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Otis R. Anthony African Americans in Florida Oral History Project  
Oral History Program  
Florida Studies Center  
University of South Florida, Tampa Library

Digital Object Identifier: A31-00048  
Interviewee: Samuel Swain (SS)  
Interviewer: Herbert Jones (HJ)  
Interview date: September 12, 1978  
Interview location: Unknown  
Transcribed by: Unknown  
Transcription date: Unknown  
Interview Changes by: Kimberly Nordon  
Interview Changes date: January 6, 2009  
Final Edit by: Mary Beth Isaacson  
Final Edit date: March 4, 2009

**Herbert Jones:** What month?

**Samuel Swain:** January the twentieth.

HJ: Okay, and when did you move to Tampa?

SS: Moved to Tampa in 1896.

HJ: Can you tell us anything about World War I?

SS: World War I? I can tell you somethin' about the Spanish-American War, 1889.

HJ: Tell us something about the Spanish-American War.

SS: See when I, when we first come here, first house my mother rented was right down there [where] they built that library on Cass Street. That library on the corner of Highland [Avenue] and Cass. That's where I stay, across from Hixon Hall. And at that time the railroad—the train station, where you get off the train between Tampa [Street] and Ashley Street—on Polk Street; the train come down Polk Street. And that train was named the HB [Henry B.] Plant.

He built that hotel, Plant built that hotel, that was a hotel over there where that college [University of Tampa] is. And I tote water there cause the people before, they wasn't through building it. And ah, the train used to come across the boulevard and back into that hotel. People would get off in there. But the passengers what was coming in, coming to town, they'd get off on Polk Street. And during the about—be here about a couple of years, and then the Spanish-American War might have been on when we come here. I was about twelve, thirteen years old.

HJ: Where there any blacks in that war?

SS: Blacks?

HJ: Black soldiers in—

SS: Sure! They fought there—well, what I can be sure I know. I ain't talkin' what seen or what hear, but I know. They fought that war for about a year or two before they got any blacks. They didn't want no blacks in it. Teddy Roosevelt, he was the—

HJ: The president?

SS: No, he wasn't the president; [William] McKinley was president in 1896. McKinley, he got killed. And so they fought over there and fought over there and couldn't do nothin' with them white fellows, so they sent over here and told them to send over some Negroes, and they made up the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry out in Texas or somewhere, and they come through here. Every soldier went over there, they had to come here, they had to come here.

They camped all out back out there on the other side of—all out there by Cypress Street and all out there on the other side of that—all up there between here and the railroad, and all round out there. They didn't have no barracks, they had tents. When you seen a soldier then he had everything he wanted. He could fight right there, he had his gun, bed, food, water, ammunition and everything. They tote them with them, they always carried them with them, all the time.

I use to go out there and shine their shoes. All back out there where they built that Baptist church out there. That was a little town out there. They called it (inaudible). There was a big old two-story building; they called them a hotel in them days. But it's a bakery, hotel, bar room, restaurant, grocery shop and everything. Shop right out there, out there where they built that church, two churches and things was out there. And so them soldiers, they practically hadn't done training yet and they ship them over, carry them to Port Tampa and put them on the boat and then go across to Cuba, along in them days.

HJ: Okay, what about World War I? How were things?

SS: In World War I? World War I, I was a grown man. I was about thirty years old.

HJ: Did you fight in the war?

SS: Un uh. I ain't been in no war, and I'm ninety years old.

HJ: So how did World War I affect black folks here in Tampa? How was—did that make a difference?

SS: Well, you see, after they got through with them colored soldiers out there, they take them out there somewhere in Brownwood, Texas. Take them and killed every one of them. Yeah, they killed them, right here.

HJ: That was from World War I?

SS: No, that was the Spanish-American War. And then they say in World War I, If they armed the Negro, who was goin' to disarm them? And they wouldn't give them no guns.

HJ: Where?

SS: In World War I.

HJ: Here in Tampa or anywhere?

SS: They (inaudible) with sticks (inaudible) and oneself another. They wouldn't give them no guns; they fought too good over in Cuba. Cause they taken them out, and I heard the took them out there in Brownwood, Texas somewhere and killed them. Disarmed them and killed them.

HJ: Some of them that they took out there in Texas was from Tampa?

SS: I don't know. I don't know where they come from, I can't tell you. All the soldiers went up there like they were going to goin' muster them out, and I heard they killed them all. When I come to Tampa then, all these streets here—I come out here in 1900. In 1900 I helped build that on my own, St. John up there, back to Grace Street; that was called city limit. Well, I worked right there on Albany [Avenue] and Union [Street], where that little school is there. That was a big livery stable over there. Man had a contract to take care of West Tampa. I feed up the horse. I been out here ever since.

HJ: Okay, how was the life different during World War I? Were there any special things that black folks did? What was life like in Tampa during World War I? How were you treated and what kind of work was available and stuff like that?

SS: I was working right there on Garcia [Street]. Garcia used to be right down there before they tore up the place. I was working at a wholesale and retail bar room in World War I.

HJ: Do you know of any black soldiers that left here to go to fight in World War I? Black men who left Tampa to fight for World War I?

SS: I remember, but all of them about dead now. All these new people to me. My name is Sam Swain.

HJ: Okay, Mr. Swain, when you first came to Tampa, what type of jobs were available to black folks in the community?

SS: When I first come down, I was about thirteen years old. There was cleaning. I was trying to clean these streets, trying to make these streets, most any kind of little old jobs that would do. They didn't pay me but ninety cents a day. Franklin Street, they was paving long in about—I don't know, about 1908 or somethin'. Right there on Cass [Street] and Franklin, that was the first—there was a building there, the first big building they had there. That used to be a five story building there, right across from Haymans. There used to be a five story building there. A fellow come and got the first high building they had here. Fellow come from Key West and built that.

HJ: Did the Black folks help him build that?

SS: Well, even them days—no, I don't think so. I don't think no Negroes were on that job, cause they was plastering, you know, bricks. I did this and that. A colored person wasn't laying brick in that time. But after a while they (inaudible) up that building there and about a year or two later, a man who was here named [Robert] Mugge. He had a bar room on every corner in town, just about.

HJ: Is this a black man or white man?

SS: White man. He owned up there on the corner of all that Colored hotel that use to be there on Central, that's where his place was. See, all that was his. He built that hotel and he built that other one where the Moon was. It was called the Moon, on the corner of Cass, on the corner of Harrison and Central. He built that. He had bars all over the county.

HJ: Okay, do you remember when Dr. Benjamin Mays was in Tampa?

SS: Dr. who?

HJ: Dr. Benjamin Mays was in Tampa working at the Tampa Urban League. You remember Benjamin Mays? He was here in like 1922, somewhere around there. Worked with the Tampa Urban League. Do you remember anything about the land boom in Tampa?

SS: Who?

HJ: The land boom, the bust, something like that. In Tampa?

SS: Oh, they started running about in twenty-six [1926]. Most all this stuff started in Davis Island in the twenties [1920s].

HJ: During the land boom was work plentiful for black people, and money and stuff like that?

SS: Well, not so much.

HJ: Not so much. Okay, when you first came here—you were a little boy—in 1896, were the police brutal to black people. They treat them real bad?

SS: Along in that time they arrested, they called themselves taming the Negroes. They was scared of us. I remember they lynched two Italians out there about 1909.

HJ: For what, being with blacks?

SS: No, it was a big strike. A cigar factory was an every corner out here, all cigar makers. And there come a strike, and a factory right down there on the corner Pine [Street] and Albany called Bustillo [Brothers & Diaz] Factory. He just had built that factory down there, and he moved from there where that Baptist church at, and moved down there and built that church 1902. Yeah, used to own that factory. That's when all them brick building started up, in 1902 and 1904.

And so they had a strike. Go in there and call the people out, tell them to strike, the Cubans and Italians. There wasn't many Italians. Cubans, Spanish, colored people making cigars. Then the man wouldn't let them in, and one of them fellows, some of them shot this White man standing in the door and killed him. And so after they killed him, they arrested him, arrested the two fellows, arrested two of them. Carried them down there and put them in a little old caboose and they done know what they was going to do with them. It happen about nine in the morning. The county jail was right up there where it is now, on the corner of Jefferson and Constance. All they had to do was come right down to Fortune Street there—then it was Fortune Street—and come across this bridge and go on out there on Green Street there by the railroad. Green and the railroad there and get them and go on back afterwards.

But they wouldn't do that. They waited until that night, about eight or nine. Drove over here in horse and buggy and got them two fellows, and carried them way out there at Howard Avenue and drove way down Howard along the driveway. Little bushes, no electric lights, and go out to the little pathway go through there. Go right straight out Howard until they got to Kennedy Boulevard and on that side of Kennedy Boulevard it was a dry swamp that run right down side of it, Kennedy and Howard. Wasn't nothin'; one house here and a house there, and a house over there. And carried them down there and strung them up back to back and shot them to death.

HJ: These Italians?

SS: Un huh, them Italians. Crackers did it.

HJ: What about blacks?

SS: The blacks—now I'll tell you the truth, I don't remember any black they lynched. Now they might have lynched them, but I don't remember now. But I went out there and seen them two Italians. I was raised up from Twiggs Street, all up and down Franklin. I

used to work on Franklin. I worked for the first pressing club that was in this town. I rode the first motorcycle that was ridden by colored person here.

HJ: When was that?

SS: Huh?

HJ: When was that?

SS: That was about in 1912.

HJ: Where did you get it?

SS: Right there on Franklin Street. It wasn't but one man would sell a Negro a car or motorcycle. You know the Home Furniture Company?

HJ: Home?

SS: Home Furniture Company. Anytime you go there, you see horse shoes run from the curbstone up into that place. That was built there for—you call it Tampa Harness and Wagon Company. There used to be a wooden water trough set out there; wasn't no curb them days, nothin' but a board sidewalk. Sometime they push the Negroes off the sidewalk, sometimes the Negroes push them off. We boys wouldn't push them off, but they wouldn't, but they didn't bother us.

And so they went there up until, but now before the automobiles come in, that place was built for cows, horse harnesses, wagons. They used to keep them up there; that was about the biggest business on Sunday. Up to Saturday, it was just a big open bar. But they kept everything like that up there: horse harnesses, horse wagons, buggy, everything for the farm. And so when they started building them automobiles, why this man, he was handling that stuff. This white fellow was handling that stuff for Studebaker, Studebaker wagon, Studebaker plows, and all like that. And so they made the Studebaker car, so when they start making automobiles he went into handling Studebaker automobiles.

There was a fellow in there called Dr. Johnson. The man I working for got him a car, got him a car, he was a doctor, but they wouldn't let have the car. The man I was working for, a white fellow, he say that man, Doug Henderson, old man Henderson run the district, of the Studebaker place. He say he'll sell to anybody; anything they want, he got it for sale. And so Dr. Johnson bought one of them Studebakers. Crackers met him out, carried him out there and wrecked it.

HJ: This is a black man that bought a Studebaker?

SS: Uh huh, Dr. Johnson, you know, they called him (inaudible).

HJ: When was that?

SS: That was way back there, about 1908, sometime long in there.

HJ: Nineteen sixty-eight?

SS: Nineteen aught-eight.

HJ: Oh. When you bought your motorcycle, they didn't bother with you?

SS: They had—we called them speed cops. They just had one; his name was Johnny Marciano. He's Italian. So he passed by there and he saw them men had it jacked up showing us how to operate it. He said, "You going to sell this nigger this automobile?" He [other man] said, "Yeah, I'm gonna sell it to him if he want to buy it." And so he sold it. The boy that bought that thing—see, we went up there with him to get it. Now he wasn't, and he bought it. And then after he bought it, them old crackers got the speed cop and some more of his friends had them big heavy motorcycles—like Excelsior, Indians, all them kind of heavy automobiles, told him if he got on it they was goin' run into him and break it, kill him.

So he pushed it all the way up to the drug store there on Franklin Street, right in front of Maas Brothers. When he got there, he done—after a while, a fellow told him, "Well, Palmer, you can try the motorcycle out." He say, "I ain't goin' get on that thing. They say if I got on it they goin'—" I told him I'll just take it, so I rode it. I went on and carried the thing. Come back later, I take it way back out there in woods—wasn't nothin but woods all back out in there, in Hyde Park. I had to carry a package there.

When I went and carried that package, I heard somebody shoot, bam, bam. So I shot back. I just shot up in the air. Cause my boss man give me that pistol. [The boss] Say, anybody bother you—and so, I come on back. I come back across that Hyde Park bridge—that's that Kennedy bridge—and he sittin' there just waiting on me. "Hey, wait a minute," he said. I come on up to Franklin Street, turned and went to the drugstore. I come in the back, they come in the front. They ask my boss man, say, "Where's that nigger?"

He say, "What nigger? I ain't got no nigger here. I got some boys. Say, another thing, you leave them boys alone. If you don't, I'm gonna have you discharged, and tomorrow I'm goin' to the mayor, anyhow." He lost his job.

HJ: Do you remember the Tampa riot in the forties [1940s]?

SS: The riots? In the forties [1940s]?

HJ: The Tampa riots between blacks and whites.

SS: This was when [Martin Luther] King was here? Reverend King?

HJ: No, that was in the sixties [1960s] with Reverend King. This was in the forties [1940s]. A riots that broke out in Tampa and they called it the Tampa riot. It was between the blacks and whites. They fought for about two or three days, or something like that. I think it was something dealing with—what was his name? I think he was involved with a white woman? Do you remember that?

SS: That might have been this Reed lady, wasn't it?

HJ: This was like in 1940.

SS: What I mean, didn't the police shoot her boy?

HJ: I don't know.

SS: That's the only riot I— The boy, he went downtown and he stole some radio or somethin' or another, fooling around down there and he come back down there on Central Avenue. And police come down there and the boy tried to get away and they shot him. Then they burned up all of Central Avenue.

HJ: That was in the early sixties [1960s].

SS: In the sixties [1960s]?

HJ: This was in the forties [1940s].

SS: I don't remember nothin' like that. I was working right across the street there. A place called Happy Bar. Went there in thirty-six [1936] and worked until fifty-eight [1958].

HJ: So, did you ever work at the shipyards?

SS: Shipyards. I worked the shipyard first during World War I.

HJ: Who was the first person over there on the shipyard?

SS: First person? The man that was operating it was called Oscar Daniels. That was called Steel Shipyard. There was two, the wooden—one place that built wooden ships and the other built them steel ships. And we would, and I was working for the steel shipyard, Oscar Daniels.

HJ: What the docks?

SS: The docks?

HJ: Who was over that?

SS: That dock down there, that was built about 1912.

HJ: What about the union? Do you know anything about the longshoremen's union?

SS: No. A fellow, he come here and—Perry Harvey.

HJ: He started it?

SS: He started it. He got over there and got this union now.

HJ: Was he the first one?

SS: Well, that was about the first union, for the dock workers.

HJ: Yeah. What I am saying, was Harvey the first person to get it all together?

SS: Yeah.

HJ: First president?

SS: Uh huh. Used to be when you got down to Whiting Street you couldn't go back there no further. Wasn't nothin' but swamp thing from there to—but they gutted all that out and made it a road. The water front was right from that bridge down there right on down that street, right on down the river front.

HJ: What about the Depression? Do you remember anything about the Depression here in Tampa?

SS: Yeah, long about.

HJ: And the soup lines, were you ever in the soup lines?

SS: No, I don't know, but they—

HJ: Tampa had a soup line?

SS: Oh, yeah, they had them. They give away stuff or somethin' or another.

HJ: Were a lot of black people in there?

SS: Colored people, they—

HJ: Where were they located?

SS: They had it right up there on Central, in different places. But what they did, they gave you some dry food and cooked something or another, some kind stuff. I didn't fool with that stuff, I was always with— Looks like everybody, every person I met liked me. I got

along fine.

HJ: What about the medical situations for blacks here? When you were sick, when blacks got sick, where did they go to help?

SS: Well, back there in them days there it wasn't no help. The city—

*pause in recording*

SS: —they come around. You got some kind of disease, they carry you out there, put you out there.

HJ: Did you ever go to Clara Frye Hospital? You ever heard of that?

SS: Huh, heard of it, I know them.

HJ: You knew Clara Frye?

SS: I know Clara Frye and I know her husband. He had a—he used to run a barber shop down there on Franklin Street.

HJ: What type of a woman was Clara Frye?

SS: She was a nice big brown bright lady. She run the hospital there, Clara Frye.

HJ: Cause I heard that they said that she used to take people in her home and give medical help.

SS: Uh huh. Well, yeah, she was a kind of midwife, and she was about—and then she had a home up there on Lamont [Avenue]. And sometimes some of them White people would want to have a baby or something and they take them to her house. And she got to doing that and so after a while she enlarged the place and they give her—they call it the hospital. People went there.

HJ: Can you tell me some things, some building that were on Central during that time? That Central was—Central, you know back in the early thirties [1930s] or forties [1940s]? Was there a Central then? Central Avenue and what clubs were there?

SS: Central and Scott?

HJ: Uh huh.

SS: Well, right there, all that was the Little Savoy, that was the bar room. That was an the corner of Scott and Central. Right across in front of that was the Greek Stand. The Greek Stand sell sandwiches and sodas; it was kind of a restaurant. There was little eating joints and Odd Fellows Hall, which was on this side, right across the street from the Little

Savoy.

HJ: What kind of social life did y'all have when you were small? When you were a young boy?

SS: When I was a young boy we just fooled around and play around here. We didn't have no theaters, called the opera house. We used to go over there to that Tampa Theater. The University, they had a opera house. We would go over there and pay ten cents or fifteen cents and see different little shows, but they were miniature shows, it wasn't no picture. It was people in person. We would go over there every time a circus would come to town. Barnum and Bailey, and all them kind of things, they would put up right there where, right there on, where the depot was right there on Tampa, between Ashley and Tampa. They put up there, them big old tents. We go there, might go there and fool round there, and they get us to tote their drums or somethin' and give us a pass to go in and somethin' like that.

HJ: Did y'all have any parties or dances and things?

SS: Well, we had halls, called dance halls in them days. They didn't have no orchestra—they had big bands—and so sometimes, they take the drums and trumpet blower and use them upstairs in the club. That's the club on the corner of Central and Scott called the Royal Palms. That was upstairs over the Little Savoy. Fellow run that club, his name Rich Smith, in them days.

HJ: What was it playing, records?

SS: Yeah.

HJ: Was it playing records or—?

SS: No, they didn't play no records, they played them horns. The first little old show that was built for colored people right there on Central, between Scott and Cass. Called it the Anthem. People in (inaudible) would come down, so I would go in there.

I remember when I first come here—I tell you somethin' about when I first come here. When we first come here [there was] a colored fellow here. He had a—in 1896, he had a white wife. Her mother was white, she was white, and this fellow was dark as me. And he stayed here and he had a little girl about that high, and they (inaudible) always stayed around colored people. Stayed right around there on Spring Street.

And what I believe—that fellow disappeared overnight, you understand. But him and this white woman and her mother used to live together for years by their self. Ain't nobody bother them. He had a nice home, he had a horse and buggy—that was the horse and buggy days—bird dogs, and a race horse, and run the bar down there on Polk Street. It was between Franklin and Tampa. He owned the bar. And I think the crackers must have got to this woman and told her she had to get rid of that nigger. And ah—but he stayed

around there a long time. Every time she'd go downtown, he carry her. White and black, there go Ms. Whitfield. We would get out and watch her go on downtown. She'd go downtown to Maas Brothers [Department Store] or one of them stores.

HJ: Well, was there any places you wasn't allow to go? You wasn't allow to walk or stand in a certain section?

SS: No, you could walk. You could walk most anywhere. But you couldn't go in them white places to eat, go to a soda water fountain. They had soda water during those days—see, women didn't go in bar rooms. Most of them went to soda water fountains, soda water and ice cream and different thing like that. But Negroes, they couldn't go in white places on Central Avenue. They had places down there in the Scrub, down there on Central, different places.

HJ: You ever remember lynching anybody?

SS: (inaudible) them two Italians, that's all.

HJ: No blacks?

SS: I don't know no blacks they kidnapped around here. The others, they killed them, they hung them. I knowed them to hang people.

HJ: Blacks?

SS: Blacks and whites.

HJ: When did they hang any blacks?

SS: Just like ah—you commit a crime, kill somebody, or somethin' another like that. Instead of electrocuting you, they hung you.

HJ: What I'm talking about, they just didn't hang you for no reason? Was it just for being black?

SS: That's somthin' like lynching. But I ain't—all the Negroes I known them to kill, they shot them. Negro, he done raise sand, okay now. Ybor City use to be—that's the sportin' district.

HJ: The what?

SS: Ybor City was the sportin' district. All them big houses you find that there Elks Rest. That use to be two sportin' houses. (inaudible) You go in there, you see a woman, nothing but women in there. Men go there, buy liquor, buy most anything they want. But the whites, all around the Negro settlement, white women but no nigger men, no nigger men.

HJ: Did you associate with the black Cubans?

SS: Oh, yeah, they was all right. They send them in a black neighborhood.

HJ: Did they claim to be black?

SS: They black.

HJ: You know, mixed with us? Did they all think they were white or something?

SS: Well, when I first come here the colored and the white, all out here was Cubans. Cubans and blacks were always together. But as you come up, the crackers coming from different places—now Florida—coming from different places, they got in with them. They wouldn't let the Italians [or] the Cubans go to the white or no other schools, the Florida people didn't. And so after a while they started to going—some of the towns were so close, some of them had to borrow money from some of them Cubans and Italians.

HJ: Do you remember any riots? Black-white clashes, fights, mass fights?

SS: The biggest thing I ever known around in the sixties [1960s].

HJ: Never no earlier than the sixties [1960s]?

SS: No, no riots. Some Negro, he got a (inaudible) the killing of yellow woman he sees and then they run him down and they caught him. Brought him back here and hung him.

HJ: Do you remember who the first black deputy sheriff was in Tampa?

SS: First black deputy sheriff. In my time—that's what I'm talkin' about now—there was a Negro called Peter Brown. They claim that there had been some more before his time. But that was about first Negro that I known that had a position like a police.

HJ: When was he?

SS: Huh?

HJ: When was he around?

SS: He was around, I guess along through the early twenties [1920s]. Peter Brown. There's a Negro was rooming in his house. And the Negro, he worked for the streetcar company—they had streetcars then—laying tracks. And he knocked off the evening—he would go to work six [AM] and worked until about five [PM] and come back. Well, he was coming through that sportin' district out there in Ybor City, and one of them yellow women was standing up talking to one of them Cuban men out there. And he was the one told her good evening.

She said something, "Baby, you hear that nigger talking about good evening?" and he just looked around and seen the number of the house. He went an home, ate his supper, changed his clothes, got his pistol and come back out there and at that same house he saw a shadow passing the window, and he shot the shadow and shot that woman. That was that woman what called him that name. Killed her, and every night he'd go out and kill two or three more.

HJ: Really?

SS: Now this fellow, Peter Brown, he didn't know who was doing it. Peter Brown, he didn't know who was doing it. He go out and come in there every evening, look at the paper, see what they say, get a gun and go back out there and kill some more.

HJ: Who was this, Peter Brown?

SS: No. His name was—I done forgot, what's that nigger's name? So finally the government found out where he stayed and they carried him home to search his house. They searched his room and found some women's dresses where he stayed. But while they was looking, they had him handcuffed over there by that graveyard. And he fooled around there and that nigger fell out that window. He fell that window and he got away and they thought he was in that graveyard. They said, Well he can't go too far cause he's handcuffed. And so they watched that graveyard all night, and sent to Plant City to get them bloodhounds. The next morning they found them handcuffs down there on the railroad. The nigger was gone. The Negro was gone.

HJ: Did they ever find him?

SS: Yeah, this Peter Brown. They put Peter Brown—made Peter Brown detective, they called it. He would go out and look for that nigger. So they found him up there in Jacksonville, brought him back here and hung him. When I first come here, the fellow what runs all them Chevrolets, Fred Parris. That was a white fellow. He was, he had a bicycle shop, fixing tires for ten and fifteen cents. In 1904 he started fooling with those automobiles.

HJ: Okay, Mr. Swain, can you think of anything else you would like to share with us right now, cause we don't want to tire you out.

SS: No, I ain't got nothin' to do but sit home.

HJ: What schools did you go to in 1900?

SS: Just a little school round out here. The time I went, I think I got about to the third grade.

HJ: What was the name of it?

SS: Wasn't no name, just go to school. I went to school about three or four years. When [John H.] Drew first come here, he come here in about 1902.

HJ: Who was that?

SS: Drew Field. Out there by the airport. That man, that they first called that Drew Field, and I worked for him when he first come here 'bout 1902. (inaudible) The first job he had was right up there on the corner of Chestnut [Street] and the railroad. That big old yellow building there. He had a little old heifer calf and little pony. He hired me there for three dollars a week—no, a dollar fifty a week.

HJ: He was a white fellow?

SS: Uh huh, named Drew. All that place out there where that airport runs out there, they called that Drew Field. I used to drive a mule and a wagon from to Tarpon Springs. Loaded with liquor.

*end of interview*