

PAULINE D LAWLER, NOVEMBER 16, 1974, WITH AMY DIAMOND

AD: Jim, just before you go, you had mentioned this man you had wanted me to meet who had worked in Mexico. Do you know what his name was?

JL: His name was Dave SPencer.

AD: And where is he now?

JL: And all you can have is his telephone number, because he's living now in a house trailer on his sister-in-law's Property. And his telephone number is 645-1528.

AD: Does he live here in Ruskin?

JL: No, it's out in the country. It's 3 or 4 miles away from town.

AD: Have you talked to him yet?

JL: Yes, in the Past. When my recorder had to be repaired. I hadn't used it in 2 or 3 years and it needed going over. And I was going to do this, I was going to get his tape and then put that in the archives, and that's what I want to do with whatever he says. What he tells me would be different from what he'll tell you, because I'd ask different questions.

AD: OK, what I was thinking though, was that sometime next week, if you're free, we could drive out there and you could show me where it is. . .

JL: Well, I don't know. I was thinking we could get Dave to come in. . .the best place where you'd be sure to be without interruption, would be in the meeting room there at the library. It's no sound, deadened, the acoustics is very good for the close proximity. You wouldn't be interfered with in any way, interrupted. . . It wouldn't be necessary for me to be there. The only time I ever met Dave was the time he brought over a picture taken way way back, in fact, was that a graduating class? Well, anyway, it had everybody here in the community on the steps of one of the buildings.

AD: The other person that I was hoping to talk to was Mrs. Carrothers.

JL: Frank

FL: Mac spoke about talkin9 to Francis Carrothers, but he never did.

AD: No, uhuh. But I was hopin9 to. Do you think that would be a good idea?

JL: Oh, yes. . .She could tell a lot about her time, but the Pioneerin9 was over with by the time she got here. She came here in '28. We'd been here 20 years when Bill and Frank came.

FL: Well, she had an awfufl lot to do with the early Public school.

Ad: Right, and that's somethin9 that I'm very interested in. Do you know her phone number?

FL: Oh, yes. 645-1102. You can get her before 9 o'clock in the morning. She'll be Playin9 bridge with us this afternoon.

Ad: Aside from my questions, I'm just interested in anythin9 that you have to say, because nobody else has really talked to you very much.

FL: I was thinkin9 last night. The Methodist Church had our 50th anniversary of the foundin9 of the church. Well, I go to the Christian Scientists now, but I was one of the charter members. And my twin brother gave the main sPeech one Sunday, and that was the history of the, not the Methodist church, but the religious history of Ruskin from the early time, and he just took it up to when the Methodist church was or9anized and he sPent quite a lot of thought on it, and People came from everywhere to hear it, and it was Put on taPe. And I think it would be well if you could get a coPy of it.

AD: Do you know where I could get a coPy of it?

FL: Well, I think Paul is goin9 to have a coPy, and then the Methodist church has the taPe. But he dwelled, definitely, on just the religious, the tyPe of religion we had in Ruskin. He did a good job of Uncle G.M., that is, Mac's grandfather, and he brought out that we didn't have any church, we had a forum. And every tyPe of religion spoke in Ruskin at one time or another, except Catholicism, I think. But we had SPiritualists--of course, SPiritualism was just at its height and it was just goin9 out at that time. And

incarnation, Rosecrucianism, everything under the sun, and we had speakers. But he spent his time on that and I kept thinking, well is he ever going to get to the Methodist church? But he stopped, after it was organized, and all the charter members left except Paul and myself and his wife, Esther. And a cousin that doesn't live here, but her mind is gone, so she couldn't come back. but the four of us left, and that was all of the charter members. Now then, I have just been asked to write a history of the Christian Science Church. Now, this doesn't have much to do with the Christiana Science Church, but it does have with Mac's great uncle. (Goes to get copies of her Paper). Now, I have two, three good copies, but I've already disposed of them, but this first here, this is mine. That has corrections. Now this is going to be printed in the Ruskin Paper. We have our dedication 17 November, and it's going to be printed for that. The dedication of the Christian Science Church. So this is the history of the Christian Science Church in Ruskin by Pauline D. Lawler.

"Even before coming to Ruskin in 1908, I remember hearing my mother say, "I think it is terrible the way they are persecuting that woman." (Is this being taken down?) (206) meaning Mrs. Eddy (Mary Baker Eddy). After coming to Florida, Mrs. Eddy's name was frequently mentioned. A cousin, Abner Miller, (now that's Willard's oldest brother) came from Chicago to help with the legal work in the founding of Ruskin. He had had an instantaneous healing of a very severe eye problem. (Now I just barely touched on this, but he, at the time that he was wearing three different pairs of glasses, I don't know what about, and he was doing legal work, and he went to visit these friends who were Christian Scientists, and they were an older couple. Now this won't mean much to you, and it didn't mean a thing to me at that time. And he was invited for a Sunday dinner. And he got out there and he was having this trouble, and they told him he didn't need to put up with that. And he was healed instantaneously, and so he was a staunch Christian Scientist. And I

think they were students of Mrs. Eddy. Now that means an awful lot to Scientists, and to the older People. But I didn't put it in here because I wasn't that sure. But I'm sure they were students of Mrs. Eddy. Mrs. Eddy died in 1910. And she had gone to Chicago earlier than that, where a lot of her students were, and I'm sure they were two of them.) This was Mrs. Eddy was living. He had to take a lot of good-natured kidding from the family. (You can imagine that.) He married, and his wife became a Scientist. When the first WW came, they moved to New York. In the depths of the Depression, they moved back to Ruskin. This time they gathered a little group together, and we had meetings. In no way was this an organized group. When they returned. . . ." (But that's all there is about Abner in that. And you're not interested in Scientists, so.)

We built a Sunday school and a reading room on this Past year, and we had inspiration meetings. And Willard's sister Aurora was the most loved, and to all of us the most beautiful Person that you ever saw in your life. She was I guess my favorite cousin, but in writing an article here for the Sunday school, for the inspiration meeting, I was talking about Sunday school teachers--it's hard to find Sunday school teachers--and have said in there that teachers never know whether they are sowing any seed, their seed is blowing on good ground or poor ground, you know. And I wrote this:

"The following are examples of what Sunday school teachers all unknown to them. My mother, who was* loved her church, and above all, her Sunday school. She taught the beginning class for over 20 years or more. She taught the little ones "Jesus Loves Me", the Lord's Prayer, the 23rd Psalm, and the Golden Text. At the end of the Sunday school service, she would bring her little fellows in and have them sing "Jesus Loves Me" or repeat whatever they had learned that day. Mother's success was her great love for children. She

could, you could almost see it. And she never talked down to children. After mother died, many of these came to me and said that all they knew of the Bible was what Aunt Rose had taught them, and that their religious faith had been inspired by her. Fortunately, many had thanked her for her labor of love while she was still with us. *Who was Aunt Rose to everyone, (and now this is about Aurora, the next:) "The most beautiful tribute I have ever read to a Sunday school teacher is to a favorite cousin of mine. Unfortunately, she did not live to know about it. When our four families (Now this is definitely a thumbnail sketch), when our four families settled in Ruskin, there were no schools, no church, no Post office, no roads, only wilderness. Now of course the first thing they worked for was a school and church. An old commissary was cleaned up and turned into both a one-room school and a church. We were living in what had been an abandoned Prison camp. To get a school, we had to have 13 children. There were only four of us, so there that Olnton and Willard and Paul and I. So we had to get the others from among the natives. One family had four children. As I recall, they had to walk about four miles, and had never been to school. Our first teacher was this cousin of mine. The youngest of these four kids was not yet six at the time. Last fall he came back to Ruskin and looked up my brother. He became a prominent lawyer down in Georgia and Alabama and is a special attorney for the Railroad and Motor Regulations, even pleading his cases in Washington. (307) The following is an excerpt from a letter he wrote my brother after returning home: "Since talking to you and thinking back, lots of things have occurred to me that I had not thought of in many years. Of course some of the vivid memories cover the first school I had attended, and your adorable cousin, Miss Aurora Miller, whose charm was the like of which I had not seen previously, and her image still stands out as a beautiful angelic type whose words knew no scorn, and for a young girl, as she was, (she was only about 19--JL) she must have been born with it. A Sunday school was started, and although she did not

regularly teach my class, I remember she did teach it once about the beginning, and she may have been reading from a Sunday school leaflet, but she said, God is love. I had not even been to church nor had I ever been taught about God, but she went on to describe Jesus and his teachings, and my whole being was completely absorbed in her descriptive language. I am certain my religious faith was kindled by her. I saw after I was a teenager, and she always remembered me and came close and spoke to me, calling my name and letting me know she remembered I had been one of her pupils at that school. I am sure God has had a hand in your success, as he has had in mine."

AD: That's beautiful. Is he still alive? (Yeah--PL) Gee, I wonder if I could write him a letter. So you know where he is? (My brother does--PL) I have to ask Mr. Dickman for the address.

PL: Paul got another letter from him just a few weeks ago. I went into the office and he handed it to me, and he was asking Paul to write a history, to write down his memories of Ruskin.

AD: It's so nice to know that there are people who are beginning to get interested in what was going on here, and I would really like to talk with him.

PL: He got his high school education by correspondence. He got it from Tampa, and he would mail his letters from Wimauma, and he got his high school education. How he got his lawyer's degree I wouldn't know.

AD: He must have had a lot of perseverance.

PL: He certainly did.

AD: Would it be possible to stop by the office, does he still work?

PL: No, Paul has had a physical difficulty, I don't know if he's home now or not, but he's here in Ruskin. I'm sure he would help you. But this boy got his education that way, and then the last letter, . . . he said that in the winter time he tracked when the skins were good, and he got coon and he mailed, he sold them to a fur company. And he collected forty-two dollars,

and he took this money to Plant City and deposited it in a bank there. Then he bought himself a good suit. And when he came back home, his friends spurned him because he had good clothes and they didn't have any. they had. . they made him feel like he was putting on airs, and then to continue this, Esther's father had a little store right across the overpass. The road has gone through it, but it was right in that, just over the overpass down there. And he had this little country store, and the Post mistress traded there. I guess for a while it was the only store in Ruskin. He told this in the letter, that he trapped and sold skins another year, and he got some more money and put it in a bank and he got the Post mistress, I think her name was Mrs. Barber, to help him make out a deposit to mail it to the bank, cause he didn't know how to do it. And she helped him do it and had mailed the letter to him. So he went to Mr. Crawley's store and I don't know what he wanted, but he had a 15 dollar check, and he wanted to cash it. Mr. Crawley put down whatever he was doing and he looked at it and said, "boy, nobody got \$15 around here." And he said yes he did, he had \$15, he had money in the bank. And Mrs. Barber happened to be in the store and she overheard the conversation, and she went up to Mr. Crawley and said, "Mr. Crawley, he does have money in the bank, I helped him make out the deposit."

AD: He must be fascinating. I would love to talk with him. It would be worth the trip up to Atlanta. That's great. I love it when you hear those stories about what was going on. It makes it so much more real to me. I've really come to feel like I've always been here, just from reading all the old papers. It's been so much fun. I didn't know Mac, so he's not really influencing my doing this. What happened was, I was interested in communities, and somebody mentioned to me, well, did you know there was one right nearby? and I said no, where is there one near Sarasota? Well do you know where Ruskin is? Oh, where the tomatoes come from. Yes, but did you know how it started. I said, no, of course not, and they gave me this very brief

sketch. . .

PL: Well, I suggest that you get a copy of Paul's speech. (430)

AD: Where is the Methodist church? Because maybe I could just stop by there.

PL: You go right up there on 4th, and you go down 2 blocks and turn left and there's this church complex, you can't miss it. . . It's just one block off Shell Point Road.

AD: My particular interest in Ruskin, one of the reasons I wanted to be here and speak with you, was that I got interested in what was going on with the children, whether their childhood was any different than either the people who were here, like the Walker family, now he sounds like he was very unusual, coming from..

PL: Well, that Walker family were. . What happened in Florida, I don't know where the natives, how they were down here, but they'd always been here. I don't know how they got here. But the natives were unschooled, and particularly girls. And during the Civil War and the various and sundry things that happened after the Civil War, a lot of men migrated to Florida that were really political refugees or criminals. Now, they could be a combination of both. The nick-name for Florida is fly-up-the-creek, it's not crackers at all. It's fly-up-the-creek, because these political refugees and criminals would follow a creek--there's always water and fish, and they would make their home up these creeks. And when we came here even, the natives never had a strip of grass in their yards. It was all sand and the houses weren't much. They would have a stoop entrance. And at night, they would go out and take a rake, and rake that sand around the house, and in the morning they'd go out and see if there were any tracks around there, see if they were spying, and if they were, why they moved on. That was their way of seeing whether there was anybody looking for them, that persisted for years and years, that the natives, some of them may have forgotten why they did it, but that was why, and the political repercussions. But these men would come down

here, and then they would marry these native girls that had no education at all. The men would be the ones that had the education. And this Walker family, the man had worked as a bookkeeper, but he came out here in the woods, he got joined up with some cracker men, and he was one of them that resented some northern people coming down. In their mind, they weren't doing wrong, but the Dickmans and Millers had bought this land, but these people had just gone out in the woods and sawed firewood, lighter wood for fireplaces, sawed down trees and wrapped them to a sawmill, and they thought that was their divine right. And so when the Dickmans came, we didn't feel, our people didn't feel that that was right for them to do that. The Dickmans even sold cordwood and firewood and fence poles, and they had a sawmill, but he was one of them that stole our timber and so forth.

AD: It's interesting that since his father was against the northerners coming down, that Eddy Walker was even allowed to go to school, and then he really

PL: I am too (surprised). There were two older girls and they were so bashful they wouldn't speak. And at that time they wore a sunbonnet, an old-fashioned sunbonnet, you know, with ruffles round the back to keep the sun off your back, and they had peeked out from underneath their sunbonnets like this, and Eddy said, that his oldest brother, he said he didn't have any ambition, he was living over in Plant City, he was just an ordinary cracker. Eddy was just one of those that happened to be different.

AD: It's really lucky for him that there was someone here to help him. Did you go to the college?

PL: Yes. Yes, we graduated.

AD: Were you in the same class, the class just before the war.

PL: I was in the same class with Willard and Paul.

AD: The idea that if your parents were very involved in a college, in a community like this, if you felt compelled to continue it. Did you ever want to continue the college or get it started again perhaps?

PL: I wasn't old enough to want to continue it. And the Miller children that could teach, now Aurora taught and Georgeanna taught music, but they had to leave Ruskin when the War came to make a living, because they just couldn't survive down here with their families. And Uncle G.M. died just as the War was over so that the college. . . None of the Miller children came back.

AD: sometimes I wonder since I started reading this, what if would have been like if the war hadn't come, or if there had been a lot of money so that there would have been things for the People to make from.

PL: Well, I have said this. Uncle G.M. was at least 50 years ahead of his time. He would have been his glory with all these scholarships and foundations that they have nowadays. that would have been right up his alley. But at that time students didn't get aid like they do now. You worked your way, and that was what his object was that they could work their way through college. They would work a half a day, and go to school a half a day.

AD: Do you remember what, was your father and your mother, what their position was in the family, were they only children, were they the oldest, the youngest, the middle?

PL: My father was in the middle of nine.

AD: I'm an only child, but I always envy such large families.

PL: And my mother was the 15th child.

AF: Huh?!

PL: 16th. She was a twin. Paul and I never knew any of our grandparents, because mother was 29 when she married. this is interesting: Her father, and dad's grandfather were both born the same year, 1810. Mother's father was 61 when mother was born. And he had been a liaison officer in Pennsylvania between the white settlers and the Indians. that's how far back mother went. My mother's life spanned the candle age to the electric age. The three generations, my grandfather (mother's father), and Paul and myself, have spanned the beginning of the U.S. almost like WWII is to a kid born now. (564)

AD: YOU know, when I listen to you talk, and I realize that Pretty soon it's going to be the 200th anniversary, it just seems like its so important to get at these stories and have them Put on taPe and written out so People know what goes on. I don't think Floridians know what was really going here in Florida.

PL: After Paul gave me that letter about the Walker boy. He kept coming down here to see his mother, because she died. And he would look UP Mrs. Barnes, and she's a sweet, she's a native girl, and she'e always been a sweet Person. so Francis Carrothers and I took the letter out and read it to her, and she got to reminiscin9 about the early times down in. .You oughta go see her. Down in Ellenton. And how her father, she was a Gillette, and the community of Gillette was named after their family. We just thoroughly enjoyed that afternoon, and she was tellin9 in the early days down there, and how her father so insisted that he wanted his family to have education, that he hired a school teacher that moved in and lived with them, and he turned his farm into a school house.

AD: Where does Mrs. Barnes live?

PL: She lives just two doors beyond Lewer's Funeral Parlors which is just UP beyond the Ruskin school. You turn there at the light and go, and she's on the left-hand side. She's gettin9 kind of frail, so if you want to talk to her you'll have to do it as soon as you can. YOU tell her that I told her to tell about the early days of her school. She told, now I've for9otten who it was, whether it was an uncle or a brother or who, but this PersPn that she told about was too young to go to the civil war, but he wasn't too old to drive the cattle that the Army lived on. He drove the livestock, and he had no education. So, when he came back, the little kids made fun of him because he couldn't read and write, and you want to get her to tell you that story. He went to school then, and in about six months he was teachin9 those same kids.

AD: Good for him. Was everybody that came down from the north, were they all involved in the colle9e? no?

PL: No, we had a lot of drifters, we had a lot of ne'er-do-wells, we had a lot that thought they were going to get something for nothing. And we had some kooks. We had 'em all. No, there were a lot of them that had nothing to do with the college, but most of them came to what we called the Literary Society. The college had a Literary Society and the whole community would come to that Practically, because. .

AD: could you talk about the Literary Society?

PL: We had debates. Well, being among the younger ones, the younger ones didn't have debates, but we had readings, and Aurora was perfectly marvelous, she gave these beautiful readings, she was an actress, really, was what she was. That was her department, was Dramatics. We had the best music in the world. Aurora married a musician Ray G. Edwards, whose father was in the community of Ruskin in Ruskin, TENN. and Ray G. was an accomplished concert violinist. And then we had another, Hubert Buckley, an Englishman that was a professional violinist, and between those two men, and then we had other musicians, but those two were the outstanding professionals. Then we had some beautiful talent in voice that came to Ruskin. So, our Literary Society really had some wonderful talent and the whole community came to that.

AD: When you say the whole community, do you mean all the people from the north, or do you also mean the people who were here before you came?

PL: Well, there wasn't a whole lot of "all the people", you see, but the whole community was invited, were welcome, and they practically came. And the community was involved in our basketball and baseball. I mean, it was absolutely a community, I mean it was like a family, everybody got together whether they were crooks or whatever they were, they enjoyed these things. But a lot of them didn't go to school. the Literary Society helped train us kids for the part that we have taken later. Now, I have been sponsor of the Junior Women's Club, and I was also a Scout leader, and a 4-H leader a long time ago. They don't have assemblies in school anymore. They used to have

assemblies where the children would do something, but they don't have that anymore. tr.--yes, they do So, I told these 4-H and these Scouts, this is where you're learning how to take your Place in society. How to conduct a meeting, how to get up and make a motion, how to, and another thing, I insisted on all, if you get up and say something and you can't be heard, you might as well not have said it. YOU've wasted your time and their time. So when you say something, make yourself heard. And then when I sPonsored Junior Women's Club and I told them, this is your training to take your Place in society, and you've got to learn how to conduct a meeting, you've got to know how to make a motion, you've got to know how to express yourself. If you don't, you're just a non-entity, and most of those girls went on into the PTA and either became Presidents or they held the big jobs in the PTA because they got their training. And to me, a Literary Society and an assembly are, it's just too bad if you don't have them.

AD: I really like that idea of a literary society and a community getting out together. I think that really influences people. It gives them a lot of good feeling. I know, the town I came from, I knew the people who lived next to me and that was it, nobody else, because there was nothing they did as a town, as a community. It was just a small place. There should be no reason why there shouldn't be meetings or. . .

PL: Well, you should know everybody.

AD: Did you feel like there was any snobbery between the intellectual people in the community, the ones who went to the college and the ones who didn't?

PL: No, there wasn't snobbishness.

AD: You hesitated. Was there something?

PL: Well, there was. . .Willard had one sister that would have nothing to do with the natives. I mean, she did feel she was superior, and let's say that we were superior in the fact that we had an education. But my mother and Aurora could make those natives feel just as at home, as though they were just

as on an equal footing. NO, there was no snobbery.

AD: I wish I could have met Aurora. She just sounds like an incredible woman. What was your mother's name?

FL: She was incredible. . . She was Aunt Rose to everybody. I had an aunt who couldn't enter, and Georgeanna couldn't enter, but they just, you know, they just didn't enter into it.

AD: I was reading through the minutes of the Commongood Society, and it said that the meetings were opened up with the Ruskin Song.

FL: It's the way we have in Ruskin, it's the way we have in Ruskin. It's the way we have in Ruskin, and everybody. . . (To the tune of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow")

AD: Don't stop!

FL: No, Uncle G. M. and the Miller family were Poetical and they made up their own songs as they wanted to, and Uncle G.M.. and I still to this day, when I sing the Battle Hymn of the Republic, how are the last words?

AD: The truth keeps marching on?

FL: The truth keeps marching on, and something, we'll die to make men free? Uncle G.M. changed that to live to make men free. And so, when I sing it, I still sing it "and live to make men free."

AD: Were there a lot of songs like that, like the one you started to sing?

FL: No, there weren't a lot of them, but (sings it again, can't remember last line) Willard will know it.

AD: What was the Position of women in the Ruskin community?

FL: Equal with men. (714 End of Side One)

BEGIN SIDE TWO

FL: She was out in Oregon. The Millers were out there at the time. She was out there, and she was to lecture and she menstruated. And women in those

days had cramps, you know, and they really were very ill when they menstruated. Aunt Addy told this story. And she had to lecture that night and she started to menstruate, and she got down on her knees beside the bed, and she Prayed to God, that if she had do this work, if it was her job to do this temperance work, she was a temperance woman, that she had a right to do it with freedom, and she never expected to have a family, and she did not need that menstruation Period, and she, and it was not right that she should suffer for it, and she never menstruated again. Now that's Christian Scientist, tr. I assume she's discussin9 Mary Baker Eddy

AD: I was readin9 through the minutes. somewhere in the minutes it said that the land in Ruskin was only to be sold to whites. Was that a clause in there? Was that one of the rules of the community?

PL: that was one of the rules, and alcohol and cigarettes were not to be sold, and land was not to be sosld to criminals who had a record. Yes, that was in there. And in our cemetary, in the original by-laws, a negro wasn't to be buried in the cemetary. Now I don't know how come Uncle G.M. tool that was about negroes, because we had JaPanese and we felt that when the war came that at least one of them was a sPy really, but in our original cemetary rules, which the land was given by the Millers and the Dickmans, why no negroes were to be buried in there, and no criminals. So when the civil rights thing came along, the director said, we'd better take that out of there because if the negroes happen to know that's in there, they might make an issue of it. So, we took it out. but as far as I know, we haven't had any negroes buried, but we took it out.

AD: Can you tell me anythin9 about a man named Hawk?

PL: Oh, yes. but Paul can tell you a lot more about him than I can. He's got, Hawk was one of the crooks. He really was a crook. aBut you can get that information from Paul because he followed it through. But if it hadn't been for my father, he would have taken over the land. Dad just refused to sign.

He had pulled the wool over Uncle G.M.'s eyes, but Dad wouldn't sign.

AD: Sounds like your Dad had a lot more of the common sense to keep the community going. Seems like G.M. had a lot of ideas

PL: Oh, he was very idealistic. He believed the best of everybody. Well, Dad did, too, but my Dad had gone to a business college. Now whether he had taken anything about law or not, I don't know, but he could see through Hawk, and he just wouldn't sign.

AD: The community really needs somebody who can see these sorts of things. That was about all of my questions. I've really enjoyed listening, though. This is really fun.

PL: do you want to talk to Jimmy?

AD: I don't know if he wants to.

PL: He loves to talk. He's gotten out of my way because he knows he'd but in.

AD: What would you think about the idea of mentioning to Mrs. Carrothers that I would like to talk to her tomorrow, and I could give her a call tomorrow morning?

PL: She just might be home now. She has quite a little routine. She leaves in the morning and then she goes home, and then she goes back and eats down at the Coffee Cup. right now, she might be home. I'll call her. (126)

END OF SIDE TWO, END OF TAPE