddy Strauss, Buddy and June Strauss, connection.

**Kurz:** He did not graduate from FSU; he attended for a couple of years, but they may be related, you know, because a lot of Tallahassee people married Tallahassee people.

**Sellers:** Right. They did indeed.

**Kurz:** And it wasn't that large a town in those days, so—

**Sellers:** Tell me a little bit what you remember about your mother and the Dames Club.

**Kurz:** You know, not a whole lot. I don't know what they did in terms of whether they raised money for things for the college or —

**Sellers:** Did they have meetings in homes?

**Kurz:** Yeah, they had regular meetings in homes, because Mother would take a turn being hostess. And I know they did some, you know, like community projects, like getting toys for underprivileged children at Christmas time or something like that. The people that I

remember who were in it were Mark Degraff's wife, Leland Lewis' wife, the Fenner's wife (I can't remember his – but he was Psychology Department), and probably Eyman's wife. They're the ones that come to mind. I know that Mrs. Dodd was not. The Dodd's lost a child, and from the time that baby died, Mrs. Dodd wore white. She stayed in mourning the rest of her life, I guess, because I never remember seeing her except in white.

**Sellers:** No wonder Dorothy was a little strange. [laughter]

**Kurz:** Yeah. That was the daughter, wasn't it? Anyway, I know that she didn't join the club, because I guess that would have been social. But I really don't know concretely what they did except to, you know, get together and support each other, I guess.

**Sellers:** Probably they needed it with all those faculty guys who were —

**Kurz:** Oh, yeah. And they were, you know, they were housewives. That was what one was supposed to be. Of course, the person who didn't fit that mold was Harold Richard's wife.

**Sellers:** Oh, yes. Hazel. Oh, tell me what you remember about her!

**Kurz:** Oh, she was really something. She was a powerhouse. And everybody said she was brighter than he was. [laughter] But, you know, she couldn't teach because of the nepotism law. I'm sure you know that she was very involved with Mortarboard, sort of a sponsor of them. And it was really true, because I took physics from him, that hardly a class went by that he didn't say something about "my wife, Hazel." [laughter]

**Sellers:** She had him well trained.

**Kurz:** Yeah, but she was a very pleasant woman. We would see her shopping on Monroe Street, because that's where you went to shop. She was very friendly and pleasant. She was a large woman, not fat but big-boned and fairly tall, at least to my child's eyes and by comparison to my mother. Mother was not small, she was kind of medium-sized.

**Sellers:** The pictures I've seen of Hazel Richards, make me think that she was what you'd call "rangy."

**Kurz:** Kind of gangly? Yeah. Not, you know, not graceful, and —. And dressed very casually. I don't ever remember seeing her really what you would call "dressed up." Now, of course, in those days one always wore skirts.

**Sellers:** And gloves.

**Kurz:** And gloves, oh, and hats and gloves, yes. But there was actually a woman, a milliner. Her name was Harbison, and her children went to school with us, and she was

divorced.

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**Sellers:** I didn't know there were any divorced people.

**Kurz:** There were two that I knew of.

**Sellers:** Divorced?

**Kurz:** Divorced. I knew the children. One was Theresa Myers, she was an FSCW graduate, her name was Theresa Murphy, and then she married a Myers, and he was a lawyer there in Tallahassee. They had two children, Freddie, who was born with a congenital hip abnormality. He was a classmate of ours. Then Teresa was their daughter, and I can't — she was close to our age, too, maybe a year different. But they were reportedly a pretty free couple before they finally divorced. And the story was that the reason that (and who knows, this was gossip), but that Freddie, the son, had the congenital hip because his mother had a venereal disease that she got from her husband. [laughter]

**Sellers:** Boy, I bet that was closely guarded gossip.

**Kurz:** Oh, yeah. But they divorced I guess when Freddie and Teresa were in highschool. And they went through the Demonstration School, too. I think Freddie was in our class, you know, graduating class. And then the other person who was divorced was this Mrs. Harbison, who was a milliner. She had four children; the youngest was her son John, who died, I think in his 40s or 50s, of — he had a heart attack and died. But he was my age, and he was my high school crush. So I sort of kept up with what happened to him as time went on. [laughs] The Harbison's were divorced, and I never knew who the father was, whether he was even from Tallahassee. But they had a really nice house. It's probably part of the campus now, but you go out on Jackson Bluff Road over a viaduct, over the railroad tracks, and the land was a little higher on the other side. And they were just right across the railroad track viaduct, there on Jackson Bluff Road. A really very nice house, which I'm sure, being a milliner did not pay for. But she was pretty unconventional, too. She smoked in public. And during World War II, she showed up wearing pants! She was probably the first woman in Tallahassee to wear pants in public. And I guess it was — actually, it was probably women in the war industries who started wearing pants, wasn't it?

**Sellers:** Yeah, because the skirts could get caught in things and they were dangerous, yeah.

**Kurz:** Yeah, because as a child, of course when we would go out on field trips with Daddy — Mother made, you know, outfits for us, they were called "beach pajamas," which we could wear in the summertime. But I remember having boys' overalls to wear because there were no girls' overalls. So we would each have a pair of boys' overalls to wear when we went

out in the woods with Daddy.

**Sellers:** And you were probably considered very eccentric, too.

**Kurz:** Well, we were probably excused because of being a botanist's children — and the students who went on the field trips with Daddy wore — they mostly wore jodhpurs, which I guess it was women could get in the way of pants in those days.

**Sellers:** Riding pants, uh-huh.

**Kurz:** Riding pants, yeah. There is a picture I sent to the Alumni Association some years back of Ruth Shornhurst Breen's class, and they were in like white pantaloons – I guess that's what you call them – going on a field trip with Daddy.

**Sellers:** I wonder if they were wearing maybe the Phys. Ed. clothing?

**Kurz:** Oh, they may have been. Yeah, because they were white and they kind of were snug around the ankles.

**Sellers:** Yeah, sort of like bloomers.

**Kurz:** Bloomers, yeah. Yeah. Long bloomers, yeah. But anyway, that really was not very satisfactory field trip gear, either.

**Sellers:** No, I wouldn't think so.

**Kurz:** Field trips used to be — that was pretty much a Saturday routine, and of course the college had no bus or anything like that in those days. And so my father, and then Ralph Bellamy would often go with Daddy and bring his car, so that there would be students in Bellamy's car and in Daddys's car, and then there was a Presbyterian minister named Caldwell, who also was an amateur botanist, and he would go along. Those are the three cars that I can remember that they would fill up with students. There was always a list of students signed up to go on these field trips. And Mother would bring bread and bologna and cheese and, you know, I can't remember— probably just water in the big thermos jugs. But she would make lunch. The students had bag lunches from the dining room. And if they didn't get back before the dining room closed, which was not uncommon, we would have, you know, eight or ten students for supper.

**Sellers:** Lots of them for dinner

**Kurz:** Yeah. And Mother would — considering these were Depression days, Mother would whip up something, nothing very fancy, maybe hot dogs and beans or something like that, but she would feed everybody. She was a pretty good sport.

**Sellers:** She was very resourceful.

**Kurz:** Yeah. She was a real good sport. Of course when the war came along and gas rationing, that sort of —

**Sellers:** The field trips stopped.

**Kurz:** Yeah, they slowed down anyway. But that's when — we didn't live that far from the campus and his office was in the History Building, and that's when Daddy started walking to work, which was good for him, too. But that's how he saved his gas rations so that he could go out in the woods from time to time.

**Sellers:** Now, neither you nor Flora went to — I guess it would have been Florida State at that point?

**Kurz:** We went for two years. And then, actually, we left to go into nursing, both of us. And we both were cadet nurses. That was part of the war effort, but it also — our stepmother had finished her Ph.D. and was back in Tallahassee, and she was not easy to live with. So I actually, you know, I mean, I'm fine with the choice I made, but I really wouldn't —

**Sellers:** Wouldn't have made it under different circumstances.

**Kurz:** — under different circumstances. I really was interested in writing and interested in journalism. I've done a fair amount of scientific writing, but, you know, that wasn't my first choice. Anyway, that was how we ended up not graduating. Flora went to Duke, and I went to Charity Hospital in New Orleans, and one young physician that I worked with said, "That tells me all I need to know about the difference in you two." [laughter]

**Sellers:** So she was a bit more of a swinger than you were?

**Kurz:** [laughs] Anyway, I really enjoyed my years in New Orleans, and I got my bachelors at LSU, which — the Health Sciences program was right there in New Orleans. So I was in New Orleans for six years, living in the French Quarter. [laughs] Well, living in a nurses' dorm for three years, but then living in the French Quarter, which in those days was all, you know, those beautiful old homes broken up into apartments for students and poor working folks. Now they're million dollar houses.

**Sellers:** Oh, yeah. Don't you wish you'd bought one back then.

**Kurz:** Yeah. [laughter] I can remember paying \$27.75 a month for a furnished apartment. [laughs] Those were they days when I — yeah. And I was making \$180 a month, and thought I was making good money. [laughs]

**Sellers:** Well, you were.

**Kurz:** Yeah, I guess I was.

**Sellers:** That was pretty decent back then.

**Kurz:** Yeah, yeah. For a woman, especially.

**Sellers:** Well, what else can you think of that you want to put on the tape?

**Kurz:** About Tallahassee —

**Sellers:** About Tallahassee, or the school, or your dad, or —

**Kurz:** I guess the other thing I would add was the Episcopal Church, and what a really important part of our life that was. We sang in the junior choir which Mary Murphree Meginniss directed. She was married to Judge Ben Meginniss. They had a daughter, Mary Hamilton, who was also an FSCW graduate. We always called her Mary Hamilton to distinguish her from her mother. The husband of Jennie Murphree was Mrs. Meginniss' uncle. And that's how she ended up at FSCW. She had the junior choir at St. John's. My mother had a trained voice and had sung in the chorus of a Chicago opera company, so she — that was another sort of entre that she had to Tallahassee society.

**Sellers:** Your mother must have been really amazing.

**Kurz:** You know, she really was. In retrospect.

**Sellers:** All of these wonderful talents that she had, that she just kind of put under a barrel so that she could —

**Kurz:** So that she could be Herman Kurz's wife. And everything she did was sort of with furthering his career in mind. Being polite to the right people, and not making waves, and keeping her two little girls beautifully dressed and all of that. She was Roman Catholic, and so she sang in the choir at the Catholic Church. She also did a lot of guest soloing (she was a mezzo-soprano) at the Methodist Church and at the Episcopal Church. She was competitive with Mary Meginniss as far as their singing was concerned. I know I'm prejudiced, but Mother had a nicer voice. Mary Meginniss had been, I think, a music major, and was very well prepared to be a junior choir director, and taught us well. Mother wanted us to be — you know, to have that experience. But I do remember the competition between the two of them to who sang at who's wedding. Mary Meginniss was asked to sing at Liepe Conradi's wedding – Liepe Conradi Ekermeier. We went to the wedding, and I was maybe eight years old. I thought — she sang, of course, "Because," because that's what you sang at weddings. When we were leaving the church, I can remember saying to Mother, "I thought Mrs. Meginniss sounded nice." And my

mother said, “She was flat.” [laughter] But that junior choir was a lot of fun, too. We had rehearsals and we sang every Wednesday night at the evening prayer services. Then when we got to be old enough, we joined – I guess it was teenagers who were in this – it was called Young People’s Service League. But I don’t remember any services we performed. [laughter]. We had picnics once a month, and we had a meeting every week on Sunday night, I think it was. There was a man named Ned Benedict – that was also an old family, old Episcopal family – who was the sponsor of the Young People’s Service League. That was a nice group of — the Lewises were in that, Walter Meginniss, who was roughly our age, and Mary Lou Norwood.

**Sellers:** Mary Lou was everywhere!

**Kurz:** And the Henry boys, Brian Henry and Joe Henry; Billy Henry was younger. Joe Henry became a physician, a pediatrician there in Tallahassee. I’m sure he’s gone by now; he was probably fives years older. He was the oldest of the three boys. But an awfully nice guy, you know, what I remember of him, he was very nice and tolerant of little girls. [laughter] I guess that’s how he became a pediatrician.

And I guess I’m sort of running out of things —

**Sellers:** Well, you’ve done a remarkable job! I’ve just kind of sat here and listened to all of it go by, and I’m just thrilled. You’ve even told me things that it never would have occurred to me to ask about. And a lot of them, I’m seeing things connect in my brain, and I’m thinking, “Oh! Now I see.” Because I’ve had pieces of them before. So this has been great!

**Kurz:** Oh, good. I’m glad I was —

**Sellers:** Oh, yes, yes. And I’m hoping Flora’s gonna do the same thing for me.

**Kurz:** Flora will be more careful about what she says.

**Sellers:** Oh, phooey. Well, let me end the tape then. Let me make sure that you are aware we were recording it.

**Kurz:** Yes, indeed. And I didn’t say anything that everybody in Tallahassee doesn’t know anyways. [laughs]

**Sellers:** Except me!

End interview