

NOTICE

Materials in our digital Oral History collections are the products of research projects by several individuals. USF Libraries assume no responsibility for the views expressed by interviewers or interviewees. Some interviews include material that may be viewed as offensive or objectionable. Parents of minors are encouraged to supervise use of USF Libraries Oral Histories and Digital Collections. Additional oral histories may be available in Special Collections for use in the reading room. See individual collection descriptions for more information.

This oral history is provided for research and education within the bounds of U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.). Copyright over Oral Histories hosted by the USF Libraries rests with the interviewee unless transferred to the interviewer in the course of the project. Interviewee views and information may also be protected by privacy and publicity laws. All patrons making use of it and other library content are individually accountable for their responsible and legal use of copyrighted material.

Oral History Program
Hollinswood Ranch Oral History Project
University of South Florida, Tampa Library

Digital Object Identifier: hollins_ohp_1001
Interviewee: Bruce Bartlett (BB)
Interview by: Marilyn Polson (MP)
Interview date: February 10, 2023
Interview location: Undisclosed
Audit Edit by: Maria Jose Pereira Gonzalez
Audit Edit date: April 5, 2023
Final Edit by: Dahlia Thomas/Richard Schmidt
Final Edit date: May 1, 2023

Marilyn Polson (MP): All right, this is an interview with Bruce Bartlett. We're talking about Hollinswood Ranch, and today is February 10th, 2023. Bruce, uh, I would love to hear any stories that you wanna share about the ranch from-- especially maybe your first memories and how it's changed, and then any special stories.

Bruce Bartlett (BB): Uh, well, I've known the Hollins family since I can remember. Um, my older brother Bob was, was, uh, probably what you'd call best friends with Dixie growing up. So consequently, every now and again, I'd be stuck to my brother's care. And he took me over to Dixie's house. They had a house on Elbow Lane, a big, big old kind of time, colonial looking house. And, uh, so, you know, it was always a separation of about eight or nine years between us. So that was kind of, you know, you had that little kid and then the older group.

So, there wasn't much of a relationship there. Uh, but as time moved on where the age seemed to disappear in the separation between parties, uh, I became more included in a lot of the functions that happened. So, um, and that involved hunting up there, which was a very, very big thing. And it was done during hunting season pretty much every single weekend, uh, except for Thanksgiving. And that was when he always spent time with the family at, up there, with the ranch. So, and, and I can't even begin to tell you how many times, but I can tell you there were years when, during hunting season, I was up there virtually every, every weekend. And Mr. Hollins was very, um, prolific on his hunting and, and guest list he had, which were a lot of the very prominent people from the Tampa, St. Petersburg area that he knew that came up.

And I guess I first started when I was in my teens, my-- would go up there to go hunting. But our primary purpose was to kind of assist with the, uh, the older group of Mr. Hollins's friends that would take out and drop off in the woods and pick up, and then when they shoot something, we'd end up cleaning the game. And, and, uh, and then they'd collect back at the big house, and everybody would go out again for a hunt in the evening. And, and the same thing would be repeated, and then again on Sunday morning. So, at the conclusion then we-- a group of myself and my, my friends that were all of our age, would then clean up the, the big house where Mr. Hollins stayed and make it all ready for the next time they were gonna be up there. But we had a

window, then we could go out and do our own hunting in the woods, and we'd go out Dixie, myself and several of us, with the dogs. And sometimes we'd go out and hog hunting and sometimes we'd go out and, you know, sit on the deer stand and try to shoot a deer and everything else.

So that just went on over and over and over again. And quite frankly, you kind of took for granted how nice of a situation you really had, because this huge ranch, then you were able to go out there, you know, places probably where nobody's ever been before, and, uh, and spend time in the woods, which, which I love doing. So anyway, time progressed and we still were hunting, and year after year after year. I had kids and my youngest and my two boys, they're four years apart, so they would come up sometimes he would have a father son hunt, which were, which would also include father-daughter. But, um, and you were able to bring the kids with you.

So, when my oldest reached a certain age, I was able to kind of tote him with me in the woods. And we'd sit out in the deer stand 'cause you'll sit out there for a couple hours in the morning by yourself. And, and, uh, you know, you kind of sit there and talk with your kid and do a little bonding and everything else, waiting for a deer to come running by. And then when my other one got older, then he also came. But I guess one of the most memorable stories, arising out of that relationship was, uh, well, probably two things, I guess. When I shot my first deer, I hunted for years and years and years and years, and I never could shoot a deer 'cause I just never saw a deer win the situation to be shot. And finally, we were hunting the south pasture one weekend, and I had - they put me on a very nice spot and, uh, sure enough, didn't take too long. Had a nice eight-point deer show up, and I shot it. So that kind of inaugurated me into having shot a deer club.

So, you go back, and you go through the cleaning process. And unbeknownst to me at that time, uh, but there's-- they do what they call a blooding, you know, symbolic of your first deer, which for most people it covered just wiping blood on your face from the deer with your cleaning. Uh, however, in my chi-- my circumstances, it involved, uh, dumping the contents of the insides, the, the deer, uh, on top of your head. And it was quite a mess. And they of course, thought it was really funny and very entertained by it, but I certainly wasn't to say the least. So, I had to go get it cleaned up and everything else. But anyway, then after that, it, it happened several more times, I guess, with other people that, you know, shot their first deer. It was something that was just kind of tradition.

So, when my kids got to the point where I was able to bring 'em, I brought the oldest and the youngest. So, when my son Kyle turned 12, I bought a shotgun for him for Christmas. It was a single shot shotgun with a hammer. So, you had several with a safety and you, so you had several steps that you could take before the gun that could fire, but more importantly, you could carry it with the breach open, unloaded, and, and you'd be very, you know, comfortable with the safety issues involving that. Uh, before he was able to use it, he had to go take a gun safety course and all that kind of stuff.

So, we went up one weekend for hunting. And the first day on Saturday, he accompanied me, um, with the shotgun. And I allowed him to carry it with the breach open and, uh, couldn't put a shell in it. I didn't give him a shell or anything like that. Just wanted to practice to see how, what

kind of safety he was at exhibiting as far as carrying a gun around myself and other people. Uh, he did a real good job. I was very comfortable. So, the next morning when we got on our deer stand, I said, okay, now here you go. It's a shotgun shell. You have two of these. Um, and you don't put it in until the hunting starts. And then when you do, you close it, you have the, the safety on, and don't cock it until you're ready to shoot. So, this was a, a shotgun. I bought it at, uh, Jumbo Sports right here by the courthouse, and I paid 80 bucks for it. A youth shotgun, small, still have it to this day.

And, uh, we got out there, dogs came running, you hear 'em howling and howling and howling and howling and then all of the sudden, out popped a deer and it was basically just turned looking at Kyle. And I had to say, "Are you going to shoot it or not?" And finally, he pulled the trigger and shot it, and that turned out to be his first deer. And that was another night's eight-point deer. And, uh, so that was pretty important to be there as a father, which is not always the situation that that happens when, when a kid shoots his first deer like that. Now, fast forward four years later, um, my second comes along, and my older now has graduated to having an actual full adult size shotgun.

Um, and on this particular day, it was a Saturday. He had a high school prom, so he had to leave to go do that. So, I was approached by my then 12-year-old second son who said, "You know, dad, I want to go hunting, I want to carry the gun". So, I went through the same drill with him. He'd already had the gun safety course and everything else before, and he carried the very same shotgun. So, that gun had been fired twice, once, test fired by Kyle. And then once when he shot the deer, and it had not-- four years later, now it's being utilized again. And Grant had an opportunity to test fire it. So, he knew what to expect. And he carried it around Saturday afternoon to see how he did, did fine. So, Sunday, I gave him the gun, and next day we're out sitting on the deer stand. And same thing, here comes a deer. He wasn't so lucky. His was running pretty fast, but to my surprise, he was able to, uh, shoot it and kill the deer. And, uh, so he got his first deer. So, I mean, that's a story you really can't forget.

MP: Yeah. Same gun? Same gun?

BB: Same gun, same gun. That was the-- gun was fired, I think a total of four times.

MP: First time out. Oh my god.

BB: And, uh, that was that.

MP: Wow.

BB: And it's still sitting there underneath the bed in the house. But, uh, pretty good story.

MP: That's a great story.

BB: And hope to pass it on to his son someday. And he can maybe be lucky enough to do the same thing. But, you know, Dixie was always very generous about allowing us to be up there and, you know, so we tried to, to do our part and, and, uh, you know, contribute to the whole process 'cause it was a lot of people up there that, with Mr. Hollins. So, it fell upon Dixie to kind of help out his father, which in turn, you know, we helped him do all the stuff with them and

cook the food and everything else that had to be done. And so, you know, run errands or whatever, whatever was needed, help the guys in and out the truck 'cause some of those fellas were getting along in years. Um, you know, as, as we grew older. And then, we just kept going.

It was a little house that was by Dixie's ranch house that he built for him and his wife. And uh, was, it was called the Little House. And it was a wooden frame home. I think the history on it goes back maybe into the late 1800s. Uh, but that was where we stayed when we were up there, my brothers, myself and then whoever else I was up there for the weekend. Uh, and then we'd go out hunting the next day, which at the-- that house was right closely located to the barn that, uh, where everybody would kind of co-- congregate in the morning. And I, you know, it's just, it's been good. Was up there this year hunting, it's slowed down quite a little bit, but the, the area to hunt it-- hunt is also not as nearly as big as it was before.

MP: So now when you hunt, you, you're only north of the canal?

BB: No, and we--

MP: No, you still hunt?

BB: We're in South Pasture, but around where the nuclear plant used to be.

MP: Yeah. Okay.

BB: That he had, they, uh, he retained hunting rights on about 3,500 acres there. So, um, it's still there.

MP: Okay.

BB: And then, you know, it's nice to be able to get up there in the woods like that. The areas are really kind of dwindling that allow you to do that.

MP: Yeah.

BB: And then he has him north end too, which we did hunt up there once or twice, but there-- but, uh, it is just, it's been, I mean I, I guess I could go on for hours on different stories and things that have happened up there. You know, a lot of people cutting up and it was kind of what tickled me was watching a lot of these older fellas that got out there. You know, one guy I'll never forget, he was a big, big time muckety muck doctor from Shands¹. and he always wore this like Scottish looking hat with a boom ball on the top 'cause it was always cold up there during hunting season. And, uh, one time one of the guys took the hat off of him and threw it out there and then took a shotgun and started shooting it across the ground. And they're all fussing and everything else, but they were like a bunch of little kids that were-- you know, they just got up there when they came on the weekend and just kind of cut it loose, you know. Uh, and so for us as younger people at the time, that was, you know kind of comical.

MP: And when you, 'cause you've referred several times to Mr. Hollins.

¹ UF Health Shands Hospital.

BB: Yeah.

MP: Maurice.

BB: Yeah.

MP: We are talking about Maurice.

BB: Yeah, Maurice, right, yeah, Maurice. Um, and then on Sun-- on Sunday, he'd load up in his Jeep Wagoneer and head down to St. Pete.

MP: Yeah.

BB: And so, he kind of had a little routine, so we'd finished up cleaning and as soon as that truck was out of there, man, we hopped in.

[Both laugh.]

BB: And Dixie's truck and off we went out of the woods. So--

MP: And you were gone.

BB: And then it would be late at night, um, sometimes on Sundays before I'd get home. And then there were hunts where I was able to bring my wife over the years. I mean, I guess the times we were up there were just really too numerous to count and it was such a, such a wonderful experience. Um, and they were always so kind to all of us and everything else and, you know, to get out there in the woods. Sometimes we just now, you know, ask for permission to go up there and just kind of walk around in the woods not really intending to hunt or anything like that. And now my wife's taken her horse up there a couple times just to ride, you know?

MP: Yeah.

BB: Off, off hunting season obviously. But, um, it's just, it's been a big-- in my house, it's been a big part of our lives. And of course, my brother Bob and Bill, likewise, they would be there, uh, many, many times on these trips. And, and so, um, it has had a significant impact on what they did and how they, you know, went through it.

MP: After your first deer, was it a long span to your next?

BB: No.

MP: No?

BB: It's, it's, it was crazy. I mean it was a long span. It was a joke. They always used to make fun of me, you know, and making sure you got bullets in there. Are you sure? Are you just letting 'em go by? I don't think he's shooting them, you know, and you get rattled about that and it's funny for a while, but then as it keeps going on, I'm like sh--, you know, I go out here now, I've been three or four years I haven't shot and haven't even seen something to shoot at, you know, and then all of a sudden there it is, you know, boom. You feel guilty about it. You know, you feel sad about shooting your first deer as did my kids, but you know, it's not like, I mean the deer is being, being utilized.

MP: Yeah.

BB: It was cleaned and, and uh, that's kind of part of the [??], he was always very, very, um, good about recording every deer that was shot with the, the biologist, the state biologist, Gordon Spratt. Matter of fact, he would come out there most of the hunts and he'd look at the teeth, he'd-- we'd save the kidney 'cause the number of the- the amount of fat on the kidney determined how well they were being fed, which then related to them allowing you to have so many doe permits². Because if deer were becoming overpopulated in a particular area and the deers were not getting the adequate nutrition, so there was not enough fat on the kidney, then they would say, you need to cut it down now because they're have food supply issues.

MP: Mm-hmm.

BP: Then you save the jaw and then they could look at the jaw and date how old the deer was. And all that was recorded year after year after year. And the weight, um, uh-- the cleaned weight and the hanging weight. And so, kept the good records and you know, a very good log of all that stuff. Of course, most of all that you know now, the ranch being sold, the center part, you know, first the power company came and took a bunch of land there. Some of the primary primo spots, the Carter Yard was there, which is now where the uh-- gas plant sits and you know, just watch the cut dwindling the away. I guess you got something like that and then everybody wants to take it away from you. Then you came along in the barge canal got cut. And I remember when the barge canal went through that a lot of the, um, ponds and stuff, the areas of water stopped having water in 'em.

MP: They were gone.

BB: Yeah. It was a couple springs. One still remains on the South Pasture, but, um, and I tell you, I- one of the earliest memories was, was 1966 'cause my dad and mom had just gotten a new car. So, my father and I went to Georgia to visit his mother and father. And so, I would've been, what, 10, 12 years old. And we came back down Highway 19, I'm not sure they even had 75³ at the time. And my brother Bob had been spending his summers up there with Dixie working on the ranch. And then they had a house in downtown, in Crystal River.

MP: Crystal River. Mm-hmm.

BB: I guess I loosely used the term downtown, but, uh, in, in, in town. Um, and so they would stay there, so they'd go on this particular day we drove by there, hoping to see my brother and sure enough he was out on the field in a tractor. And he was harvesting, um, the, uh, seeds from the Argentina Bahia that was growing out there. And I guess they, it's what they sell in, you know, the give to somebody. I don't know what they do, but it's--

MP: Yeah, I remember.

BB: It's har-- you know, they harvest the seeding and then people buy that. Um, so we stopped and talked, you know, talked with him about that and what was going on and everything else for

² Antlerless Deer Permit.

³ Interstate 75.

a couple hours. And then we headed back home to St. Pete. So, and then Bob probably was then was maybe 18, 19, something like that. So, he'd go up there and work, they'd ride, they mend fences, they did all that kind of stuff. So, it was a huge part of his life. Huge. And, you know, we maintained a relationship with Dixie to this day. Talked to him periodically. Um, we went on a couple trips with him and, uh, over the years and, you know, just kind of grown closer with all of us as we all get older but--

MP: We get closer in age.

[Marilyn laughs]

BB: Yeah, that's exactly what happens. The gap disappeared.

MP: It does.

BB: You know, like I said, what-- it existed when I was a little kid, I was, you know, to tag along knowing nobody wanted to bring your little brother with you but, you know, he'd gets stuck with ya sometimes. So, I remember another one too, just as a, just a Dixie story. This is back, give you an idea where, where we were, we were at that house in St. Petersburg, on Elbow Lane, right there by Jungle Prada⁴. And, uh, it was Christmas and he had gotten a .22 rifle and a target. And it was a red steel target about a foot wide and about a foot and a half high. And it, when you shot the target, it went into this metal cylinder and then it rolled around like a snail shell so that the bullet would then ricochet off that but didn't remain inside of that cylinder. And there was a clip that was clipped on top it was part of the thing built in that, um, held the target.

So, we went over there and they, my brother Bob and him, were on the back steps in the backyard of the house shooting the gun at the target and trying to be who-- you know, see who could shoot the best of the bullseye and all that kind of stuff. So finally, Dixie said, you know, "You want to take a try?" And so, he handed me the gun and God, I don't know how old I would've been at that time, but it would've been-- I, I had to be probably no more than seven years old, eight years old. Anyway, so I took it and I shot, you know, you're shooting 22 shorts, so it's not really carrying a whole lot of power. And uh, I hit that clip and immediately destroyed it. And that was the end of that.

[Both laugh]

BB: They-- he started yelling at me and there, "God dang!" You know, "What are you doing? You wreck-- wrecked that up." You know, "And we've been here all after morning-- after." Well, in the morning here, doing it.

MP: You take one shot

BB: You take one shot and now you're ruining it. So anyway.

MP: Yeah, I like that.

⁴ Jungle Prada de Navaez Park, St. Petersburg, FL.

BB: That's just some of those things, you know, as a kid, that you have that memory that's kind of just embedded in your head that you don't think about it and all of a sudden one day it comes to your mind. But anyway--

MP: Great, love those stories.

BB: I have very nice things to say about the family like I said they were always so, um-- hospitality was nothing to be scoffed at. They took care of everybody did, you know, did everything for you and, uh, and Dixie's that way now. You need help you can always count on him to, to help you out with whatever you got and, um, you know, for advice. Good, good, uh, information and everything else so.

MP: Did the um, girls have to do any of that?

BB: No--

MP: You know, you talked about Dixie and--

BB: Yeah.

MP: His friends and you all haven't--

BB: Yeah.

MP: Calling everybody around and getting them where they need to go.

BB: Yeah, that was like, that was pretty-- I wasn't married at the time and I, I was like maybe 17, 16, um, right in that age zone. And that was kind of how we got be able to come up there on the weekend. So, it wasn't like, and-- and his father liked it because then, you know, it was always "Go get this, go do this, help him with this, help him with that." So, we were there and could do it. And then we had that little window when we got to hunt. But you know, in the morning when we put everybody out, we still got to go sit in the woods and wait till it was time to pick up or somebody needed something.

MP: Yeah.

BB: And be able to hunt then too but you're never really-- all the good spots were always taken by Mr. Hollins.

MP: By the guests.

BB: Yeah, and then there was time where they, they were running the dogs and uh, you know, a few times I got to ride the horse to, to do the-- you know, letting loose the dogs and stuff like that, you know, as, as you did it more. But I mean it was, I don't know how I could ever do it these days now, you know, with going every weekend like that but we did.

MP: But you did.

BB: And I had a-- even after I was married it was, you know, wife was very understanding about it and everything else. But we spent a lot of time up there at hunting season. It was just kind of like the norm. Everybody expected it. It was accepted.

MP: It was part of your life.

BB: Yeah.

MP: Yeah.

BB: Yeah. It just, it was, was good. But what I think probably what the most important thing to me was that my kids got to experience that, you know. Because I mean, you still have areas you could hunt through the applications for management areas with the state of Florida and all that kind of stuff. But it's not like when you're hunting on private land. So, you don't have interlopers coming in and showing a presence and I mean, it was-- nobody else was there.

MP: Yeah.

BB: You didn't have to worry about your stuff getting stolen if you leave it out there, you didn't have to worry about any of that kind of stuff. Now you go to these preserves where you got multiple people, you gotta worry about who the hell's shooting and where, and you know, do they know what they're doing and kind of stuff like that.

MP: Mm-hmm.

BB: Makes you a little bit nervous. So.

MP: Yeah. Probably a lot nervous-- make me--

BB: Yeah, yeah.

MP: That would be nerve-wracking, yeah. Not the same. Not the same at all.

BB: 'Cause meeting that group of friends I was talking about, we used to go like to the Osceola⁵ and the panhandle and then we'd go to, uh, Citrus Wildlife Preserve⁶ and you'd get permitting in there for, for two days out of the year, um, and kind of go around but you had a lot of other people that were there.

MP: Mm-hmm.

BB: So, you never really felt terribly safe about who was shooting where and what, somebody shooting a high-powered a rifle that's right over there. That was one thing that they were up at the ranch. They were very, very strict about your guns. Guns do not get loaded until you're out there, ready to hunt and uh, you don't lean the gun on a side of a truck or something like that. And, uh, you don't-- when you're doing the deer drives that people are on the road, you're never within where you can see the other person but you, you know, not that far away.

MP: Mm-hmm.

BB: And you always use shotguns, no high-powered rifles that would go far. And at night when you sat out you used high powered rifles, but even if you shot a deer, you stayed on your stand and then somebody, like one of the guys would come to where the shot was to see if that person

⁵ Osceola National Forest, Sanderson, FL.

⁶ Citrus Wildlife Management Area, Citrus County, FL.

needed help with anything. And if the deer was wounded, then they would run with a dog and find it. So--

MP: Okay.

BB: You know, you just had to stay and your stand, but safety was first and uh, it was a very, very important thing. And of course, you do when you've got everybody running around with guns. And then in the afternoon and after-- well at night after you got back out of the woods, which would be, you know, it'd be about six 'cause it would be dark at quarter to five or quarter to six or so, right around there. And, uh, you'd come outta the woods and you'd come back and you'd have dinner, and the alcohol would come out and you know, people would kind of party and everything else and tell stories from the day. But the guns were always put away and it was nobody with guns, but anything to do with alcohol.

MP: Mm-hmm.

BB: You know, it was just not, you don't do it. You know, safety, they had a lot of risk. If something happened to somebody then, you know, that's really problematic.

MP: Right, right. But that was ingrained, I mean that--

BB: Yeah, it was a time up there too, I remember we were in the-- I guess at the- I don't know, a hundred acre, no, it wasn't a hundred-acre field. It was, it was the pasture that you can see from, from 19. And we had a deer driveway running a deer, um, and it jumped the fence. And, and it-- it was a military guy if I'm not mistaken, and his wife and kid and, um, he hit the deer. And so, Dixie brought him back to the ranch and they got all the information and needed get the insurance and everything else and told him not to worry about everything he was gonna cover. He ended up, you know, making sure all the repairs and everything else were done in the truck 'cause he said, you know, it was our fault for, we were running the deer and everything else.

But another story I kind of forgot, this is another hunting story, but, um, so where the power lines are is where the power plant road is and there's a huge, uh, battery of power lines that are suspended, that run along there with large, uh, steel foundations that are, you know, all, um, erected that way. So, underneath those areas is really covered heavy in trees. So, I was out there one time with, um, I think it was Jimmy Owens, um, but he had a set of beagles. And so it, it's an open area except for what's going on around where those power poles are, um, stanchions I guess you'd say. And they, they're probably every 80 feet or so. And so, he said, "You want to watch this?" He and he turned his dogs loose on that area over those, around the poles, and sure enough, out jumped three big, big deer.

And, uh, so I shot at 'em, I unloaded my shotgun, and I didn't do anything. And so, this, the big, big deer, the primary deer, and it was like a 11 or 12 point, ran north and you could hear people in the woods seeing, hear the deer coming by and they were shooting at it, and it was kind of like, you know, bam, bam, bam, bam! And, and then, then a little while later, bam bam, bam, bam, bam! And um, at deer ran all the way to the north end to the Barge Canal⁷. And finally, I

⁷ Cross Florida Barge Canal.

think Rodney Levins, um, a guy that was working at the ranch ended up shooting it. I might be wrong on that, but I- with he, he has the information of how many people shot at it, but I think it was seven or eight different people. It started with me. And uh, and I mean, it was just an amazing thing that that thing went that far like that and everybody's shooting at it and it-- nobody got anything. Finally, finally did.

[Marilyn laughs]

MP: I'm gonna talk to Rodney. I'll have to ask him.

BB: Yeah.

MP: About that.

BB: I think it was him. I could be off on it could have been. Um, uh, Lee Earl.

MP: Lee Earl?

BB: Yeah.

MP: I talked to him the other day.

BB: Yeah, it could have been him.

MP: He's having--

BB: but Rodney, you'll know the story, he'll know it.

MP: Open heart surgery.

BB: Did he really?

MP: Um, Wednesday.

BB: Whoa.

MP: Lee Earl, yeah.

BB: So anyway, that's kind of my story, I guess. I mean, there's a lot of 'em swimming around in my head. It's just a matter of retrieving 'em right now.

MP: Yeah. No, I, I love the story about your kids. Yeah, that's a great--

BB: Yeah, no, that's what I said. That's something I should have said in the Sports Illustrated.

MP: Yeah?

BB: Um.

MP: Yeah, with the picture of the gun, picture of your kids.

BB: It was a little youth shot, single shot shotgun. I remember my father had one, I guess when he was a kid. And, um, I never really had any stories, I just remember that came from-- it was my dad's gun and uh, I'm not sure where it is today, if one of my brothers has it or not, but, um, and I

can't even remember who manufactured the gun I got with the kids, but it wasn't one of the brand name manufacturers. It wasn't Remington or anything like that, but it was one that you're familiar with. And uh, it was '79 something, something. So, 80 bucks when I got it. And it worked out.

MP: Yeah. Priceless now.

BB: Yeah, it really is. Yeah. Yeah.

MP: Yeah.

BB: Yep. So that's pretty much it.

MP: Thank you so much.

BB: I spent time besides hunting, fishing and everything else with, with Dixie and the guys and he's always been big about, you know, wanting to entertain and having get-togethers and all that kind of stuff.

MP: Mm-hmm.

BB: Up there at the, the ranch and everything else. So, a lot of fun, a lot of late-night riding around through the woods and everything else up there. And particularly in the, in the, uh, partly we used to be called Charlie Cedar Hammock that's now state land, but all the way back going towards the Gulf. A lot of pigs and stuff back there and, you know, you see all kinds of game.

MP: Yeah.

BB: Saw a Florida panther up there one time and uh, I've seen an alligator come across my deer stand. Otters, raccoons, all kinds of stuff.

MP: Armadillo?

BB: Armadillos are everywhere.

[Marilyn laughs]

BB: Yeah. Lot of fun over the years. Lot of fun. Something, you know, things like that you'll never be able to repeat.

MP: Yeah.

BB: But you know, you just, some things don't mean as much to you until they're gone, and then you really realize what fun you had up there.

MP: How special it was.

BB: Yeah.

MP: It is an amazing place.

BB: Yeah. It's nice. At least he's still got, you know, some part of it that's there.

MP: Mm-hmm.

BB: Someday that'll probably be all built up. You have homes all around those phosphate pits.

MP: Mm-hmm.

BB: It'll be- one point in time, I know, uh, I had a brother-in-law who was working for a city planning company and he had talked about, there was discussions about a potential of a major airport there, up in that area. And that was, they're talking about, you know, where he had that land, but that didn't ever fly. So, 'cause we used to have a population base really to support it.

MP: To support it up there.

BB: Yeah.

MP: But now with the Suncoast Park⁸, I mean--

BB: Mm-hmm.

MP: You can be in Tampa in no time.

BB: Oh yeah. It's great.

MP: Yeah.

BB: It's, it's cut-- the guy, our office's, uh, director, he goes to Tallahassee every week during session. He's been going and he was-- came in here yesterday. He was telling me that, um, he got back, it was just under four hours for him to go back 'cause of the Parkway, you know, catching it up there in Crystal River.

MP: Yeah.

BB: So, you don't have to go through Homosassa.

MP: Yep.

BB: You don't have to go through the Crystal River proper. And uh, I mean if you actually take, there's a road that cuts right there by where you'll see um, Rural King⁹, but you know, before there's a light there when you're leaving the ranch, it's, there's a motorcycle shop here and it's called Gobbler or Turkey Trot Road or something like that. And you take that and it goes back here and dumps off on 44¹⁰.

MP: Okay, right.

BB: And you're closer to the Parkway and you kind of avoid some of this stuff in here.

MP: Yeah.

⁸ Suncoast Parkway AKA Florida State Road 589.

⁹ Rural King, farm equipment supplier, Zephyrhills, FL.

¹⁰ State Road 44.

BB: Yeah.

MP: To the city.

BB: So, if they get it all the way up to red level, that'll really, really do it.

MP: Mm-hmm.

BB: Yeah, because then you just go right on into Inglis and then that stretch up there is what, 40 miles to get the Chiefland and then there's nothing.

MP: To Tallahassee all the way. Oh yeah.

BB: Yeah. We got a lot of little town stuff there.

MP: Yeah.

BB: It's, you know, it's a direct shot up 19. A lot of people go to the interstate, but it takes you more miles and puts you out and you come back around and you gotta drop down--

MP: By 10¹¹.

BB: And if you're, you know, you can do-- now at the Parkway, you can do better time in my opinion 'cause it's a more direct route to get up there.

MP: And it's not as grounded.

BB: Nuh-uh. No, unless you can see stuff, you can stop places and get something to eat and everything else, you know, it's got-- you need to pop in here to do this or you wanna get a soda pop real quick, you're not having to get off the interstate and all that kind of jazz.

MP: Yeah.

BB: So, anyway, what else? Anything else?

MP: Unless you can think of anything else you want--

BB: If I do, I'll call you about it.

MP: Tell me about the ranch. Okay, good.

BB: Yeah.

MP: Good.

BB: My brother Bob will have some stories for you.

MP: Okay. I'm gonna call him, I'm gonna call him today and leave, I'll leave a message for him.

BB: Yeah. Um, he, he's probably the one that he spent the most time up there.

[End of recording.]

¹¹ State Road 10 AKA Atlantic Boulevard.