

Interviewee: James, Elizabeth
Interviewer: Robin Sellers
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[Barbara Scott James and Pat Johnson are also present at the interview]

Sellers: Mrs. James, if you will just go ahead and tell me a little bit about where you were born and where you grew up.

EJames: I was born in 1918 to Carolyn Cordson and Dennis Brandon Scott, and as I said, in 1918, in Savannah. We lived there for a couple of years. My father was working for a railroad company, and he got a better job in Bainbridge with the Georgia, Florida, and Alabama Railroad company. And so we moved to Bainbridge. And shortly thereafter, my sister, Carolyn Scott Watt, was born, and my Aunt Sissee, who was a favorite of everyone in the family, came and got me and took me with her to visit my grandparents in Washington. I remember I put my foot on the table because I had some new shoes, and my grandfather said, "Betty, take your foot down." I just kept wiggling my toes. Finally he said, "Betty, come here a minute." I got my first paddling then.

After that, we were in Bainbridge for several years. I went to kindergarten there when I was four years old, and I have a very close friend living in Thomasville, Georgia, who went to kindergarten with me also. She also had a house at Alligator Point right below us. So that was a case of history repeating itself. My friend is Shirley Altman.

We always had graduation exercises from the seventh grade, and we all wore beautiful white dresses and carried white roses. So I did that, and then I was in high school. We lived in Bainbridge then, and my youngest sister was born in 1927 – Sarah Scott Hartsfield – who also lives now in Tallahassee. I used to dress her up and put her in the carriage and take her all around to see my teachers, I was so proud of her.

Soon after that, the Depression got ahold of us. My father lost his job with the railroad company because another outfit, the Seaboard Coastline, bought it. So then he was affiliated with Mount Clapp and Carter in Atlanta. So during the Depression, he would have jobs in Atlanta, and Sarah and my mother and father went to live with my aunt in Atlanta where most of my father's work was. I was sent to live with my aunts (Polly cordson and Hammie Cherry and her husband Buddy) in Savannah, and my younger sister, Carolyn, lived here with Jack and Sarah Simmons, whose house is right down the street. The two years that I spent in Savannah, I tried to do everything that I could. I did win a scholarship for going to church the most times. I sang in the choir there as well as I sang in the choir when I was in Bainbridge. I was always interested in church work. During the time I was in Savannah, I made a lot of good friends who are my friends today, even though I was only there two years. And Barbara Scott's going to laugh in a minute, because she especially wanted me to tell you I lived in the attic. They only had two bedrooms; my aunt was in one and my uncle in the other. So actually, I did live in the attic, but it was warm in the winter and cool in the summer. They saw that I had all those things.

Sellers: Was it tall enough that you could stand up?

EJames: Yes, it was. And I could hang all my clothes up there on the rafters and everything. Some of my friends, they were wealthy. And one of my good friends had a pair of white buckskin shoes, and I wanted a pair of shoes like that so bad, and what do you know? I got them for my birthday. I was fifteen and I was so proud of those shoes. Anyway, I enjoyed going to Savannah High. They had twelve grades at that school, but my school in Bainbridge only eleven years. So after the two years I was at Savannah High, we moved back to Bainbridge and my father opened his own business with Elberta Crate and Box company. He was the manager and owner of the commissary, and they had Babbitt (token money) with Scott Supply Company. And most of their customers were employees of Elberta Crate. And a few years after that, he opened one in Albany.

We moved to Tallahassee in 1935, but my father worked here a year before we came because he wanted me to graduate from my high school in Bainbridge.

Sellers: Did your mother stay behind with you?

EJames: Yes, she did. And my father only came home on the weekends when his business was first started. Then I went to Florida State College for Women. As I say, I graduated from Bainbridge High in 1935, and immediately went to Florida State College for Women in the fall. I pledged Alpha Delta Pi sorority and was initiated in March of '36. I was a day student and I was a loyal member of the day student's organization. When I was a junior, I gave my junior speech recital. I was what we called then a "speech major," and as a junior I gave a one-act play. And as a senior, I gave a three-act play. Of course, and acted all the characters. So I enjoyed going to college very much. I always loved to learn things. I went to summer school my sophomore, junior years in Tallahassee at Florida State College for Women. When I was a freshman that summer, I toured Florida by bus. Went to visit several of my friends.

Sellers: Was that something in connection with the college?

EJames: No, we didn't have a car for me, so I just went from one place to the other by bus. Had a wonderful time.

Sellers: The Depression wasn't bothering your family too much.

EJames: No, it did not bother them.

Sellers: Your dad was in businesses that it didn't affect.

EJames: That's right. And darling, when I was living in Savannah, many of my friends fathers committed suicide. It was a terrible thing, the Depression was. And to this day, of course, I turn lights off when I leave a room. But anyway, to get back to my senior year — I had

an idea when I was in college that I might want to go into private students in speech. I had taken elocution from about the fourth grade all the way through high school and so forth, and I thought maybe that's what I wanted to do. So when I was at Florida State College for Women, I did act in quite a few plays, and I also was in some little – the little theater here.

And the summer that I graduated, I filled in for my friend and I was the receptionist for Dr. Johnston, who had a private hospital here in those days. I told my mother that I really didn't want to do that, that I wanted to go to New York to school. Would she please send me to Katherine Gibbs? So it was arranged that I would live with my aunt and uncle (Mary Scott and Ray Hicks) in South Orange. They had two boys; one was fourteen and one was twelve. So I lived with them the year that I was at Katherine Gibbs. I got a degree from there called "the special degree for college women." And the hardest thing I'd ever done up to that time was learning to type. I remember I'd get up at about five or six o'clock in the mornings and start typing. The course lasted a year, and I made a lot of new friends up there, especially being a Southerner. I was in my friend's wedding the following July down at Bay Head, New Jersey.

Had my fortune told about that time, and found out that I was going to marry sometime, and the person would be from Alabama, we'd have a large family, and we'd go a lot of traveling. Well, Charlie was not from Alabama, but all his people were. And my friend Betty Dittmann, we called each other "Beezie." I was in her wedding and she said, "Beezie, I'm saving your life because four times now – three times not a bride – four times you're safe." So believe it or not, that was in July, about the 27th of July. And the following year I worked up there. I worked for a Scandinavian furniture company to begin with, and a fellow was named Walter James. I was all of 21, and oh, I thought he was the most handsome thing. I almost had a crush on him. I'd sit there and I would write, "Elizabeth James!" Isn't that a beautiful name? Little did I know that I would be Elizabeth James the next year.

So I enjoyed working in New York. I loved it up there. And in July of 1941, I came home to be in a wedding. And while I was away, my roommate and her husband had just married and had my other roommate to dinner. So when I came back, they asked me to dinner. I didn't have any idea anybody else would be there. And this young doctor from Virginia was there. And I guess we kind of hit it off because we had nine dates – the reason being that he was a resident surgeon at the hospitals there and had very few nights off. So we corresponded often.

We were very fortunate to have already made a good many friends in New York. A lot of Charlie's friends, you know, were doctors. So when we became engaged, my aunt and uncle turned an engagement reception into a wedding reception. And it just so happened that my mother and aunt were visiting me at the time in New York. So Charlie and I decided that I would be married like my sister was, in Tallahassee, and that was okay. But he said, "If I'm called into the army, may we marry in New York, we'll be able to have a honeymoon." So I agreed to that. And bless Pat, he was called into the army. And of course, my mother and aunt being up there helped me get the wedding together. We were able to get it on a Sunday at the Little Church Around the Corner chapel. My sisters came up and all – a lot of Charlie's cousins were there for the wedding. The weekend of the wedding, my mother and I bought my trousseau by way of a taxi. We would go to Altman's for my underwear; we'd go to Best and Company for some clothes; we'd go to Lord and Taylor for this and that. And shoes. And the taxi would just wait there for us to do the shopping. And we got it all together and the wedding was on Sunday afternoon.

And some of our friends we were unable to get in touch with, so when they came and saw my hand with two rings and realized we'd already married. And so we went away on a wonderful honeymoon. And in those days, air flight was kind of "the thing." So every time we would land, Charlie would get out and take the pictures. Away we went to Montreal, and we stayed at — I don't remember the name of the hotel right off the bat — and my friends, George and Clifton Lewis, they also spent their honeymoon at this same hotel. They later became my neighbors, and George bought their house in Los Robles for \$7,000, and it's now for sale for \$545,000. Needless to say, we had a wonderful honeymoon in Montreal, took in all the activities such as going to see the Indians dance and all the important buildings there. And from there, we went to Appomattox to see Mama Ada and Daddy Charlie. And during that time she planned a reception for us.

Sellers: Clifton and George Lewis weren't there at the same time you were in Montreal, were they?

EJames: No, darling. They just happened to go there on their honeymoon. They weren't there on their honeymoon because they were married before we were. By any chance do you know Clifton?

Sellers: Oh, yes.

EJames: She's as sharp as a tack.

Sellers: She's a character.

EJames: Well, she is, without a doubt. She's a very, very close friend of mine, all through college though I'm older than she. But she is a delightful lady. And you know, she lives at Georgia Bell Apartments.

Sellers: Sarah Lewis Marxson, her sister-in-law —

[conversation about Dr. Marxson and the Lewis sisters not transcribed]

EJames: So now we're in Appomattox with Mama Ada and Daddy Charlie, planning a reception there. In those days they had them mostly for women; men weren't invited to these kind of parties. I got a chance to meet the lovely people in Appomattox, and little did I know that I'd be spending a year there a few years after that.

Sellers: You're talking about Appomattox, Virginia?

EJames: Yes. We went to live with Charlie's aunt and uncle in Hampton, Virginia, after he was called into the service; we were unable to get on the base. So we lived with Aunt Tillie and Uncle Ralph James about six months. And I got a parking ticket one day when I was in

town. Oh, first time I'd ever had one. Hadn't been married very long. I was so scared. Aunt Tillie said, "You don't have to be worried about that; that's nothing." She gave me a lot of courage. She was a wonderful lady. Her husband, Ralph, was an attorney. She actually put him through school. And Uncle Ralph lived to be 102 and 1/2, and he still had all his faculties. We were there for his 100th birthday, and we brought him a shirt that had "100 years" on it, and the back had William and Mary. And he said, "Heck, I wish both of them were on the front." He was a great lover of his alma mater, William and Mary. He was a delegate to the legislature of Virginia for many, many times.

And after we stayed with them about six months, we were able to get on the base. So we lived in a very nice apartment. Unfortunately, it was upstairs. I was pregnant. It was hot that summer. And she [Barbara Scott] was born on September 11th. And Charlie's mother believed in help. You had to have somebody to help and work for you all the time. That's what Mama Ada said. And Mama Ada said, "I'm not a good entertainer of little children, but I can get somebody for you who is." And so Annie came to live with us at Fort Monroe. And she could fry the best oysters; she was just a wonderful maid.

About that time my uncle, Jack Simmons, in Tallahassee, sent a wire-haired terrier to Barbara Scott. I had grown up with hunting dogs, pointers and so forth, and wasn't very familiar with a wire-haired terrier who's very high-pitched. So he ate up my aunt's shoes and he did a lot of bad things.

Sellers: How old was Barbara at the time?

EJames: She was about six months old. So every time we let him out, he would go strike out for the boys barracks. And so finally after we didn't pay him much attention, I decided I would just give him away. So I gave him to the boys and they loved that. And our years at Fort Monroe were just wonderful. My mother would come up and visit us, both of my aunts. We had a lot of company. And every Sunday there, they had a dance at the Officers Club with a wonderful orchestra. We just enjoyed living there and made many friends. We were there for about 3 and 1/2 years, and she celebrated her birthday in September. She was three. But Charlie was already in England then. And Fleet was born two weeks after Charlie got to England. He was with the 104th General Hospital there, out playing golf. And when he came in, his army friends said, "You have a son." And of course, we didn't know what we would have as far as the sex. He said if it's a boy, he was going to be named Charles Fleetwood James III. I said, "Yes, and we can call him Woody." He said, "Woody? We will call him Fleet." And Fleet lived up to that name, because he's a fast mover. He was our first born son.

Charlie, of course, stayed over there in England for nineteen months and when he came back Fleet was walking and talking a little bit then. So we stayed there at Mama Ada and Daddy Charlie's house where they had a lovely apartment that was built for a doctor friend of theirs. So that was a perfect place for us to stay while Charlie was in England. And we would come to Tallahassee and visit my mother; by then my father had passed away. And we would come and stay six or seven months with her. And she had good health, too.

Sellers: When had your mother and father – had they permanently moved to Tallahassee when they bought you here?

EJames: Yes. No, darling, when we moved to Bainbridge and we lived in Bainbridge until I was a freshman in college, and then we permanently moved to Tallahassee. But my father worked here a year before we moved. We moved and lived on 6th Avenue for a year, and right after that we moved to a house in Los Robles. And we moved from that house to another house. We lived in two houses in Los Robles before they built their house, which is right next door to the one that we had rented. That's on Cristobal Drive.

So we get back to Charlie's homecoming. He had planned to work in Birmingham by himself, but his office space that he thought he was getting had not even started being built. So therefore, we hung around in Appomattox about a couple of months for him to decide what he wanted to do. He decided that he'd like to live in Tallahassee. He visited here several times, and he liked the city. So we decided the best thing for him to do is to get in the Veterans Administration, because Florida and Virginia did not represent – had no reciprocity for each other. So therefore he requested to move to Lake City, Florida. So he worked there for the Veterans Administration for a year. And during that time, my uncle said, "You'd be wise to come to Tallahassee because we're building a new hospital here and we don't have but one surgeon here." So it didn't take much persuasion for him to decide that we'd live in Tallahassee. And I just couldn't believe that I was coming back home and I didn't have anything to do with saying, "I want to move to Tallahassee." It just happened. So I felt very, very blessed.

So we lived with my mother for about a year. We were looking at sites to build a house. And Charlie said, "If we're going to live in Tallahassee, we're going to live as close to your mother as we can." So there were two lots vacant on Isabel Court, and we decided that they were the best ones that were available. So we bought both of them. And my friend Clifton, oh, she worried so. "You're building a big house, you're going to have a lot of children, you don't have much land." "But Clifton, that's the best we can do." So Charlie said, "It will be your house and my office." So actually, I looked at a lot of magazines to find something that we would like. And in *American Home* was the house that I chose. It was also the house in Montgomery, Alabama. So of course, I went to see the house.

And I might get back to some of these years that we would go to Loudon to visit when the children were small, and we kept on doing that for years. So we did go to Loudon. House was built in 1835; it's never been out of the family. My mother-in-law inherited it. Her father was a doctor. He practiced 65 years in Livingston. And in those days they believed that land was the best thing, so he had quite a bit of land. And he had nine children. And so his brother-in-law and his sister decided to move from this house in the country back to Livingston. And so he bought it from them and decided to give it to his eldest daughter, who was my mother-in-law. And so she inherited the house in 1939. And in 1948, we wanted to escape the rest of the building of this house, so we all went to Loudon, myself and my three children.

BJames: I thought you told me that Mama Ada kind of bought the house. That she worked in the drugstore and she made that chicken salad and she saved her money and she bought it. That wasn't so?

EJames: No, darling, she didn't buy it. But she wanted to improve it, and she knew that Daddy Charlie didn't have the means to do what she wanted to do. So she did have a restaurant there and she would get up, as Barbara Scott said, early in the mornings and make the

sandwiches. Her husband was a pharmacist and owned his own drugstore in Appomattox. So all the money that she made, she saved to put it on Loudon. And in 1947, when Dennis, my second son, was about six months old, electricity and running water came to Loudon. And that was a big time; that was really something. And so when we came back from visiting there, the house was completed, all the grass was all there, rugs were on the floors and all painted. And so then I had a little bit of furniture, so we had to buy some more furniture, piece by piece.

But anyway, I've always loved the house. It was just what I needed. And after we came back and started living here in '48, we had three children. So I knew that I couldn't spend a whole lot of money on the house. So I found that plan and I was very satisfied. Little bit later, we had another daughter; she was born in 1949. She was premature; she only weighted almost three pounds. She was born on November 13, and should have been born in January. She stayed in the hospital until the 5th of January, and Charlie said, "That's the way to have babies – let the nurses bring her into everything." However, my friends would see me on the street and they would say to me, "Charlie looks so sad. What is wrong with him?" I'd say, "Well, you know we don't know whether we're going to get to keep Betsy or not." So we were lucky that we got to keep her.

A couple of years or so after that, here came a third child —

BJames: Second girl.

EJames: Yes. And I hoped, "Dear God, please send me a girl so Charlie can see a girl from her infancy." So that's when Betsy was born. So then we were expecting another child. So I said, "Send me another girl, please." So he did. That was Carolyn. So we ended up, as he later said, "We have a full house – three queens and two kings." So during the time —

Sellers: He was a poker player?

EJames: That's right, a poker player. So during that time, our house grew. We added upstairs two and a half rooms and a small bathroom. And my son Fleet, in later years, had a friend spend the night with him. And when Bob was taking a bath, he said, "Fleet, this is the littlest bathroom I've even been in." Fleet said, "Yeah, they built it when I was a little boy." So we continued to thrive and be happy, and the children all did well in school. They were able to walk or ride their bicycles; they all went to Sealey Memorial, which was a very fine school. One by one they went there so that the younger children and the older ones at school never did want their mama to take them to school. They'd already been to the school; they wanted to go by themselves. And Mama Ada would come and visit us in October, and she would bring her canaries with her in the cages on the back seat of the car. And during holidays at school, the children would all come over to see Mama Ada's birds.

We had a wonderful time going to all the parties and things that Sealey school had. And then the family kept growing, and we needed a new kitchen. Carolyn was about 10 years old. So we did build a new kitchen according to my specifications, regardless of the price of the kitchen. The kitchen ended up being more money than the whole house was when we built the house.

Well, what else can we talk about.

Sellers: I've got some questions. I'm going to start from the most recent and go backwards. I want to know where the canaries stayed when they came inside.

EJames: They stayed in the cages on the porch. They continued in the cages.

Sellers: And I suppose when she was here in October, it was warm enough for them to be on the porch.

EJames: It was. And Barbara Scott got the idea that she, too, would go in the canary business. So actually, they had some canaries – Mama Ada's had some canary babies – so she claimed them and sold one to Reba Carolyn Messer. Reba Carolyn Messer —

BJames: She was my friend.

EJames: And Reba Carolyn evidently didn't take care of the bird, because in about two weeks the bird died. And she told Barbara Scott, "I want my money back. That bird died right away." Barbara Scott said, "I'm sorry. She was a happy little bird when you bought her. I'm not responsible for who takes care of her after she leaves my place."

Sellers: You said you bought furniture slowly to furnish the house. What furniture stores were in Tallahassee at the time?

EJames: The best store was Shaw's. It was operated by a man named James Shaw. It was on the corner of Gadsden Street and College Avenue. There's a huge big building there on the corner, and that's where Shaw's was. And Shaw's continued to be in business until about – I would say about 1965 or maybe a few years later than that. And they went out of business. I bought several pieces that were on sale from them, such as a highboy for Charlie and a dresser for me and spool beds, you know. And nice furniture that I couldn't really afford.

[conversation about current furniture stores and sales not transcribed]

Sellers: Where did you grocery shop?

EJames: Byrd's Grocery on Thomasville Road. And my mother didn't have a car, and so she ordered her groceries and they were delivered to her. And so if she ever wanted any ice cream, she would just call the drugstore and they would bring it to her. In those days, everything was brought to you.

Sellers: Wasn't Byrd's phone number #1?

EJames: Yes, that's correct. It was.

BJames: The Jitney Jungle, wasn't that around then, too, or is that later?

EJames: No, it was much later. It was over where the Miracle Plaza is now.

BJames: Oh, I thought it was over on North Monroe.

EJames: Excuse me, I'm wrong. It was.

BJames: Yes, it was over there on North Monroe. It was where that American Home Patient medical supply place is.

EJames: It is. And Mr. Johnson was the owner. He was a wonderful man.

Sellers: Where did you shop for clothes?

EJames: Oh, a lot of places. Steyman's, which was a wonderful ladies shop. Linden's, also a ladies shop. Miller Bootery.

BJames: Mae's.

EJames: Mostly Mae's, yes. Who just turned 100? Lillian Cox. She had a lovely ladies dress wear shop. And you know, she's 100 years old.

Sellers: I saw that in the paper.

[conversation about Lillian Cox not transcribed]

Sellers: Was Bertha Cooke's here?

EJames: Yes, that was a good one. And I have to tell you, Linden's had this gorgeous cerise satin dress – damask – it was three pieces – had a jacket and an underpiece and a skirt. Oh, my, I wanted that dress so bad. We were talking at the table and I said, "There's the most beautiful dress I'd love to have, but it cost \$100!" Charlie said, "Well, why didn't you buy it?" I said, "You mean it?" I hotfooted it up there and I got the dress. And the dress is hanging upstairs in the closet. Still have it.

Sellers: Did you wear it \$100 worth?

EJames: Yes, I did! I was so proud to wear it. A lot of my clothes did come from Mae's. And she would tell you, you know, "I'm not selling this to anybody else." That wasn't true. My first cousin and I had the same Easter dress – Sarah Dozier. It was a navy blue linen with a white jacket. My mother was quite a stylish lady; she did all her shopping at Mae's. And she loved this dress, and Miss Mae said, "I'm not going to sell that to anybody in Tallahassee now." And Mother said, "That'll be fine." So at the cotillion club, Beverly Brock, who was my age, had the same dress on. My mother was really furious about that. My daughter Betsy taught

school down in Ft. Lauderdale. She was to be at my son's wife's bridesmaids luncheon. So she said, "Mimi, please go get my dress from Mae's. You know what I want." I said, "Betsy, you can get it when you come up here." "Oh, no. I'm just going to be there a few days before the wedding. You go and get it." So I didn't get the dress for her; I waited for her to come. She got the same dress I had, so I didn't get to wear that dress. But she wanted the same thing I wanted. That was funny, wasn't it.

Sellers: Tell me a little bit about being at FSCW. You said you took elocution. Would that have been Libby Thomson?

EJames: Yes.

Sellers: What do you remember about Libby?

EJames: Oh, she was the most precious lady. I loved her to death. Everybody loved her. She was a precious person, and she was always vivacious, she was always happy. And in later years, after she gave up being a professor out there, I would go to see her every Christmas and sometime more often than that. She gave me for a wedding gift a beautiful turquoise vase that I still value. But everybody who had her fell in love with her. She was just really something special. And Ms Buford was also my teacher. She was excellent. Once we were at the same party and I had a black patent leather purse on – I had it under my arm. She said, "Betty, is that your Bible you're carrying around?" She was really strict. She wasn't nearly as much fun as Elizabeth was. Well, she was a lot older than Elizabeth, too.

Sellers: You were a day student, so you didn't live in the sorority house?

EJames: No, I didn't. But I did live there the fall session of my senior year. I lived out there then.

Sellers: Was the house in the same place? Is it the same house?

EJames: Yes, it's the same ADPi house.

Sellers: You said you belonged and were active in the day student organization. Tell me something about that.

EJames: You know, I can't even tell you anything. I've forgotten everything about it.

End side A

Sellers: Did you ever have a professor by the name of Sarah Herndon?

EJames: No, I didn't.

Sellers: Who are some of the professors that you remember?

EJames: Dr. Dodd, Dr. Rogers.

Sellers: What did you think of Hudson Rogers? Was he the dreamboat everybody says he was?

EJames: Yes, darling, he was. He was the most wonderful man. And of course, he was from Virginia. I don't know why we always thought anybody from Virginia —. He was a wonderful man. I took every course he had. Also Mrs. Alfriend was a wonderful teacher, and I took nearly all the ones that she had. I actually had two majors. I had a major in English and one in speech, and my minor was in history. I tried to take all the courses that I thought were cultural. I knew I wasn't going to a finishing school, so I decided I would take the nicest courses that I thought would enrich my personality. So I was real picky about that.

Sellers: Who did you take in history, do you remember?

EJames: History? I should remember. You know Mrs. Alfriend taught history.

Sellers: What about physical education?

EJames: Learned to tap dance as a freshman.

Sellers: Did you only have to take the one semester or one year of physical education when you were there?

EJames: That's right. And we had to have uniforms. And my dancing partner was Nell Green.

Sellers: Did you go right through and graduate in '39?

EJames: I did.

Sellers: So you weren't involved much with any kind of wartime activity on the campus.

EJames: No. I was 21 when I graduated, because I only went to high school 11 years. So I was a little bit ahead of some others.

[group conversation about ages of friends in college not transcribed]

Sellers: Tell me about the children, and we need to start chronologically. We'll do Barbara first, since she's the oldest.

EJames: She was the easiest child. She was a perfect child, really. All her life, she has been wonderful. Anyway, she went to kindergarten here. She went two years here. And she also took dance lessons from Patsy Gilliam. And the first time she was there, she came home and I said, “How was your class?” She said, “It was fine, but Mimi, she can yell louder than you can!” So Patsy was a strict dance instructor.

BJames: Then I was lucky to be able to take piano lessons.

EJames: Yes, she was the first one in the family to take piano.

Sellers: Where did one take piano lessons in Tallahassee?

BJames: From Mrs. DeGraff, right down the street.

EJames: And all of the children asked to take piano, so all of them did. And I thought the boys’ fingers would go very well with their brain and they might be a surgeon, but not a single one of them was musically inclined. And every time Charlie would go out of town, I would buy a piece of furniture. So he left town, so I bought a piano. Another time he left, I bought a sewing machine. I don’t know why I always picked when he was out of town. And Barbara Scott seemed to enjoy acting in plays in high school. She was the thespian of the year. And she wore a lot of my clothes in the parts that she played. I was very proud of her. And she graduated in 1960 and decided she wanted to go away to school. We wanted to send her away [laughter]. She was accepted at the University of Virginia women’s school, which was then Mary Washington. And her roommate was a good friend of hers from Tallahassee, Mary Sturgis, whose father was a supreme court justice here.

By then we had three children away at school. Fleet was at Suwannee Military Academy and Dennis was at Woodberry Forest, and she was in college. So needless to say, I didn’t get that sofa I was thinking I was going to get.

Sellers: There’s more children here —

EJames: Yes, Fleet was the next one. When his father came home from the war, he was learning to talk. And he would walk around everybody. He’d say “tooka-tooka-tooka.” He wanted you to give him something. He still does [laughter]. But he was the cutest little boy. And then when he got a brother, he would say, “If you hurt my brother, I’ll beat you up!”

We went to see a close friend of Mama Ada’s in Lynchburg. She was 100. And Aunt Ella said, “Now stand up there, you children.” They stood all in a line. And Fleet whispered to me, “I want to give her something but I don’t have anything but a dime.” I said, “Give her the dime.” So he gave her the dime. He excelled at Suwannee Military Academy. He was 13 when he left home. By the time he graduated, he was a tall, slender young man.

BJames: I wanted to work with clothes and I wanted to work in a department store [??]. So I went out here and got my degree in merchandising.

Sellers: At FSU. And it was FSU by then.

BJames: Oh, definitely.

EJames: It was made coeducational in 1947. That's when my second little boy was born. That's how I can remember the date of it.

Sellers: We've gotten Barbara Scott and Fleet and Dennis and Betsy — what did you do with your merchandising degree?

BJames: I went to Washington and I worked at Woodward and Lothrop.

Sellers: Oh, Woody's.

BJames: Yes, Woody's. And I worked there for 32 years. I was a buyer, store manager, a divisional vice president, and then I retired. And then our company went bankrupt. Too greedy. They bought Wannamakers and it was too much and it folded, all of it.

[general conversation not transcribed]

EJames: When Fleet was at Suwannee, we had a wonderful time. We would go up for all the dances and we would take my little cousins – three girls – and Charlie would have a hard time getting all those huge skirts in the trunk of the car. And when he graduated, my aunt went with Charlie's parents and my mother – all of us went there for his graduation. And my Aunt Sisse said, "Fleet's got one of those." Fleet was a captain and he had all these ribbons. "Fleet's got one of those." She was so proud of him; we were all proud of him. Then he went to University of the South for a couple years. Fleet left the University of the South. So then he worked at the World's Fair the rest of that time.

Sellers: In '64, in New York?

EJames: In New York. And he was the manager of the Rhinegold pavilion. And then he decided that he would go to Livingston and go to college there because his grandmother had broken her hip. And so he went right there from New York, and they tell me he read every book in the library. He lived in a hotel there that Mama Ada and Daddy Charlie owned part of. And wonderful help was there. Said, "Miss Betty, is Mr. Fleet opening up a men's store?" "No, that's just his clothes." Anyway, he loved living there, and he loved Louden.

And I must tell you that every – since 1948, every June we would spend at Louden. And every August we would spend at Appomattox. And during the times in between times, I would farm the children off to Mama Ada and Daddy Charlie. One Christmas, Barbara Scott and Fleet went up for Christmas. They loved to go up there because Daddy Charlie would give them a little tiny job in the drugstore and they would do that, and enjoyed being there. And then we would go June over to Louden and Daddy Charlie would send all these big boxes of cookies so

we wouldn't run out of anything like that. And Mama Ada always had these cold drinks for the children. We had a wonderful time. We had plenty of help. We had several taking care of the children. I raised the shade and said, "You all be quiet so I can go back to sleep." And believe it or not, at Louden – we still have Louden – Fleet has it now – Elizabeth, who nursed my children, is 71 and she goes to Louden every single day and she helps on the weekends. That's really something unusual, isn't it?

Sellers: Why did you go to Appomattox in August? Isn't that a dreadfully hot time?

EJames: It was cooler there than it was in Alabama. And so we went – the children were out of school. We went nearly every summer for I guess maybe eight or nine summers, something like that.

BJames: Talk about some of the times when you were growing up and you all would go to all these "jook joints" around Tallahassee and stuff that I've heard you talk about.

EJames: You mean at night?

Sellers: I've not seen a jook joint open during the day [laughs].

EJames: We did as she said. We went from place to the other, and we would call it "jooking." But mostly we stayed at a place on the Thomasville highway where there's a church there, and the proprietor is a man and his wife. They loved every one of us who went there. They were the dearest, sweetest things. And we did drink a lot of beer and did a lot of dancing. And we'd go to another place and do the same thing. Keep on going. We had a real good time. And when I was in college, my sister Carolyn, she had more dates than I did. And finally, I had some.

Sellers: I think you were just running with a kind of racy crowd [laughter]. I've talked to other people at FSCW that didn't have quite that exciting a time.

BJames: Who were some of the people that you ran around with?

EJames: You mean boys?

BJames: All of them.

EJames: Well, Inez Davenport, Dorothy McKay, who lives up in Ohio. Have you met Carolyde O'Bryan? This is her sister. She was my best friend here. And Carolyde was next best friend, and Inez – I was in Inez's wedding. And Carolyde is my daughter Betsy's godmother. She's very ill and has not been anywhere for quite some time. All the Phillips girls. And their house was a hangout for all of us. There were how many children? Six. All of them girls. And I know you've read Carolyde's book. And Sister Phillips was a good friend of my

grandmother, and when my grandmother would come to town, I'd always take her to see Sister Phillips. And so she was close to me, too. I loved all these older people. I was the oldest in the family and I would go with my mother to visit her friends. And when her friends had parties, such as Judge Elyn Thomas and his wife — they moved up here when Pat was about 14. And my parents were invited to their parties, and they always included me. So I was very lucky to get to meet these older people. Very fortunate.

Sellers: You must have been very mature.

EJames: I was the oldest in the family.

Sellers: But you were comfortable with that group, and they sensed that you were comfortable with them or you wouldn't have been included.

EJames: That's right. I'd go with my mother to see her friends – in the daytime. And my parents did a lot of entertaining, and my aunt and uncles, they did a lot of entertaining, too.

Sellers: Quite a social clan.

EJames: Yes, it was. And I'd like to tell you that I go to St. John's church, and we were left a lot of money by a single lady named Emily Lively. And so we are renovating our kitchen now, and it will be called Lively Kitchen. And Emily, one of three daughters, she never married. And I said, "That is really funny, here she's giving a kitchen." And I know she never did much cooking. But her sisters were Polly Carraway, whose husband was a legislator here, and her other sister – I cannot think of her name right off the bat. But their mother, Mrs. Lively, had the most gorgeous parties of anybody in Tallahassee. Her dining room table must have been from here to the dining room wall – you never saw anything like it in your life. And it was covered with the most gorgeous food. And Charlie and I were invited to a lot of their parties.

BJames: Where did they live?

EJames: They lived on the corner of Gadsden Street and Park Avenue in that big, gorgeous, white house.

Sellers: I know which one that is; it's just recently been renovated. You know, Mr. Lively gave the women's college a lot of the property that became the Reservation out at the lake. And he was also responsible for convincing the president of the college, Edward Conradi, to purchase more of it for the college, too. So the Livelys are responsible for us having that Reservation.

EJames: I didn't know that. And so Lively Vocational School is named for him. It was a wonderful family.

Sellers: Did the boys that you dated come up from the University of Florida or were they

local —

EJames: No, they were Tallahassee boys. One of them was Ralph Newman, and one of them that I dated the longest time of any was Ed Skipper. And his aunt and his mother both taught at Florida State College for Women. He was a darling boy, but he wasn't marriageable.

Sellers: While you were here at FSCW, did you ever go to any of the ball games at the university of Florida?

EJames: Yes, we did. A whole lot of them. We also went as far as Jacksonville, and I was there with one of my very closest friends. You're familiar with the Messer family? Phoebe – I always said that when I moved to Tallahassee, Phoebe took me under her arm and introduced me to all my friends. We were at a ball game in Jacksonville, and this man in front of us, he just fell over like that. I said, "Phoebe, the man died!" She said, "He didn't die, he just passed out." Drunk! I'd never seen anybody like that before.

Sellers: I know the sororities would sometimes go on buses down to Gainesville to ball games.

EJames: We did, we did.

Sellers: Did you have fun —

EJames: Oh, we had wonderful times. Going to different fraternity houses at the same time. Oh, it was just wonderful.

Sellers: Did ADPi have a fraternity that they coordinated with back then like they do today?

EJames: Oh, yes. Phi Delta theta was our one. Well, we were at the KA house, Ed Skipper and I. We were there with a lot of friends. And this boy just wanted us to see the KA house. He took us all over the house. He even showed us the bathroom. And he said, "Jack, this is Betty Scott." And he said, "You'll pardon me, Betty, if I won't get up." [laughter] And that's an awful joke. That's terrible. So let's get on another subject.

Sellers: I'm running out of subjects.

EJames: And then Dennis went to Woodberry Forest, and he wanted to go so bad that they said, "Well, if you go to summer school, you can come." So he went to summer school, did very well, was accepted, and ended up being in a room with four other boys. And he did not like it at all.

Sellers: Had he always had his own room?

EJames: At home? Part of his life.

Sellers: And just his brother the rest of the time?

EJames: Yes, that's right. But anyway, he didn't like it – hated the food. So we said, "Well, if you don't have enough sense to get a better education, you just come on home." And if he had not come home, he would not have won a scholarship to Georgia Tech, playing football. So he made his own way. However, when he came back from Woodberry Forest, whew! He was very important. And he had to mow the grass one day. I said, "You better get started early because you have to mow the grass before you go to your practice." He didn't mow the grass before he was supposed to go. I said, "That's just too bad. You're not going to practice, you didn't mow the grass." So he learned from there that his mother meant business. And that got "I'm so and so" out of him pretty fast.

Then came Betsy, and she did very well. She was in the May Court. And she was very pretty. She went on to Brenau, and graduated from there four years later. Got married too soon; they went to live in Fort Lauderdale where she taught school immediately. And her husband wanted to come back up here so he could hunt and fish. So they moved back up here, and that's what he did. He worked at night so he could hunt and fish. They just didn't get along very well. Unfortunately, she became pregnant and she lost the baby. And she said, "That is God's way of telling me I better get out of this marriage." So she did. And Carolyn, she loved going to school. She went to Augusta Raa, and she said, "You know what, Mimi? I better get skinny if I'm going to get me a boy." I said, "You sure better." So she got skinny and she never has put it back on. But those are just some funny things that don't need to be recorded or anything.

Sellers: Well, they've all been recorded.

EJames: I'll tell you one thing. I wanted my aunts and uncles to play a part in my children's growing up. So this was the house where all of them came to visit. And Dennis would give up his room to Aunt Hammie, and she would give him \$5. She came when Betsy was born and she was Betsy's nurse for several months, staying here. And Mama Ada came when Carolyn was born, and she stayed here with us for a long time. The family was wonderful, I'll tell you.

Sellers: How many of you are there still around that gather for occasions?

EJames: Well, I'd like to tell you that maybe 15 years ago my cousin came to visit from Livingston, New Jersey. So I had a reunion, and there were 51 people in this house, all related. And only one couple came from out of town for the reunion; the others were living in Tallahassee. My cousins living there, and most of them still do live here. Charlie said, "I'll NOT discuss anybody with anybody in Tallahassee because everybody is kin. And he could not get over the fact that we all hugged and kissed each other when we saw them. I mean, on the street you'd see somebody. He couldn't get over that. And it's still done today with good friends. You've experienced that. It's a very loving place.

And the nice thing about our situation, talking about Charlie's and mine – my friends'

husbands became his very best friends. And one of them I'm especially thinking of was Julian Proctor. And my boys, Fleet and Dennis, would have a hunt for their customers and friends in September over at Loudon, and that has gone on for about 25 or 30 years, and it's still going strong. And Julian told his wife Sarah Ball, "I would rather be at Loudon than any place on earth. These old men who were friends of Charlie's loved to go to Loudon. One of them is Ban Stewart. He has every cap from Loudon. The boys would have caps made with Loudon on it. They had some wonderful times. And Elizabeth did all the cooking; she was right there through the years. And she said, "Oh, Mimi, I miss Mr. Ban so much and Mr. George. Mr. George was my brother-in-law. And incidentally, Charlie and George became the best of friends, and like brothers.

Sarah Davis was one of the most perfect friends I ever had. She was really somebody special. I knew her from the time she was about 11 or 12 years old. I don't know whether you've ever heard of the Hutchinsons or not in Tallahassee. We called her "Screwball."

Sellers: Screwball had a sister, too, who went to FSCW.

EJames: Yes, darling, she had two sisters. She had Dorothy, who was her younger sister, who got a divorce from her husband in Jacksonville. And Dorothy moved up to Tallahassee. And then she had a sister, Adela, who lived down state. Dorothy died — you did interview Screwball — then you had a good time!

Sellers: Oh, yes.

EJames: Did you ever hear how she came to be called Screwball? Godfrey Smith got her that blind date. She pushed that fellow in the water, and he said, "You're just a screwball." I guess if you had a best friend from seven or eight years old, she would be it. We used to sew together, and we thought we were so smart. We made a pair of shorts. Neither one of us could even get in them. And her mother was sick for so long. But I would go see Omeria a lot, and she would be the one entertaining. Screwball's mother was a precious lady, and Screwball made a white dimity organdy skirt to put around Omeria's johnny seat [laughter]. I could tell you a lot of stories.

Sellers: Graduating in '39 — that makes you an Odd. Did you ever take part in any of the Odd-Even rivalries.

EJames: Well, yes, I did, but not a whole lot.

Sellers: Did you belong to Spirogyra?

EJames: No, I didn't belong. I did belong to Zeta Phi Eta, which was a speech honorary, but that's really the only thing that I was a member of. And my mother would have to take me — she'd take me in the afternoons — she would come get me in the afternoons and I would spend nearly every afternoon in the library doing my homework. And my aunt and uncle had this black boy (I shouldn't say that) — Afro-American — and he drove all of us to school. They had a big

car. He would make the rounds and take us out there. And then somebody else would come and get us, because we didn't have a car of our own then.

Sellers: And the library would have been in Dodd Hall.

EJames: Yes, it was. And that window in there now, isn't it just gorgeous?

Sellers: When you were dropped off, did you stay for the day?

EJames: Yes, till my mother came to get me in the afternoon.

Sellers: Where did you eat lunch? In the dining hall?

EJames: I didn't stay all day. I beg your pardon. I came home for lunch. And I spoke of Ban Stewart – his mother owned the Dutch Kitchen.

Sellers: Alban Stewart.

EJames: Yes, and you really ought to interview him, darling.

Sellers: I have. Alban Stewart – I just didn't make the connection.

End interview