Helen Richards
Seabreeze Restaurant (Closed)
Tampa, Florida
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Date: February 14, 2015
Location: Home of Mrs. Richards – Tampa, FL
Interviewer: Sara Wood
Transcription: Deborah Mitchum
Length: One hour, twenty-seven minutes
Project: Tampa Devil Crabs

START OF INTERVIEW

[00:00:00]

Sara Wood: I just need to introduce the tape, so it is Saturday, February 14, 2015, it is Valentine's Day, and this is Sara Wood with the Southern Foodways Alliance. I'm sitting here with Mrs. Helen Richards and we're at her home on 49th Avenue. So, Helen, I'm wondering if you wouldn't mind saying hello and introducing yourself.

[00:00:24]

Helen Richards: I'm Helen Richards. I've lived in Tampa all my life. All my family's from up in the hills in Georgia. I'm Cherokee Indian and Irish, and I love my life. I have had a most interesting life all my life. I've never had a boring day in my life.

[00:00:47]

SW: And Helen, for the record, will you tell me your birth date?

[00:00:50]

HR: September 2, 1936.

[00:00:55]

SW: And, Helen, you just mentioned that you've lived here your whole life. Can you talk about where you grew up and what it was like there?

[00:01:02]

HR: My first six years, or I guess my first four years, we lived over in Drew Field which was where the Air Force was located, and the planes were young then. That was about like 1940, 1941. It had to have been 1941 because the war had already started with Germany and the planes

would use our house as a target practice as we were so close to it, and they would go up high, high, high and then they would dive bomb our house and scare me and my brother to death. [00:01:44]

But it was most interesting there. We lived so far out. It was during the Depression and there was not any money. There was no–. Nobody had any money. Nobody had any jobs and life was hard. When I was born there was no money for the doctor and no way to get to the doctor, and there was a dairy across the road from our house, I guess it must have been about a half a mile away from our house. It may have been a quarter of a mile but it seemed like a long ways to a four-year-old. They had lots of cows and the lady who birthed the cows there, who delivered the cows, came over and delivered me when it was my mother's time. So we were just–. So I was delivered by the lady who delivers the cows.

[00:02:34]

Then my mother had grown up on a dairy herself it was right next to Columbus Drive and the Hillsborough River, and the cows back then–. When she was young they had the horse and buggies, and the horse knew every stop to make. They'd go to deliver the milk and every time it was time for a house to have milk the horse automatically knew to stop, and she would get off the buggy and run up there and go put the milk on the door in glass bottles. But they eventually, the city, made them move the dairy because the cows was polluting the river.

[00:03:18]

Then she had my first sister, I think she was maybe fifteen when she had her, and her first husband kept climbing out the window to go visit some other ladies and so she got a divorce from him, but my sister was my dear heart all her life and she was eight years older than me so my mother had to be about twenty-three when she had me. I remember my father–. Times were

so hard and my father went to the dump to see if there was any–. Usually there's plants growing, you know, the seeds come up and things grow around the dump, and he came home and he was ecstatic. He had found a five-gallon can of syrup and it was–. We were ecstatic because we'd been eating nothing but bread and lard sandwiches with a slice of onion on it or – because we always had biscuits. My father never allowed light bread in the house. He called it "wasp nest" because you could squeeze it up and it'd be just absolutely nothing to it. He said, "There is no substance in light bread. [*Laughs*] You can take the whole loaf and squeeze it down to one little ball. So we always had biscuits or cornbread, that we always had, and back then the–. But the syrup, back to the syrup: we was going to have biscuits and syrup, or pancakes and syrup, and the syrup was put on our plates and it was full of ants, and we said, "Daddy! It's got ants in it!" He said, "That doesn't matter. It's just more meat." [*Laughs*] So, we ate syrup and ants. That's what we did.

[00:05:11]

But life was hard. He finally went to work on the WPA and he helped make the balustrades on Bayshore Boulevard. That was what his job was at that time. But every able bodied man had to join the service because the war was on and it was going full force, and every little bit of tin–. You could not throw any tin away. You had to mash the tin cans down, even the–. Even though we only got chewing gum maybe once a year you even had to save the tinfoil that was wrapped around the chewing gum. You had to put it all in a ball and save it, and the chewing gum, if we got chewing gum, you ever hear that song, "Does the chewing gum lose the flavor on the bedpost overnight?" Well that's where our gum was every night. One stick of gum, we may have it for a month, and every night it went on the bedpost. [*Laughs*] It didn't matter, roaches or whatever, [*Laughs*] that was life.

[00:06:24]

We had no running water, no electricity; we didn't have none of the luxuries of life. But still, life was–. We didn't know that the whole world didn't live like that, and then we lived a little–. My mother was deaf. She was like ninety-seven percent deaf. She had a tiny, tiny bit of hearing. You could stand behind her and yell at the top of your voice and she could not hear you, but if you look at her she read your lips. She knew every word you said. You couldn't hide anything from her or whisper anything because she knew whatever you said. And that was all her life, even when televisions came on. It didn't matter if the television was on or not, she knew everything they were saying, and if it was a Spanish station that somebody put on she says, "Change that. I can't understand what they're saying." You think that's hard? Turn off the television some time, the sound off, and see if you can tell what they're saying. It was not an easy thing.

[00:07:23]

But anyway, we were in this furniture store and our bed was a hole in the wall where a mattress was put in, and it was like that's where we climbed up into, and right next door to us it was a busy highway, Hillsborough Avenue. It was only two lanes back then but they were two small lanes. There was a juke joint right across, right next door to us, and a lot of the Army people would be across the street or they'd be at the bar and all night long, at least till 3:00 in the morning, the same songs played over and over and over again, very loud, and it was "Irene Goodnight," "The Yellow Rose of Texas," and – oh, what was the other song, something else about yellow? I can't remember. There was four songs that they played continuously all night long, and they're engraved in my brain. I just can't think of the names of them right this minute.

[00:08:26]

SW: Do you remember the name of the juke joint that was next door?

[00:08:29]

HR: No, I don't, but that's where the Hillsborough Community Col–. No, it is a college there, but it's a trade school that is there now. But then when we went back home to go to our other house–. They had let my father out of the service because my mother, being she was deaf, she could not run the furniture store. Being she was deaf, she only went to the fifth grade. She had no education at all except she knew how to read and write, but not really good. But when they let him out of the service we went back to our home in Drew Field and somebody had stole our home. Back then it was nothing to see a house going down the road on the back of a truck. They had big, long moving trucks, made just to move all these–. Back then all houses was wood, very few cement houses, and they were all on pillars so you could just slide the forks underneath there to pick the house up.

[00:09:35]

I ran across the house later after I got married, and it was just a – what a coincidence. The people invited me over for coffee and I knew every inch of the house. It was very unique on the inside because it had a curved archway in the middle of the house, and I asked the people, "How did this house get here?" and they said, "Oh, somebody moved it here," and told me what year it was, and it was the same year that our house had disappeared, so what a coincidence it was.

[00:10:06]

So we had no place to live then, so we came out here to Palm River, and back then so many people was losing their house during the Depression. They could not afford to pay their taxes and if they couldn't pay their taxes they lost their property. So that's how my father got the

property that we're on. It's like eighteen acres but it was very cheap. Him and another man went in together and they divided up the land, and then as we got older there was seven of us children and we moved out here and we lived–. From the time I was seven years old till I was seventeen I lived out here in the woods. It was right on the edge of a swamp, and I think at some time or other a meteor had to hit there on that spot because no trees ever grew and there was like a big ring where the shell from underneath the ground was pushed up all the way around in like a big ring, so I always felt like a meteor hit there at some point in time, and eventually it may be proven true but it does not really matter.

[00:11:32]

Anyway, we had very little money so he put a small slab down. It had to be about ten, maybe ten by fourteen, I would say, very small, but it was a tarpaper shack. All it was was two-by-fours–. We had that little cement slab, two-by-fours, and tarpaper around it, and we lived–. There was no running water, no refrigerator, no toilet; there was nothing, not one luxury did we have. We slept on a–. It was a couch that opens up into a bed so during the day it was our couch but at night it formed a bed and all of us children stacked in it like cordwood, and the baby slept in a baby bed. That's where we slept.

[00:12:31]

And then we were right on the edge of the swamp and there was lots of snakes, rattlesnakes and moccasins. We killed those every day, every day, small ones, big ones, giant ones. It was just a matter of life with us, and I mean I was small but, you know, we knew caution and we knew to be very careful. My father was Indian and he was always full of Indian tales and he would tell us, "You watch out for the coachwhip. If the coachwhip wraps around you it will

whip you to death," and he made sure we knew what they looked like. You didn't see very many coachwhips but there was coachwhips here in this area.

[00:13:20]

My sister, she was five years younger than me, and she was old enough to walk but not old enough to understand what you were saying, to follow instructions. She must have been about two years old and I must have been about seven. We were sitting out there in the yard, she was sitting in the yard, and I saw this big coachwhip going up to her, and it was just making a straight line, right towards her, because snakes feed by vibrations and warmth. That's what they feel, and I know they were going to get my sister, and I couldn't–. The snake was probably about three foot long, or maybe a little bit longer than that but not much because I think it was about as long as I was and that was probably about how tall I was, and I couldn't let it whip my sister to death so I grabbed the snake by the tail and I swung it around and around and around, and finally it slipped out of my hands and I can still see it to this day. It went straight towards our house and went straight up the wall and must have went halfway up the wall before it fell down, and it was going like crazy. I bet you it's still telling the tale about that, his tail [*Laughs*] being swung around, to this day.

[00:14:55]

SW: And, Helen, I'm wondering–. I want to make sure I get this before I ask you more questions. What were your parents' names?

[00:15:03]

HR: My father was Travis Jesse Chatten and my mother, her name was Leah. She always thought it was Leah Lynn. She did not know that she was – that her father was really from Spain and came to Cuba and then he changed–. When he was in Spain his name was Enrique Rojas and

when he moved to Cuba it was still Enrique Rojas but when he moved to Tampa it was Henry Rogers, and he married my grandmother and my grandmother had the same luck as she did with her first husband. He was slipping out the window to go visit somebody else and so she divorced him, but she never even–. But she was still pregnant at the time and she married a man by the name of Grimmer Lynn, so she always thought until she was twenty-one that her last name was Lynn but really she is of Cuban descent.

[00:16:12]

SW: And can you tell me the names of your brothers and sisters?

[00:16:15]

HR: Yes. There was Betty Benjamin, which was–. She was my sister. That was my first one. And there was my brother, Robert, and then it was me, and then my sister, Yona, brothers, Jesse, Henry, and Edgar, and my–. We had to walk–. When we were here we were so far down in the woods we had no neighbors. The closest neighbor was a mile away and the closest bus stop was almost two miles away, and we had to walk, even though we were very small for our age and very tiny, we had to walk that two miles every morning to the bus and my father, he was a very, very strict disciplinarian and he would think nothing of whipping us with switches till we bled. It was a daily occurrence, and we said, "We didn't do anything," He said, "That's in case you decide to do something." But we had a–. I had a rough life. But he said, "If you miss the bus you better think about walking right on to school," and school was about four miles away and it might as well have been on the other side of Tampa as far as we were concerned because it was such a distance for us, because we were both small for our age.

[00:17:46]

But when I was nine years old–. No, I was eight, my brother was ten, and we missed the bus, and it was in November and it was super foggy and coming home–. Every day coming home there would be these long dairies – I mean not dairies, pastures – full of cows and the cows were–. Back then they didn't cut off the horns and they were longhorn cows, and these cows wound stare at us from the time they saw us until they could not see us anymore, and we always thought that's why they called them "steers" because we always though they were staring [*Pronounced more like "steering"*] at us. But they were on both sides of the road and they had like metal bars down. They didn't have a fence across that area; they had those metal bars, and we knew if anything upset those cows enough that they could run right through those metal bars to get to us, so we was very careful not to wear red, you know, going to school because we didn't want to be like a bullfighter, you know how that red angered them. So when we–. And they had just dug this–.

[00:19:05]

Let me go back. On the way home one time we saw all these buzzards circling and we got next to where one of the dairies was. These metal bars were on both sides of the road, so on both sides we were afraid that those cows would come out. So when we–. This cow had just had twin calves and the buzzards had, being that it smelled like blood, I don't know if she died during childbirth, during calf birth, but the buzzards had already ate out her belly and had pecked the eyes out of one of the little calves, and me and my brother was going to save that other calf. We could not let those buzzards kill that little calf. These were not vultures; these were turkey buzzards and they were as tall as we were. They had the red heads and brilliant, mean, angry eyes, and the eyes, where I was as tall I matched their eyes. Their eyes was eye-level with my

eyes. So they were quite large and there was a lot of them but we felt like all animals, wild animals, were afraid of humans and so we were not concerned about us; we just wanted to save that calf.

[00:20:27]

We grabbed around the necks of those buzzards – I can still feel their skin under my hands and they were covered with blood – and we would shake their necks, trying to make them leave those calves alone, and they just ignored us completely. Then they started–. We had that blood all over our hands and they started circling me and my brother, and talk about scared. I think it was one of the scaredest moments of my life, and we took off running and ran from there the whole mile to our home, and we were petrified to come home every day. We had to make my mother come down there and meet us because we were just so scared because those buzzards was sitting on that fence every afternoon watching us, so that was a traumatic time of my childhood.

[00:21:24]

Then they had just dug a pit across the street in the other pasture for the cows to drink water, and it was not sloping and we did not know that. We didn't ever go swimming because we had no car. We didn't have any way of going. But we had a cow at home, it was a little Jersey cow and her name was Pet, and Jersey cows are very much like a pet. They are so gentle and so mild. And we had no car to go get groceries or anything but the man down the street, he had ten children – eleven children, I think it was – and his wife was pregnant and they had the baby and she could not produce milk and no way of getting any milk. But they had this little car so they would trade my daddy to let him use their car so we could go get groceries and so we could go

do something and they would borrow our cow so they could have milk for the baby. So that's, you know, you bartered with whatever you had back then.

[00:22:48]

Me and my brother, we had to work like a man just about. We had to work from the minute we were home until dark, and being there was no electricity you get up with the chickens in the morning and you go to bed with the chickens, and chickens go to bed at sunset and we got up at sunrise, sunrise and sunset. We had this one chicken, its name was Blackie, and it was my brother's favorite and all it ever laid was double-yolk eggs. It laid one every other day and it lived to be many years old. We never killed it because it was always my brother's pet and when it got older it started crowing like a rooster and it grew long spurs, and we'd never seen anything like that or ever heard of anything like that ever.

[00:23:43]

But anyway, that cow pit, when we went that November, cold and foggy, so foggy you couldn't hardly see in front of you, and the school bus came early that morning, or we got there late, one or the other, but we missed the bus and we knew we could not walk all the way to school and we were scared to go back home. So my brother said, "Let's just go over there and we'll stay over there at that pit all day today," and we went over there and there was some boards there. He said, "I'm going to make me a raft," and he made him a raft and I kept begging him, "Come on. Let's go home. Let's go home. Let's please go home." And he drowned. [*Tearfully*] That raft turned over and he drowned.

[00:24:32]

SW: How old was he?

[00:24:36]

HR: He was ten years old. He did not know how to swim. He came up four times, the last time just his hand came up, and I was screaming so hard, screaming so hard a sound would not come out. This man came up, and his name was Ferlita, and he was about drunk. He'd been out there hunting and he'd been drinking and hunting, and I said, "Please! He just went down. Please get in there and get him." He says, "Too late. Too late," and he was going to leave. He just turned around to leave, and I begged and begged him, "Please, please, take me to my house so I can tell my mother," and finally after a lot of begging he brought me down here to my mother's house and he was just going to leave.

[00:25:25]

My mother had just had a baby that was two weeks old and my father worked at the shipyard and he had no car, so he had no way of going, and she begged and begged him, "Please, please, take me down there so I can tell my husband, so I can get my husband from the shipyard so we can come get him." So he finally, okay, he went down there and just dropped her off at the gate, didn't even stay or nothing, and my father finally came out and they had no way–. They had to hitchhike out here. They had to hitchhike to find a way out here, and when they got him out of the water he was up to his waist in sand, quicksand, and if they'd waited a few more hours they would never have even found him in there because he would have disappeared in the sand. Ferlita, where he had gone, he went and got the reporters and told them this great story of how he tried to save him and everything and he couldn't save him. I've been angry at that man all my life because he could have saved him.

[00:26:38]

SW: What brother–? What was your brother's name?

[00:26:40]

HR: This was Robert. This was my brother, Robert.

[00:26:43]

SW: Well, Helen, I wanted to ask you, you said that your family–. You mentioned a furniture store?

[00:26:50]

HR: Yes.

[00:26:51]

SW: Did your family have a furniture store?

[00:26:53]

HR: It was a used furniture store, and I don't know the name of it or anything. I just know it was a used furniture store. We never had any customers that I can remember, and if you came by my mother [wouldn't have known what to sell anything for] anyway, so that did not matter.

[00:27:08]

But then I was the only one. I had to do all the work. I chopped all the wood for the–. We had a woodstove to cook on and I had to chop all the wood and feed the cow, everything. It was hard. Life was hard. But I went into a depression and I did not comb my hair. My mother–. From the time I was born, I guess, all the flour sacks in the–. We always had chickens and we always had a cow, so we always had milk and we always had eggs, so we did have those two things. Matter of fact let's go back to Drew Field for a minute.

[00:27:58]

When we were there I had a loose tooth, and my father, being he was Indian – another Indian tale – he says, "You can never lose your teeth outside because whatever animal steps on it that's what will grow in its place," and I lost my–. You would know it, I lost my first tooth outside, and I cried and I looked, and I cried and I looked, and here this–. I looked in the chicken's mouth and I said, "They have no teeth. I hope a chicken doesn't step on my tooth." And I looked in the cow's mouth, "Oh, those are giant teeth. I hope a cow does not step on it." And I looked in the cat's mouth and they had little pointed teeth and I said, "I hope the cat don't step on it." And I looked in the dog's mouth and I said, "Well, if anything steps on it, I hope it was a dog," and it was a dog that stepped on it. I had a dog tooth grew in that place. It was the only tooth in my mouth that was long and pointed. [*Laughs*] So when I got about forty, I think I was about forty-two, I finally had it filed down so it looked like the rest of my teeth. [*Laughs*]

[00:29:08]

But anyway, back out here, we roamed the woods. We did not know that the whole world didn't live like we did. But after my brother died I went into a deep depression and, thank heavens for teachers, but I didn't comb my hair. I was going to tell you that from the time I was born till I don't remember, till I was probably twelve years old, all my dresses, all my clothes, my unders and everything, was made out of feed sacks. They always put them in floured cloth, and the flour–. The big sacks of flour and the chicken feed was–. So that's where–. And my mother sewed all of our clothes. Once she got a roll of–. It was like what you would see on mattresses, mattress ticking. It was gray and pink with stripes and she made everybody, all my brothers, all the same shirts and me a dress and we were all matching. [*Laughs*] I can see us all.

[00:30:15]

But we roamed the woods and we'd come–. And every year all the woods was burned. It was just something that everybody did because that's why–. Back then they didn't have all these so many bugs that breed in the ground, like those flies. What do you call those flies, Stacy [Roberts, Mrs. Roberts' granddaughter], that stick together?

[00:30:47]

Stacy Richards [Mrs. Richard's granddaughter]: Love bugs.

[00:30:50]

HR: Love bugs. Love bugs, yeah. [*Laughs*] That's why there was no love bugs because every year they burned, and we'd get croker sacks and we'd have tubs of water out there and we'd beat the edge, you know, so it wouldn't get close to the house and we knew just how far to let it go. So there was never no underbrush and there was lots of trees here, it was full of pine trees and palmettos, is what was out here, and my mother grubbed all the palmettos out so we'd have a yard and she always planted flowers. She had the most beautiful flowers. She didn't just have a green thumb, she had a green arm. She won every prize that she entered into the fair, because she didn't just talk to her plants, she petted them too. You know, as she walked by you'd see her petting all, touching all of them and everything, and between the chicken manure and the cow manure she had the most beautiful flowers you could ever see, everything that she grew. People would come from everywhere just to see the flowers.

[00:31:55]

SW: And, Helen, I don't want to–. I wanted to ask you a little bit about the restaurant, so can you tell me a little bit about how you met Robert–

[00:32:03]

HR: Okay.

[00:32:03]

SW: –and how the restaurant happened?

[00:32:04]

HR: I sure will. As I grew up, when I turned fourteen, my father said no more school for me because he felt like girls should be seen and not heard, and possibly not seen, and that I should stay home and learn how to cook and can and that was to be my life, and the more he said that the more determined I was to go to school. Until then I'd never–. I made just barely passing grades but – and I was determined then the more he said. But there was no more lunch money, there was no more clothes, so I had to find a job at fifteen. I think I was fifteen then. At the Big Barn grocery store I was their first girl bagboy and every day I had to go to work. This was way out in the–. We lived out here, way out in the woods, and the days that I worked I had to beg a teacher, "Please," find a teacher that was going that direction and have them drop me off, and then every night when I came home I never knew how I was going to get home. I'd ask some stranger, "Would you please carry me home?" It was just lucky that everybody back then was a different breed than they are today and nothing ever happened to me.

[00:33:36]

But as I got money I got my first nice clothes at the Salvation Army. I'll never forget. It was a green plaid skirt and a red jersey top and I felt so – like I looked like the rest of the kids. The other kids made fun of me all day: [*In a sing-song voice*] "Helen's going to a wedding! Helen's going to a funeral!" But anyway, I was determined – determined – that I was going to be something one of these days, and my grades went from nothing to being on the honor roll, and I

was determined that I was going to look right, I was going to talk right, and everything was going to be right in my life.

[00:34:18]

Then when I was sixteen I met my husband. I had been going with another guy for about a year but the day I met my husband it's like I never saw that other guy in my life. This was–. I lived on one side of the Seabreeze and he lived on the other side of the Seabreeze.

[00:34:38]

SW: And the Seabreeze was already there?

[00:34:39]

HR: The Seabreeze has been–. The Seabreeze was here before either of us was. It's been here since I would say 1919, and it was in a spit of land that was getting ready to be developed. It was going to be the new centerpiece of Tampa. That's where they was going to put Peter O. Knight Airport, which they ended up moving, putting it on Davis Island, and they were going to have these great apartments and a great entranceway coming into Tampa, and the Licatas, they were famous for–. They already had some restaurants in Ybor City, and the name of their restaurant in Ybor City was the Tropicana, but they wanted to get in on the ground floor of everything and they were–. I suppose you could say they were into–. They were the wonderful, best cooks that you could ever imagine.

[00:35:39]

So their first one, it was like a little – just a little shack there on the edge of the water, and the only way you could–. There was no bridge coming to it or anything, no 22nd Street Causeway, and the only way you could get to it was coming off of 50th Street and you had to go way down through the woods to this little shack down there. It was just made out of cypress

planks and palmetto fronds, like palm fronds, and that was the sides. They'd prop up the door in the mornings, it would swing down, and when you'd prop it up and put two poles underneath it, it made the shade where they could have a table and everything, and they cooked everything out of the woods that you can imagine. You could smell it, they said, from everyplace around, and they used everything out of the water, anything out of the woods. They cooked swamp cabbage, whatever; whatever nature provided is what they cooked.

[00:36:43]

You had to go at low tide and you had to get out of there before high tide came or you'd be stranded until the tides changed, and it could be–. It depends on what the tides were for the year; you could be stranded for twelve hours down there, or the only way you could get out would be with a wrecker. A wrecker had to come down there and get you. And the ruts, there was just two ruts going down there, and if another car came while you were trying to leave each one had to take one rut and go down to pass each other, to get down there. But back then there was not any electrical kickers or motors for the boats and so if you came across from Palmetto Beach you had to row, or if you wait till real low tide sometimes during the year it would be – you could see the sand and it would be like a trail almost across there and they could almost walk across there to the bay.

[00:37:45]

But me and Robert went on our first date there in 1953, and back then it was the most–. It was *the* hangout place for all Tampa, everybody in Brandon; almost everybody, every teenager, had to go there because it was a forbidden place. When we used to come by we had a little English Austin and it held–. It was five kids and my mother and father and, you know, an English Austin's only about the size of a dining room table, [*Laughs*] so we'd come over on that

English Austin and when we passed the Seabreeze my father would make every one of us turn our head and look the opposite direction. He did not want us looking at the Seabreeze because they sold liquor there, and that was not all they sold there, so they did not even want us looking in that direction.

[00:38:50]

Later when I was working the only way I could get to work is my father worked for Cushman Motor Scooters and he–. The only way I could get to work–. By then I was working downtown at a dress store, the Outlet, and you had to dress up in high heels and hose and everything, nylon hose to go, and the only way I could go was ride on the back of his Cushman motor scooter, and oh, I was so embarrassed to do that. We was riding down there, it was 1950, and the Seabreeze had just burnt to the ground, and that was the fourth Seabreeze. We did not realize it but the first Seabreeze was the little hut and they built another big nice one down there, right on that same spot – it was about four blocks from where the present Seabreeze was – and they moved it. They moved it by one of those moving vans and put it in the location and it opened the same day that they built the bridge, and the same day that the bridge opened is the same day that the Seabreeze opened, and they had this long line of cars and it said, "Everybody's heading to the Seabreeze," on the front page of the paper.

[00:40:11]

So that was 1926, when they had moved over there, so that was Seabreeze number three. Then Seabreeze number four they just redid Seabreeze number three. They just started from – same windows and everything, but they made it much more sturdy and they put more blocks around it and everything, and then it became one of–. It was one of the showplaces in Tampa. It had a long gazebo out into the water and where the water was, where the gazebo was, people

came to dance, and they came dressed to the nines, is how they explained it. I mean they dressed in their fanciest dresses, the flapper dresses, you know, the fanciest hairdos. The men wore tuxedos or they all wore those suits and top hats and they–. It was the place to go.

[00:41:07]

SW: I have a quick question about that, Helen. Since we're talking a specific time period, was it mostly white customers? Was it segregated back then or did you see a mix of people in terms of ethnicity?

[00:41:19]

HR: Let me get my–. [*Pause*] What did you ask me?

[00:41:35]

SW: At the time, I was just wondering, was the Seabreeze – was it a place where everybody could go or was it mostly just whites because of the time period? Was there segregation here?

[00:41:45]

HR: Well, it was–. Segregation was very alive back then but not with the Cubans and not with the, you know, not with the Hispanics, not with the Latins or French or German. It did not matter. Only the blacks were segregated, and that was even when I was working downtown at Woolworth's, and that is where they had the sit-in and I was working there at that time.

[00:42:16]

SW: You were?

[00:42:17]

HR: Yes, at Woolworth's at that time. That had to be 1953, I think it was.

[00:42:22]

SW: And were you working at the–?

[00:42:24]

HR: No, 1952, I think it was, 1952.

[00:42:28]

SW: Now was this the place you were working at the dress shop or were you actually working–?

[00:42:30]

HR: No, no, this is–. I was working at Woolworth's then.

[00:42:33]

SW: The lunch counter?

[00:42:34]

HR: The lunch counter–. I didn't work at the lunch counter; I was working at the candy counter and my first day there I spilt a whole twenty-five-pound box of those chocolate malted balls on the floor, [*Laughs*] and that was the second most embarrassing time of my life because I was trying so hard to do good.

[00:42:54]

SW: Do you remember the sit-ins? Were you in the store when the sit-ins happened?

[00:42:58]

HR: Yes.

[00:42:59]

SW: Can you talk a little bit about that, what you remember?

[00:43:01]

HR: They would come and just sit there at the counter and the waitresses would just sort of like ignore them, but they took up the whole counter so it was sort of like a standoff. I do remember that. That's also the same year that they came out with all those famous Christmas songs too, like "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus" and "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," and there was another one too, but they played those over and over and over in the store all the time, every day, every day, every day.

[00:43:48]

SW: So, I'll go back to the Seabreeze here. I just wondered about that. So how did you and Robert end up with the Seabreeze?

[00:43:57]

HR: Well, never in my wildest dreams would I ever think that we would end up being owners of the Seabreeze. What happened is that from the time that I met my husband–. We dated for two years, but I was so in love with that man and it never changed. We were together fifty-nine years and he was the love of my life. He was a roofer. He worked for his uncle first and then he worked for his cousin. He was working for his cousin, I think, when I met him, and he was working in Lakeland, and I didn't know how to drive or anything at that time. I had never driven and he told me to go–. He wanted me to go to Lakeland in his car and pick up his check. I said, "I've never driven." He said, "Just get in there. I'll show you the gears and everything and you can just go," and, oh, I had a hard time [*Laughs*] because I–. That was my learning experience in driving. I went so slow and everybody – cars backed up around me, I bet you five miles back. [*Laughs*]

[00:45:12]

But after we got married we lived in–. We had the roofing company and while we had the roofing company his brother worked with him. He had five brothers and they all lived on Palmetto Beach. His father died when he was twelve so he was like the man of the house. He was the oldest and a hard, hard worker. Roofing has to be one of the hardest jobs that there is, and he worked in tar because he did pitch roofing; you know, with the rock roofing you have to use a lot of tar. So his brother was working, his baby brother, Ross, was working with him at the roofing company, and then he went to work for the shipyard, Ross did, and when he was working at the shipyard they had a lifeboat that came off of one of the ships and it was for sale. So I think it was only like a hundred and twenty-five dollars but that was a lot of money to us. We couldn't even think of having that much. At that time we paid forty-five dollars a month for rent and that was high to us, and the house, the only thing holding the whole house together was paint. It was just a termite-eaten house but we did so much improvements on it that they raised the rent up to seventy-five dollars and we said we're not about to pay that amount of money. We might as well have our own place. So we bought us a trailer and moved it out here to where – on this property that my father had given us as a wedding present. He gave each of his children two lots of land.
[00:46:55]

While Ross was at the shipyard they paid down on that boat and they paid ten dollars every time they had ten dollars, and finally after about a year I think they had it about paid off and they brought it out here, and it took nine months to make our first shrimp boat and it was a–. They made every inch of it, rebuilt the whole thing, lengthened it out, and made a nice little shrimp boat, most unique, most unique. The man who ended up buying it from us, he loved it.

He treasured it for years and years and years, because we sold it so we could buy a bigger shrimp boat.

[00:47:42]

SW: Had Robert's family had a tradition of–? Had they done that before?

[00:47:49]

HR: Well, no, but his nickname was "Captain Seaweed" because all the boys–. His first boat I think he bought for a dollar and a half. He bought it from Mike Morris – [*Coughs*] excuse me – and it took four boys to run the boat. There was two rowing and two baling. You had to bale water constantly [*Laughs*] the whole time you were in it, and they went out all the time and he knew every inch of the bay. That's why they called him "Captain Seaweed" because he loved the bay. They would always go fishing every weekend and the teacher would finally say, "Oh, Robert, I see you're back in class today. That must mean the fish quit biting." But that's where the name "Captain Seaweed" came from, and we ended up naming all five of our boats that. It was all the *Seaweed* boats because we couldn't think of no better name for them. It just fit. It just made just a fit.

[00:48:53]

But when we took that little boat out, he took it, him and one of his old friends, Lloyd Ramey, they took the boat to Gulfport, Mississippi to shrimp because they heard that the shrimping was real good there, and we finally got enough money to get enough fuel to put on the boat that they could go, and they just knew that they'd keep catching shrimp to pay for more fuel and to make us a good living and we had–. That's the time we had four children already and we were here and didn't have any money. We were super poor at that time and when he–. I went to get Food Stamps for me and my kids and they said, "Oh, no. You've got land. Sell the land. We

can't give you no food stamps because you have property," and the neighbors is how we stayed alive, and my parents. They lived just three or four blocks down and we – but we managed. [00:50:07]

They were gone, it seemed like it was forever, and when they got there the shrimp were too small and the doors they had on the shrimp boats was way too big. It was like for a seventy-two-foot boat instead of a thirty-two-foot boat and all the other shrimpers just laughed at them and made fun of them, but it's okay. When the shrimp got a little bit bigger they were parked next to that ship that – when [Hurricane] Camille came. They were there when Camille came. Camille was part–. That big ship was parked there on the shores at Gulfport and they were tied up right next to the ship, and they didn't have a radio or anything so they didn't even know that a hurricane was out there going around but they finally caught enough shrimp to sell to get enough fuel to come home. I still have his log. On that last day it says, "Going home," and he has about fifteen lines drawn under it, [*Laughs*] so I knew he was so glad to get home. When he finally got home he called and said he was on his way home, and I borrowed enough money to get enough gas to get down there to pick him up and when he came he parked behind the Seabreeze Restaurant. That's where he came to, and he got out and kissed the ground. He was so glad to come home.

[00:51:39]

We had twenty-five cents between the two of us, and he sold the rest of the shrimp that we had on the boat to the Seabreeze and they asked him, "Is it possible that you could get us some soft crabs?" Soft crabs is when the hard crabs are growing and that's how they grow. They shed their old shell and what emerges is soft as a baby's behind. It's so soft and you could just–. When they cook it they cook the whole crab, you know, they clean out the insides and remove

the fat and then you have fired soft crabs, and that's what–. They were famous for their soft crabs. They're delicious. So Robert went and got some–. You get roofing tins, the old shingles off of houses, and you fold them over and you put them on the shallow part of the water and the crab will get inside those to molt. So the next day he had enough soft crabs so they asked him, "Would you like to build a little fish market here on the edge of our property and pay us the rent with soft crabs?" and that's what we did.

[00:52:51]

He borrowed a thousand dollars from his ex-boss. He worked for a boilermaker. He was a boilermaker for–. After he left the roofing company he became a boilermaker and he knew all about welding and everything, and he–. We did very well. We had the most–. We had the best seafood of any place in Tampa. It was fresh off the boats, and back then any fisherman could come and sell to us. We bought from all the fishermen. We sold bait and tackle and there was a dock right there for the boats to put in to go fishing, so we could rent the – charge them a little fee to park their cars and use our boat ramp, we'd sell them the bait, and then we'd buy their fish when they came back.

[00:53:44]

SW: And what year did you guys begin the market?

[00:53:48]

HR: It was like 1967, '68, right in there, is when it was.

[00:53:55]

SW: And you guys supplied–. It started with supplying to the Seabreeze and then you eventually opened the market?

[00:54:00]

HR: Well, no, it combined. No, we opened it right then because they didn't want all the fish, and there was people that was selling bait, they'd bring it by to us, so we'd have the prettiest bait in town and the word spread. We had to be there at 6:00 in the morning and there may be a line that's a half a block long of fishermen waiting to go fishing. They would like it if we got there at 4:00 in the morning. It don't matter what time you would be there, they were ready to go fishing. It didn't matter how bad the weather was, they were ready to go fishing, and they'd say, "I know I'm the only idiot out here today," and every fisherman that would come up would say the same thing, but that's how it was. It was a–. We had the most interesting business in Tampa next to Busch Gardens. We had our own crab traps. Back then my husband's idea, from the time I started dating him in 1953, his idea of a big date was I got to carry the sack or push the tub. The tub is if we were going crabbing, because you could dip them up and then he'd run the tub over and the crabs would all be in the bottom of the boat and my feet would be on top of the boat. But the bottoms was full of it, and to this day, to the day he died, that was his idea of a big date.

[00:55:29]

SW: Can you talk–? I only have a couple more questions, Helen, because you've been sitting here so generously this morning. I'm wondering, how did you all–? So you had the market next to the Seabreeze, and then how did y'all end up taking the restaurant on?

[00:55:51]

HR: Well, in 1972, I think it was, or '73, in 1973, the Licatas, who owned the restaurant, their son got–. On Christmas Eve he was in a crash and he burned to death and they had to go identify him. They never got over it and they grieved over him for all those years. There was always docks out there on the back side and everything and we kept everything up for them. We

helped them all we could. Every way we could we helped them. They wanted to sell, they were tired and they wanted to sell – this was in the 1990s – and somebody was coming to buy the Seabreeze and they were ecstatic, and on the way there the person died and they were so upset over it.

[00:57:05]

So they were still trying to sell the restaurant and they had another buyer and the person did not want our fish market back there, and by now we had built five shrimp boats on our property, four of them from scratch. One of them was rebuilt. My husband built every one of them and every one of them was perfect and they were all named the *Seabreeze*, so we had plenty of shrimp, plenty of customers. We would have lessons on how to clean the rock shrimp, and sessions and sampling sessions and everything, and we had the best seafood anyplace. That's all there was to it. So the restaurant benefited from all of our seafood and from all of our customers, because we drew in sometimes more people than they did.

[00:57:54]

But they were tired and tired and wanted to get out of the business, and the person did not want our fish market back there, did not want our shrimp boats back there, so me and Robert looked all over Florida for a place to put them and there was no place. No place had deep enough water to accommodate five shrimp boats. So we made the Licatas an offer, or they made us an offer. They said, "Well, if this man, if his money is not–. He has to have his money on a certain day and if it does not come by that day then you can go in that slot, but you'll have to wait until his contract is up," and the man did not come up with the money that day. So we had borrowed everything that we could, even cashed in our life insurance policies and everything to make the down payment for the restaurant, and when we took it over they was going to take it and make a

quick trip to Texas to relax for two weeks because they never got to go anyplace. While they were gone they found out that George had terminal cancer and that he did not even know it before he went to Texas, so he was never–. He was going to come back and help us but by the time he sold it to us, it was two weeks before we could open and in that two weeks' time the place was stripped bare by someone. I have no idea who went in there and took all the food, all the liquor, everything that was in there that we could use, took it out.

[00:59:37]

So we started in the hole. We didn't have enough money to–. We'd already used all of our money for the down payment so we started–. And we knew that one of the employees in there was a thief and we did not want–. They were hoping we'd keep all the same employees but one of them was really doing them damage, and I met a man out there in the parking lot and I said, "Boy, you're going to sure miss the Seabreeze when they're gone, I mean going to miss all those Devil Crabs." He said, "No, I'm going to miss the back door." He said, "I used to buy the steaks, the lobsters, the Devil Crabs by big platters." I said, "Really?" He said, "Yeah," and he told me the guy's name that was doing it, and that's the one in there that I disliked the most anyway. He had the foulest mouth of any person I'd ever talked to in my life, and loud and belligerent, and I did not want him to come work for us and the only way to do it was to fire everybody there, and then we hired everybody back on an individual basis and he was the only one that we didn't hire back.

[01:00:42]

So that's how we did it, and we didn't know one thing about restaurants. Really we didn't even know about tipping because we never went out to eat. My husband loved my food. He did not like restaurant food and we didn't know one thing about restaurants, I mean not nothing, and

there was fifty-six employees there. It was not a small operation. It was a big restaurant. It had two huge dining rooms. One was for everybody in suits and dressed up, and that was the doctors, lawyers, and Indian chiefs that was in the back room, and then in the front of the restaurant we had all the workers, and that was the loud area and that's where the bar was – we had a full 4COP bar – and such a reputation, because Mr. Licata was the best cook I ever ate food from in my lifetime. He was just magical with food and it didn't matter what he fixed. He was one of the most special people and Lucy, his wife, was my best friend. We went on trips together. We did everything together. It was wonderful but they were never allowed to–. They never came in to help us or anything.

[01:02:10]

We ended up with a–. The day we opened another most famous restaurant, the Kapok Tree – they were over close to Clearwater and they were famous for their delicious food – they closed the same day that we opened, and their manager came and asked would we hire him and we said, "Why, yes!" because we didn't have a manager and didn't know one thing about the restaurant business. So he was a godsend to us and he worked for us for seven years, but he asked the owner if we could use their recipes and they allowed us to use all their wonderful recipes, so it was a blend of Seabreeze recipes and the Kapok Tree's recipes and that's what's filled up in my cookbook, is that. It was not an easy life but we had a wonderful time there.

[01:03:14]

SW: Could you talk just–? This is the last thing I'll ask you and then if you want to add anything I would love for you to. Could you talk about the devil crabs? That started with the Licata family?

[01:03:25]

HR: Yes. The devil crabs was what the Seabreeze was the most famous for. When they started the very first Crab Shack over–. There ended up being six restaurants in all. They were all the Seabreeze. The first two was called the Seabreeze Café but the first one, that was the little hut, that was when the devil crab started. They'd boil crabs and sell crabs, soft crabs or whatever, and any crabs that was left over they'd pick all the meat out, because you didn't waste anything, and they'd make croquettes out of them. They were really crab croquettes, is what they were, and they were small. You could get a dozen of them for a dollar, and a dollar was a lot of money back then. A dozen of them would fill up a little one-pound bag, so you could tell about how small they were. Now they're gigantic, and we try to keep ours smaller because the crust on them is what makes them so delicious. It's not all the crab meat inside; it's the combination of that crunch and the crab meat on the inside. That is what makes a good devil crab.

[01:04:44]

Everybody loved them because they used lots of hot pepper inside of them and they'd want those hot-as-the-devil croquettes, and that's how so many people asked for them: "Hey, we want those hot-as-the-devil croquettes," and then it ended up being devil crabs, you know, the crab croquettes. They were hot devil crab croquettes, so it just ended up being deviled crabs, is what they ended up calling them, and they were famous for it. Every kid in Tampa, they would go first to the Seabreeze – and the Auto Park Drive-In was across the street and it was famous too. That's where everybody on a date, or if you had a dollar you could go down there and get the whole family in for just a couple of dollars. They charged by the person that was in the car so half of them would be in the trunk of the car and half of them would be [*Laughs*] in the seats of the car, and they would go first to the Seabreeze and get the devil crabs and they'd either sit there

and try to read the lips, the sound on the screen at the Auto Park, or they'd go into the Auto Park, and it was their history.

[01:05:57]

You talk to–. It don't matter who you talk to, which letter you read, they're going to talk to you about the devil crabs. That was their memories of it, and they were forbidden–. Most all teenagers were forbidden to go to the Seabreeze because they sold liquor there and they sold, I guess, women there. They had rooms upstairs. But they were not allowed–. Nobody was allowed to go to the Seabreeze, but by now we were on Seabreeze number five and it was a drive-in, and the drive-in is where me and my husband went on our first date. That drive-in – loved it. Almost everybody ordered the same thing. They'd bring a bottle of hot sauce and devil crabs and the most delicious Cuban sandwiches and Coca-Cola. Coca-Cola was a new company when–. They started about the same time the Seabreeze started and when Coca-Cola started what they did is they would come out and offer you a sign for free, but they'd put "Coca-Cola" in huge letters across the top and they'd put the name of the company in small letters underneath it.

[01:07:11]

But then a little bit later that changed and they put, on the one that – the big cement one where they had the gazebo and all the fine–. You had to be dressed to the nines to go there, everybody did. By then they had neon lights, "Coca-Cola" was in neon lights, and the Seabreeze sign was lit up in neon lights, and that's what caught fire. That's how the restaurant burnt down, and it was in the middle of a hurricane season and there was a hurricane out there, and at that time they had moved out of the–. They had their–. They were inside the city limits and they could not sell liquor past 1:00 at night inside the city limits, but if you were outside the city limits you could sell till 3:00, and that was their main business, was liquor. They sold–. Even in

1923, back during Prohibition, you could buy out the back door there. That's how they–. They were the only ones in a ten-mile radius that did not go bankrupt. They were the only ones. [01:08:26]

That's how they ended up with all that property is because during one of the hurricanes in 1921–. Right down from the Seabreeze and right at the Seabreeze is where the big boats would come, barges would come, loaded with cypress logs – or cedar logs. It was cedar logs. That's what they used to make the cigar boxes, because Tampa was famous for cigars and they were famous for having the cedar boxes to put them in, to make the smell stay wonderful. When you opened up that cigar box that cedar smell and that tobacco smell would just overwhelm you. It was like a perfume to men. And the box factory was right down the street from the Seabreeze, I'd say about a mile and a half, maybe two miles, just over the railroad tracks right there at Adamo Drive in there. That's where the box factor was, and the Licatas' original house was down about two blocks from there, on down from there. During that hurricane all those cedar logs was all washed up on the shore and everything, and one of the men that in my book, he was telling me about how he walked on that log and it was hollowed out and it was full of contraband liquor, and that's how all the contraband liquor came into Tampa, was through those cedar logs, through the Seabreeze, through the Licata house, right down the street, because they had a tunnel going from their house underneath to the box factory, and then the cedar logs would stop there at the Seabreeze because they also unloaded cedar logs there. [01:10:24]

So it has such history but, like I said, the parents did not want their kids–. They were forbidden to stop at the Seabreeze. So then all these kids were at the Seabreeze one night and here came the Ku Klux Klan. They were all in convertibles and all in their white and their tall –

tams, I guess it's called? – the hats, the tall hats and the sheets with the eyes cut out, and they were circling the Seabreeze, around and around and around, and all those kids thought that the parents sic-ed the Ku Klux Klan on them, and they were famous for lynching people and they were petrified. They all–. Every car on that lot was gone within five minutes.

[01:11:19]

SW: Why were the Ku Klux Klan there?

[01:11:22]

HR: I don't know. [*Laughs*] It was probably because of the things that the–. I don't know if it was for–. I have no idea. It's just a guess that it probably had nothing to do with the kids but they didn't like what was going on at the Seabreeze and they wanted it cleaned up. So, you never know. I mean I'm just supposing but I don't know.

[01:11:48]

SW: Helen, I wanted to ask you–. One of the last things I wanted to ask you was just do you know where the devil crab recipe came from, like who started it, like in the family?

[01:11:59]

HR: The Licatas did. In 1919 they were making it, and the women were not–. That's what they did. The women were not allowed to be seen inside the restaurant. They were in the back. They were in the kitchen and they were making the devil crabs and they just made the same–. They just made it by hand. They knew it. They didn't have to have it wrote down or anything. Then back in the early years there was this man on a bicycle. I think my father is the one that made the box to go on the bicycle, for him to sell devil crabs in, an insulated box that he could carry, and he used to come to the Seabreeze to get his devil crabs. He told me this himself, just I guess years later. The man told me, he said yeah, he used to come there and get his devil

crabs and then they got in a big argument, him and the Licatas got in a big argument, so he started making them himself, and that is–. But he's originally–. And they probably made them in Cuba. They probably made crab croquettes in Cuba, you know, so there's no telling. You know, they probably made them over there and they probably brought them here, but you go down to Cuba and ask for devil crabs and they say they never heard of such a thing, but they probably just didn't call them–. They probably just called them crab croquettes.

[01:13:38]

SW: Now, why do you think they've lasted so long here in Tampa?

[01:13:42]

HR: Oh, because they're so delicious. They're like addictive. I mean you start on them, especially anybody who's ever had them, they're the best, it don't matter who makes them, and they would never give out the recipe. For all the years that we were there people came all the time begging for the recipe and the Licatas would never give it out. But when we took it over they wrote out the full recipe for us and then when I made the cookbook I put the recipe in the cookbook, and because it's so complicated and there's so many steps to it that almost no one would go to that trouble, and I tell anybody, if you're going to do it – and a lot of them do. They say it's such an experience to make them. I say you have to have a party when you're making them. You have all these people here to help you because it is a lot to it to make it.

[01:14:35]

SW: Did you roll the crabs when you were working at the restaurant?

[01:14:39]

HR: I never did. My daughter-in-law, Donna, she did. She made them for [us]. We taught her how to do it. But we always had very, very experienced – and they could flat roll some devil

crabs. I know even Brocato's, they used to come there like three times a week: "Now, show us again. Show me again. Show me again," and they would keep showing them till they finally–. This is when me and my husband had it. They didn't come when the Licatas had it because they would not have told him, allowed him to even come in there and even look, but we don't mind because it don't matter who makes them. Nobody makes them like the Seabreeze does.

[01:15:18]

SW: Well, Helen, I've taken up a good hour of your time. Is there anything else you'd like to add that I didn't ask you, or you–

[01:15:23]

HR: Yes, about–

[01:15:24]

SW: –think is important?

[01:15:24]

HR: Yes, about the Love Rock. The Seabreeze was always blessed. It was always a blessed land. People would come up to me and whisper. They never said it out loud, they always whispered it, they said, "You know, this place is blessed," and I would say I always felt it was. One lady, I asked her, I said, "How can you tell it's blessed?" She said, "Oh, you can feel it as soon as you walked in." One night in a dream I had this dream about the Love Rock, and would you want me to tell the story about the Love Rock?

[01:16:00]

SW: If you want to, sure.

[01:16:02]

HR: I think it is a most special story. I dreamed about this beautiful rock sitting in the garden at the Seabreeze, and it was a pink rock that glittered in the moonlight and it was round and flat, and the top of it–. It was like three layers to it. The top layer was just the right size for a bride and groom, the next layer was just the right size for a maid of honor and the best man, and then the third was the ground, and we had a bank of flowers. There were steps going up the four sides of it and we had a bank of flowers around it, and it was beautiful. But what was fascinating was what it said, and I had to get up–. My husband was sound asleep next to me and I had to slip out of bed in the dark, pitch black, and find me a paper and a pencil that I could write on in the dark while I could still read what the book said, and this is what the book said. It said, "Legend tells it that since its beginning Seabreeze is the place to fall in love. Be careful. Standing on this rock can lead to mysterious feelings of love that can last a lifetime. To make the magic work full moons or sunsets work best. If you don't want to fall in love be careful. Don't hold hands on this rock. Don't look in each other's eyes. Especially don't kiss in the moonlight on this rock. This spell has been known to last a lifetime."

[01:17:43]

When my husband woke up the next morning I told him about it and he said, "We'll have to do that," so he started drawing. He was a tremendous drawer, he was always in construction, and he kept drawing until he got it exactly the way I saw it. Then I had two friends that I went to school with and they owned a marble company and they had all types of rocks in there. So I called Gloria Youngman and asked her, "Would you and your husband please come to dinner? We'd like to–," or come to lunch, "because I want to treat you for lunch because I have something special to tell you about." So they came and me and my husband sat there with them and I told them the whole story about the Love Rock and she busted out crying. I said, "I didn't

mean to make you cry." She says, "No, I understand now how far back in time God worked to make the Seabreeze so special and how far back he started on this Love Rock." I said, "What do you mean?" She says, "Well, back in 1956 my husband asked me to marry him out here in the parking lot, and back then it was nothing but oyster shells and potholes and sand spurs, and I begged him, 'Please don't ask me here. Please don't ask me here.' I wanted him to ask me in a more romantic spot, but now I understand why he asked me there. It was part of God's plan." She said, "You come over and look and see what I have."

[01:19:27]

So I went over there the next day and they had hundreds of samples of marble and granite and different rocks and I didn't see it and didn't see it, and we looked and looked and didn't see it, and I said, "It's a pink rock that glitters in the moonlight." I was just getting ready to leave, we'd looked at everything, and there I saw it, there in the window. I said, "That's it, right there." She said, "Oh, that's rose granite. Yes, it's a pink rock and it glitters in the moonlight." She says, "We'll arrange to send to North Carolina, to the mountains, and get it and we'll shape it and we'll bring it down and put it in the garden." [*Coughs*] So they did. They brought it. Then my husband and my boys, they finished the rest of it, and I planted all the flowers and it was beautiful, beautiful. Then I had to look for the book. I said I had to put that inscription and I said maybe I'll put it on granite because that'll last forever, and the price was three thousand dollars and I said we can't even think of affording that. I said maybe it'll have to be a special metal that will last for fifty years and that will hold up next to the salt water.

[01:20:46]

You'll have to excuse me a minute.

[01:20:48]

SW: Yes.

[01:20:49]

HR: [*Coughs*] I'll just take me a drink of water. [*Pause*] So, I could not find any place that could do that. I said I don't know even know what metal it needs to be made of but it needs to be something that's going to last. Then I was looking in the Yellow Pages, I'd called everybody in there, and there was a little one-liner. It was Garcia's Metal Refinishers, "We specialize in bronze, silver, brass, gold, copper, all the fine metals." I said, well, it sounds like he knows enough about metals and maybe he'll know how to do that. So I called and made sure he was going to be there and I went to his place over in Drew Field and I told him the story, and he says, "Ma'am, you're not going to believe this, but we've been waiting for you to come in." I said, "Impossible. How could you be waiting for me to come in? I never even heard of you until fifteen minutes ago." He says, "I promise." I said, "Well tell me how." He said, "Well, we've been working on this process to do this for two years and we just finished two weeks ago and I told my partner, 'Now all we have to do is wait for the right person to come in and we'll know them when they come in,' so we know that you are the one," and I knew that he was the one.

[01:22:20]

Then a long time went by and he didn't show up, didn't hear from him, and then finally he called. He was in Key West in the hospital. He had cancer. He said that he knew he wasn't going to die because it was his destiny to make that book. So another time went by and then he called and he was crying. He says, "It's finished and I'm bringing it today." He said, "I want you to know that this is the most important, the most significant thing I have done in my lifetime," and when he brought it, it was right in the middle of lunch hour, and we have like mirrors on the

wall. You can look out but you can't look in. But when we got there the dining room was packed, it was full, and when he came and brought the book over a thousand butterflies followed him. There was nine different species of butterflies. I counted and you could not count the butterflies there were so many of them, and everybody came pouring out of the restaurant, out into the garden, not to see the book because they didn't know anything about the book, but they came to see the butterflies. You could see them on their cell phones: "You got to see these butterflies. You got to come down here and see them," and they lasted for three weeks. I went in the back room where my grandson was and he says, "Grandmother–." He's an angel unaware. It was Chad, and he said, "Would you turn on the television for me?" I said, "Sure," and when I turned it on the little girl came on and the very first words spoken [were], "My mommy says that wherever the butterflies are the angels are there," and I cried, and I can't tell the story to this day without crying. It was just so overwhelming.

[01:24:15]

We were–. That no-name storm came up–. It was beautiful. We had weddings out there. Every wedding we had, it was like magical because it could be a hot, hot day and not a cloud in the sky and as soon as we start to have the wedding here comes the clouds, covers the sun, and puts shade over it, and every time was beautiful. It was like that–. It was just we knew it was going to happen every time we had a wedding. Then when that no-name storm came our yard was absolutely beautiful, the flowers were beautiful around the Love Rock, and me and my husband was sitting out there on the edge of the Love Rock and I told him, "Just think, when that hurricane comes tomorrow the salt water's going to rise and it's going to destroy our beautiful yard and all these flowers are going to all be gone," and sure enough, when the storm came, the salt water rose over the grass and the winds blew up to ninety miles an hour, and the next day

there was not one dead blade of grass and the flowers looked like they had never been through a wind at all. It was just absolutely amazing.

[01:25:31]

A little bit later on I was out there working on the flowers and this lady came. She says, "Oh, I see you have the Love Rock here," and I said, "Yes, that's what we call it." She says, "No, you don't understand. You have *the* Love Rock here." I said, "Yes, that's what we call it." She says, "No." She said, "I'm from the Billy Graham Crusade." She said, "We heard about it and he sent me over to see if you really have the Love Rock, and that is the Love Rock. It's the only rock that's mentioned in the Bible and it's mentioned with love and it's rose quartz." So we really did have the Love Rock there, and it was a most magical spot.

[01:26:06]

SW: Well, Helen, I think that's a really good place to stop this morning because it's Valentine's Day and we're talking about the Love Rock.

[01:26:13]

HR: [*Laughs*] It is. It is a place of love.

[01:26:16]

SW: Well thank you very much for doing this, this morning. I really appreciate your time.

[01:26:21]

HR: I am so pleased to be a part of history.

[01:26:25]

SW: I'm going to go ahead and turn the tape off.

[01:26:29]

END OF INTERVIEW