



Jim Crow at the Beach:

An Oral and Archival History of the Segregated Past at Homestead Bayfront Park.



ON THE COVER

Biscayne National Park's Visitor Center harbor, former site of the "Black Beach" at the once-segregated Homestead Bayfront Park.

Photo by Biscayne National Park

**Jim Crow at the Beach: An Oral and Archival History
of the Segregated Past at Homestead Bayfront Park.
BISC Acc. 413.**

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Contents

Figures..... iii

Acknowledgements..... iii

Introduction..... 1

At the Swimming Hole 6

Just Another Day at Work..... 10

Beyond Black and White 11

Integration..... 11

Conclusions..... 12

Appendix 1, Homestead Bayfront Beach Timeline in News and Images..... 13

Appendix 2, Oral History Transcriptions..... 23

 Interviewee: Julius Keaton, employee at Biscayne National Park and former
 Homestead Bayfront Beach attendee..... 23

 Interviewee: Ozell Williams, former lifeguard at Homestead Bayfront Beach
 North..... 33

 Interviewee: Boyd Valentine, employee at Biscayne National Park..... 40

 Interviewee: Robert McKnight, Miami Artist..... 54

 Interviewee: Willie Synagogue, employee at Everglades National Park 64

 Interviewee: Josiel Morera, Current Director at the Homestead Bayfront Park,
 Miami-Dade Parks and Rec 67

Appendix 3, Current Views with Historic Descriptions..... 69

Bibliography 76

List of Archival Sources 81

Figures

Figure 1. Homestead Bayfront Park pamphlet.....	3
Figure 2. The black road (May 1960).	4
Figure 3. Entrance to Homestead Bayfront Park (April 1962).	5
Figure 4. The black road (2011).	5
Figure 5. Cleaning the lagoon (April 1962).....	7
Figure 6. Barbeque Pit at Homestead Bayfront Park (date unknown).....	7
Figure 7. Homestead Bayfront Beach South swing set August 4, 1957.....	8
Figure 8. Swimming instruction at the black beach, April 1961..	8

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Introduction

This project has described and examined the events at Homestead Bayfront Park / Beach, a public park and beach in Homestead, Florida which, during the segregation of the 1950s and 1960s, became two racially divided but adjacent beaches. The grounds of the former Homestead Bayfront Beach North, the separate beach developed in the mid-1950s to separate people of color from white beach-goers, is today part of Biscayne National Park and the site of the park's visitor center and headquarters.

Primary resources used in the preparation of this report were predominately oral history interviews collected by the author in 2011 and 2012 (transcripts provided in Appendix 2). Research also included archival and library studies in local Homestead and Miami-Dade County repositories. Throughout the document, excerpts from the oral history interviews, period photographs, and newspaper clippings are provided as examples that illustrate the main themes and topics. The report is laid out in a series of themes. First, the primary details about the project and the beach in general are presented in "A Period in Time." Then, the separate entrance roads that show the separation of the races even before their arrival at the beach are examined in "The Long Road to Segregation." "At the Swimming Hole" introduces the details and differences between Homestead Bayfront Beach North and South. "Just Another Day at Work" looks at the perspective of a black former employee at Homestead Bayfront Beach. "Beyond Black and White" confronts the racial topics that affect more than just the white and black beachgoers. "Integration" explores the effect that the Civil Rights Act had on the beach and its patrons. And lastly, conclusions and final thoughts about the project and recommendations for future work are presented.

A Period in Time

Biscayne National Monument was established in 1968. Shortly thereafter, the National Park Service obtained former Dade County property for the construction of the new monument's headquarters and visitor center. The land provided by the county was, and is, immediately north of Homestead Bayfront Park, and a few short years prior to the transfer had been known as the segregated Homestead Bayfront Beach North. Until the effort resulting in this document, Biscayne National Park had little information on this part of the park's history, despite the fact that the majority of the park's visitor interactions occur directly upon property that was once the heart of the segregated beach. The opportunity to interpret this history to park visitors, if it could be captured before being lost to time, was the main reason for the initiation of this project. Despite the fact that the time period is relatively recent, most activities at the segregated beach did not find themselves documented into any written records. There are even known members of the present Homestead community (including several Biscayne National Park staffers) that have had personal experience with the beach. It was decided that a collection of oral histories would be the best source of information about the beach. The author was responsible for gathering personal experience from the former beachgoers in the form of audio and video recordings of oral history interviews and also for finding and compiling references from other historic and archival documents. Homestead Bayfront Beach North was a well-known segregated beach in the area during its years of operation, but there is little is presently known about it. Its history is somewhat eclipsed by those of the well documented South Florida segregated beaches at Virginia Key Beach and Daytona Beach. What was Homestead Bayfront Beach like, who went there, and what happened to it? These questions are explored thanks to the oral histories shared by some former beachgoers who visited the beach during that time.

Found on the coast of Dade County (now Miami-Dade County) in south Florida, about twenty-minutes east of the city of Homestead, Homestead Bayfront Park (Figure 1) was initially dedicated January 28th, 1939. However, development of the beach was halted during World War II, and the land was leased to the United States Government until 1947. After the war, development resumed and the county constructed restrooms, a refreshment pavilion, a two-story residence building, a maintenance shed and a toolshed. Then the atoll shaped beach was constructed along with an enlarged marina, parking area, and an entrance road. It was dedicated once again on February 2nd, 1951.

During the Jim Crow Era of "separate, but equal," Dade County segregated the park by constructing an entirely separate but smaller atoll beach, facilities, and even its own lengthy entrance road; immediately north of the existing Homestead Bayfront Park. "Homestead Bayfront Park North" (as it was referred to by parks staff and in county Parks and Recreation documents) or the "Black Beach" as it was known to the public was established for "colored" people during the 1950s and 1960s. It went into disuse after the Civil Rights Act in 1964 legislated integration throughout the United States. Eventually, the abandoned facilities at the closed beach became the first Biscayne National Park offices, headquarters and visitor contact station. Those buildings have long since been replaced and the landscape significantly modified. Now the only physical remains of the beach are several miles of the abandoned entrance road and something of the original shape of the atoll beach enclosure, ghosted in the jetty that circles the park's boat harbor.

Homestead Bayfront Park



Homestead Bayfront Park plays an important part in the lives of the many residents of one of the most important sections of South Florida, the Redland agricultural district.

This park is the water gateway to the fish-teeming waters of the Florida Keys area. From its fine marina sail the boats of sport fishermen, the outboard motored craft of vacationing mariners and the skiffs of those who seek fun with rod and reel.

A South Seas-type atoll provides safe swimming and wading. Coconut palms fringe this atoll, the water of which is kept clear and cool by tidal action. Use of dressing rooms as well as automobile parking is free. Picnic tables, grills and shelters are near the beach. For the little ones there is a playground. The refectory has refreshments and beach supplies for sale.

On the north side of the canal, which passes through the park, is an exclusive park for Negroes with an atoll pool, rest rooms and parking space. Additional facilities to match those on the south side of the canal will be installed on land set aside for this use.

Near the Keys



Figure 1. Homestead Bayfront Park pamphlet. Courtesy of History Miami Museum (date unknown).

The Long Road to Segregation

The beaches were kept isolated by two different roads that separated at 162nd St and ran parallel to each other separated by the C-103 (aka Mowry) canal. The black road was unpaved and provided a rough ride for its drivers while the road to the white beach was paved and less trouble on traveling vehicles (Figure 2). In many instances, a car full of black people headed to their side of the beach could see a car with white people riding on the paved road across the canal to the white side of the beach (Figure 3). The black road is the only existing feature of Homestead Bayfront Beach north still existing on the modern landscape (Figure 4).

...coming out here, I remember coming out here the...I remember the roads they were more like the 1st bridge up there, when you come in where the blinking lights are. That was the last chance you had to get on this to get on this side, you know to go to the so called black beach...I remember a sign said "colored beach" at one time and the other side of the road, I never experienced that until they did integrate but we used to come down the road with one area, it turns into more like a rocky road. Boyd Valentine (2012).

...we would find a way to get a way down to Homestead because the beach I mean it was off beaten path. You go down...the roads basically follow the canal down, up to the base and because it was it was isolated you know... Robert McKnight (2012).

The white road was patrolled by the police to make sure the south side of the beach stayed restricted to the white population. Non-white families (black, Hispanic, or otherwise) would be stopped, given a ticket or warning, and turned around to be rerouted to the other road.



Figure 2. The black road (May1960). Photo courtesy of History Miami; image 1991-050-8063.

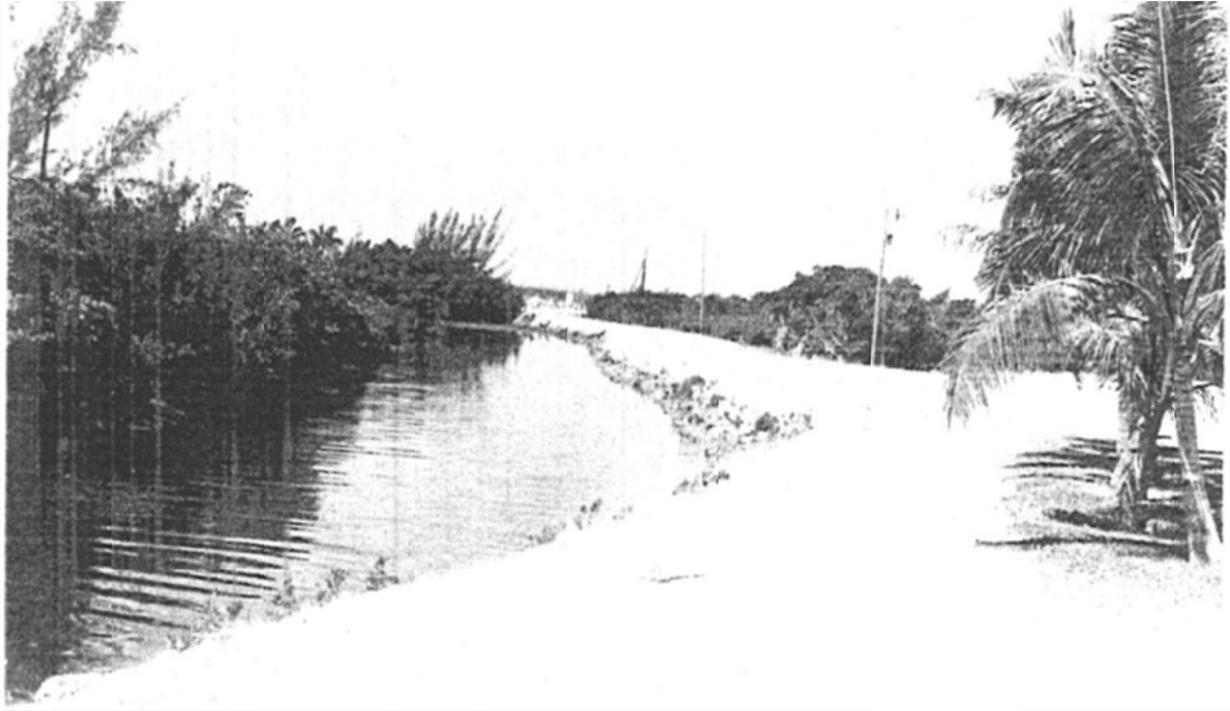


Figure 3. Entrance to Homestead Bayfront Park (April 1962). Photo courtesy of History Miami; image 1991-050-8071.



Figure 4. The black road (foreground and left of the canal) is currently used as an unmaintained canal service road while the white road is used today for all traffic entering Biscayne National Park or Homestead Bayfront Park (SW 328th St, or Lucy Road); the two roads remain separated by the C-103 Canal. Photo by author (2012).

At the Swimming Hole

While both beaches were man-made lagoon-style atoll beaches (Figure 5) maintained under the jurisdiction of the Dade County Parks and Recreation Department, aesthetic differences and different recreational amenities at the two beaches somewhat stretched the definition of “separate but equal”. The amenities for Homestead Bayfront Beach South included: free parking, changing rooms, showers, a refreshment stand, a volleyball net, a swing set, and lifeguards on duty from 8 am to sundown (Figure 6 & 7). This beach was for white beachgoers and their families only.

On the other side, Homestead Bayfront Beach North for colored people was opened 4 years later on November 13, 1955. There were no changing rooms, a few picnic tables, and only one shower. The descriptions of the north beach include comments like “left to nature” and “not maintained very well.” One beachgoer stated that thinking of the beach, he remembered:

... a lot of seaweed in some area...and we got into the water the rocks and you didn't notice them right then but they were you know you really had to get out so far the rocks got a little sharper...and I remember fish being in the water, occasionally a jellyfish something like that. Occasionally I remember seeing a jellyfish out there and uh we used to we were so; we were actually comfortable out here. You know you come to the beach and everything, you have a little picnic. Boyd Valentine (December 2011).

I remember the beach it was basically a small hole, it was a hole in the away from the bay...Matheson Hammock was the same way because of the to get to deep water I mean water above your to your waist you had to go to into the bay you had to walk out a couple miles and then to get even in high tide you have to walk so far out and you had to catch steppin on the creatures especially with the little spikes...the urchins, sea urchins and stuff. So you had basically a swimming pool. The side and that was the swimming hole. Robert McKnight (2012).

Starting in 1961, the newspapers announced swimming classes offered at both the North and South sides of Homestead Bayfront Beach. Children were bussed from surrounding towns including Richmond Heights, Perrine, and Goulds to take part in the free lessons (Figure 8).



Figure 5. Cleaning the lagoon (April 1962). Photo courtesy of History Miami; image 1991-050-7962.



Figure 6. Barbeque Pit at Homestead Bayfront Park (date unknown).



Figure 7. Homestead Bayfront Beach South swing set August 4, 1957.



Figure 8. Swimming instruction at the black beach, April 1961. Picture courtesy of History Miami Museum (1961) image 1991-050-8065.

Unlike the south side of the beach, the north side did not have volleyball nets or swings. However the children on the north side provided their own type of entertainment. One beachgoer remembers on his seventh birthday a carousel; presumably in the concession stand that cooked corn dogs and sausage dogs. A slab of concrete was labeled “the dance floor” and had a jukebox with one speaker set on a pole that played a radio station when songs were not requested. The jukebox was under the control of the workers in the concession stand, but they would play songs when requested by the visitors as well.

We had a big round circle, okay, and the jukebox used to be right in the middle but on the edge and back then it was a nickel. Nickel used to play one song, so on a Saturday you had to have a couple nickels in your pocket to listen, but you had to have somebody to help you out there to put the nickel in and put the numbers in and all this stuff. Julius Keaton (December 2011).

...a little round circle, cement circle and they had a little juke box. ‘Course the jukebox was in the concession’s place, but they could punch the little records outside. Ozell Williams (2012).

Going to the beach was usually a group activity. These groups included churches, families, and even groups of neighbors and community members. The children were watched by all of the adults not just their parents and especially by the elders who were well respected. The children in the community would gather and play games together such as:

...we play tag you it...underwater. We used to like Lloyd Bridges...we used to watch it on TV. We figure we’d be like Lloyd Bridges and all that stuff. And we can only go so far, that was our favorite program, especially on Saturday. Sea Hunt. When we come out here, we thought we was Lloyd Bridges. We wouldn’t have all the necessary equipment he would have, but with our imagination we just had a great time... He had a truck and he always throw his kid’s birthday party and then we always came on the beach. And we load on the back of that truck...and when I say load, we load that truck up! Come out here and Ms. Margery would have the food, the music be playin, and aw, man, everybody just have a good time. Julius Keaton (December 2011).

The teenagers would get together in groups to play football, or baseball; sometimes during the hours of the days that they should have been in school. Instead of going to the more populated beaches such as Virginia Key, they would come to the “country” to stay out of trouble.

Just Another Day at Work

Homestead Bayfront Beach North was not only a site of recreation, but also one of employment. Beachgoers were not the only people segregated onto separate beaches, the Dade County staff members who worked at the two adjacent beaches were segregated as well. Lifeguards and concession staff at Homestead Bayfront Beach North were all black, and their counterparts to the south were white. One interview was completed with a black former lifeguard at the beach (who actually worked at both sides, first exclusively at the north beach and following integration he moved to the south side), providing a glimpse of the work routines, rules, and relationships between those of different races that had to work together.

On daily work activities:

We would get here, check the area, make sure that the area was clean. The concession attendant, not the concession attendants, the park attendants would clean the bathrooms and we would make sure there was no glass on the beach. People would start coming around 9:30 (am) we would stay here until 5 o'clock which was close. We had a concession stand where we could buy hot dogs, sodas. Ozell Williams (2011).

On moving to the south side after integration:

Well, when they closed this one down, then I went over there, I stayed there until I went someplace else. No, I had no problem with anybody. When I told them they had to do something they did it. Ozell Williams (2011).

One quote that was repeated during this interview in regard to the possible racism is “Everyone had common sense.” This meant that while there may have been problems the majority of the workers were more focused on performing their jobs. There can be a sort of camaraderie that develops between co-workers since they are on a common side, a distinguished group that is working toward one goal.

While all interviews suggest that there were no problems or issues with regard to race between staff at the opposite beaches, one has to question the possible underlying racism that could be present in everyday interaction or lack of interaction and even in the rules for the employees in the workplace.

Beyond Black and White

In topics of segregation, any mention of other races is usually marginalized. However, segregation affected more than just the black population in south Miami Dade County. The agricultural background of this area illuminates the presence of a Latino history as well. While there are only a few accounts of the Latino population they were a part of the history of the beach. Typically they had to share the North side of the beach with the blacks. One question that may arise is whether all of the visitors on the white side were in fact “white.” There are people that may “pass” for white but who were in fact either black or Latino. More interviews would possibly shed light on this possibility and identify the Latino experience during Segregation.

Integration

In 1964 the Civil Rights Act was passed and segregation was declared illegal in the United States. When laws change the status quo, usually social change takes time to come about. According to the interviewees, at Homestead Bayfront Park this change occurred quickly...not because this small country beach was particularly progressive, but because the north side simply closed. Some said it was due to a lack of funds from the county, but there was not much certainty. So once the Civil Rights Act had passed and the north side closed, people of different races went to the south side of Homestead Bayfront Beach together, or they went somewhere else entirely.

Once there was access to the south side, the difference between the two beaches was noticed immediately by those previously confined to the North side.

I could've sworn that water seems cleaner. I think it might have seemed cleaner because of the, uh, sea growth on the bottom. Out here like I say there was sea weeds in there and there were some over there too but not like here and we had more. The sand looks better... Boyd Valentine (2012).

There were no reported altercations or problems reported by the interviewees. The beach was where people came to relax in most accounts, and most recollections of the beach were positive ones. Apparently that feeling remained after integration as the atmosphere was not as antagonistic as many others newly integrated places, including other places in Dade County where race riots were not entirely uncommon.

It was like...it was different altogether. That we you integrated, the 1st time you integrated. You got little black kids playing with little white kids and all that you know. On the shore line, it was very fun. Julius Keaton (2011)

It was all, yeah—It was always welcoming, and it would be--yeah like I say it was never there was I never felt you know that it was...I'm from Richmond heights I gotta hang with people from Richmond Heights. Robert McKnight (2012).

Or perhaps there was another reason for the ease in which the integration was taken on this particular beach?

You know and it wasn't it wasn't any kind of real violent, violent riots down there, but it was just like you know people just you know didn't get along. You know and they didn't know that there were certain things they didn't like, you didn't like, they didn't like...well as far as on the beach that little beach, you did you just didn't really pay attention that there was an area where the whites were, but what I remember is they always had their boat. (laughs) You know we had to move the water area and plus because down there there's the island, Elliot Key, and they would take the boats and go to Elliot Key. We couldn't go to Elliot Key. We didn't have boats so we didn't take a boat anywhere. We just swim, in that little tidal basin. Robert McKnight (2012).

It seems possible that integration of Homestead Bayfront Park happened peacefully only because of the wealth of recreational options and other beaches available to the white population. Perhaps integration only forced those who did not want to mix to visit other areas for their recreational activities.

Conclusions

The history of this particular beach was sadly undocumented until recently. While this project is the result of a small number of interviews with former beachgoers it is the start of hopefully more in-depth gathering of information on historical occurrences. Future studies should include more interviews from people of varying racial and ethnic backgrounds to develop a better picture of the beach in the past, for example Asians and Latinos who experienced the area. Homestead Bayfront Beach is part of a history of segregation in the United States and illustrates how American people of all races interacted. This account can provide us with more of a lesson on how discrimination played out, and may continue to affect every aspect of life beyond the political declarations.

Appendix 1, Homestead Bayfront Beach Timeline in News and Images

Large Crowd Sees Park Dedication

A holiday throng of approximately 6,000 Dade County residents flocked to the colorful dedication ceremonies of the 1,200 acre Homestead Bayfront Park Sunday afternoon. Highlighting the program was the unveiling of a plaque honoring James Sottile, Sr. who donated the high tract of land which made the creation of the Park possible.

Preceding the unveiling of the plaque, County Commissioner L. D. MacVicar spoke of plans being made for the future development of the Park. He revealed the great need for such playgrounds now that the Country is on a virtual war-time footing, and stressed the importance of Parks in helping people to relax from the added strain.

Director of Parks, A. D. Barnes, presided as Master of Ceremonies at the dedication of the sixth major park of the County's \$10,000,000 system.

A festival of sports was included in the program, featuring motorboat racing, water skiing, model sailboat races, barbecue, and music by local high school bands. The bands were from Homestead and Redland High School and were under the direction of Jesse Pearl and Stan-

(Continued on page 5)

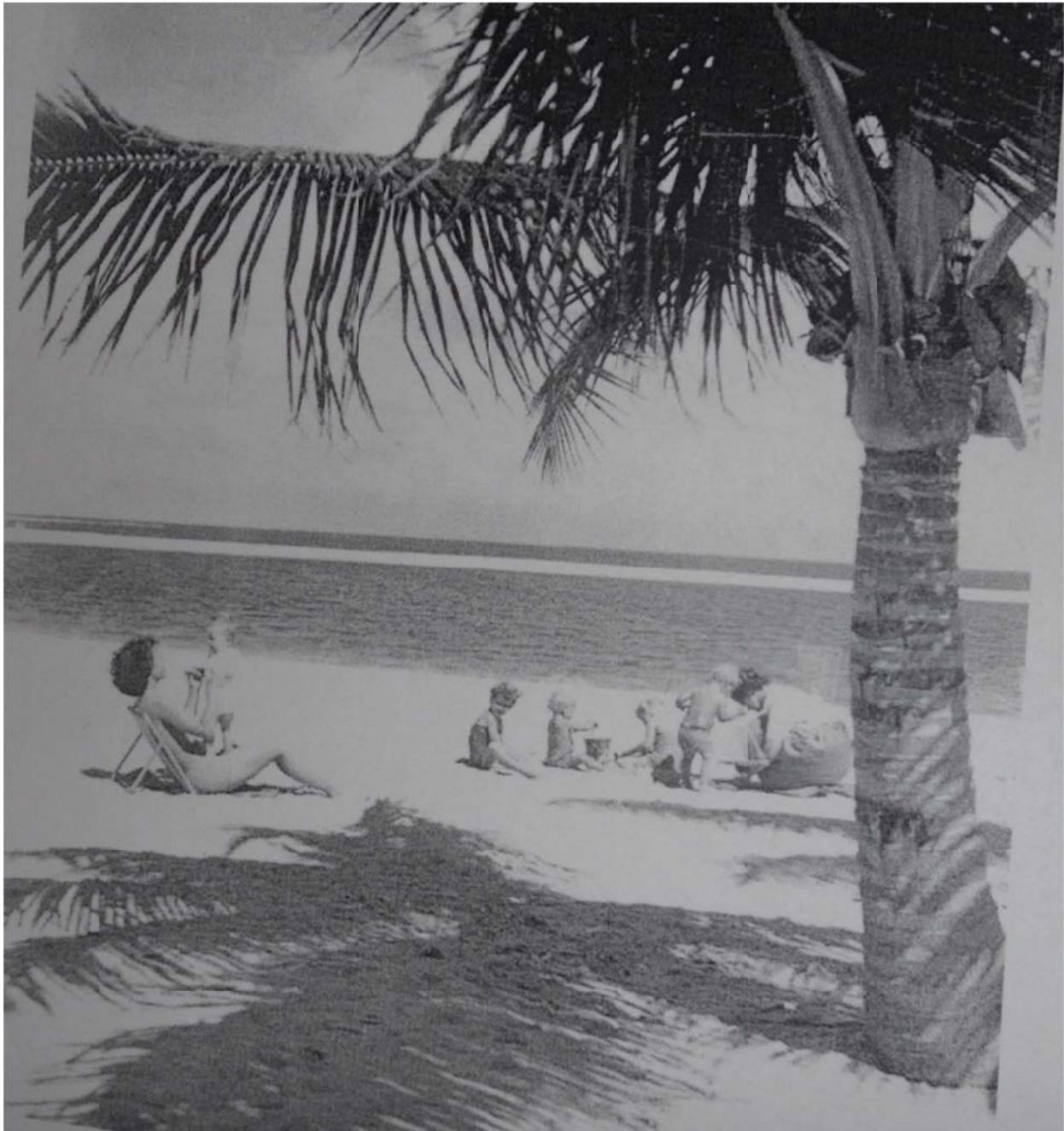
Sportsmen's Club Has Dinner Wed.

The Redland Sportsmen's Club entertained members and their wives at a dinner Wednesday evening, with over a hundred present. Special guests were William Humphrey, State Wild Life Officer; J. P. Hodges, Assistant State Wild Life Officer, of Opa Locka; Bill Thiebold, president of the Dade County Sportsmen's Club; Herbert Schaller, Board member and father of Conservation in South Florida; and Sam Dubon, Treasurer of Dade County Sportsmen's Club and Holmes Allen, Sec'y of the Dade County organization.

Frank Webb, local club president presided over the dinner and a movie of marine life was shown.

Mr. Thiebold told the newly

The Redland District News Paper February 2, 1951 Page 1 Vol. 17 Number 18: Beach established/dedicated February 2, 1951 (initially 1939, construction stopped due to World War II).



1952 Homestead Bayfront Beach South

Picture Courtesy of Florida photograph collection, Florida Memory Project of the Florida State Archives
(1952) Image Number: C017003

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Negro Bathing Beach Bids to Be Called

The Dade County Commission will call for bids for construction of a bathing beach and recreation area for Negroes within the next few weeks, it was announced this week by Commissioner Preston B. Bird.

The new beach, plans for which have been in preparation for the past year, will be located north of Homestead Bayfront Park above the North Canal road, and will have a perimeter bathing pool, sandy beach and concession stand similar to those at Bayfront Park.

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Homestead Leader Enterprise, Homestead, FL, July 1, 1954, Page 1.



HOMESTEAD BAYFRONT NORTH, NEWEST MAJOR PARK IS BEING USED!

Aerial view of the two parks on Biscayne Bay ten miles east of the City of Homestead showing, in right foreground, Homestead Bayfront Park North (for colored) which was opened on November 13, 1955.

Colored side of the beach opening in 1955, courtesy of Miami-Dade Parks and Recreation Homestead Bayfront Beach.

Over 500 at Opening Of Negro Bayfront Park

An attendance of more than 500 was recorded on the opening day, Sunday, at Homestead Bayfront North Park, the county's newest park for colored persons.

The park will be open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day of the week except Wednesday during the winter months, announces Warrie R. Ferguson, park superintendent. During the summer months, he said, the park will probably remain open through the daylight hours.

'Sun Worshipers' Bow to Beach Lure

By EVELYN DOTARDO
Braid Staff Writer

beginning with May that welcome cold spell has been slaked with last year's jinning suit, and with summer's sun upon us more and more heads are being turned to the fancies of golden lanes and surf.

string of public beaches, maintained by the City of Miami Beach, Dade County Parks Department offers six excellent public beaches for putting that sun tan lotion to the test. Here's a rundown on what's available:

HAULOVER BEACH: The only public beach at the north

ent of the county stretches for over a mile between Bal Harbour and Sunny Isles. There's no parking problem here, and motorists can pull into one of the 2,500 parking spaces for 10 cents.

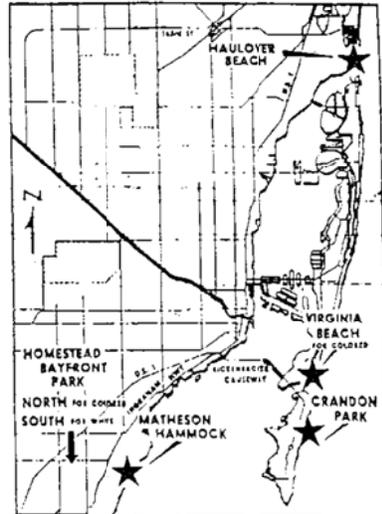
Staffed with 14 life guards, Haulover is the only Dade beach with undertow problems. Depending on the tides and wind, it can be dangerous, and the life guards' wands are few when the situation exists.

Open 24 hours a day, it has such added comforts as free outdoor showers, and free change and rest rooms. You can check your clothes for 25 cents or rent umbrellas, chairs, beach pads and windbreaks for 35 cents a day.

Haulover also has refreshment stands and offers charcoal grills for those who want to cook their own.

VIRGINIA BEACH: For Negroes, it is situated on Virginia Key off Bickenbacker Causeway. It has three life guards, a refreshment stand, free change rooms and parking for 1,000 cars. In fact the only thing you may have to shell out for is a cabana, if desired, for \$2.50 a day. Or a clothes check for 15 cents. Open 24 hours a day. The current is often strong, but not considered dangerous except with extreme weather conditions.

CRANDON PARK: Two miles of beach along Key Biscayne, this strip comes equip-



ped with 14 life guards. About 6,500 free parking spaces are available for bathers a la mode. Crandon also has picnic facilities, refreshment stands, and a bath house, but the fee is 25 cents per locker.

Cabana costs vary from \$3.50 to \$6 a day, and reservations can be made as far as six days in advance. Crandon's cabanas can be rented by the week, month or year as well.

Its waters are protected by an off shore sand bar and probably one of the most calm of best swimming areas. Beaches are open to the public around the clock.

MATHESON HAMMOCK:

Swimming here is in what, in park largon, is called an atoll type pool. Simply, its waters are surrounded by a man-made rim of sand beach. This park also has a 1/4 mile wading beach.

Located on Old Cutler Road, the park has free change rooms, refreshment stands, checking for 15 cents and three life guards. Parking lots will handle 2,000 cars. Matheson Hammock opens at 8 a.m. daily and closes at sundown.

HOMESTEAD Bayfront Park North: For Negroes, the beach is located in South Dade on the north side of North Canal Dr., south of Homestead.

Here you will find a small atoll type pool. A life guard is on duty from 8 a.m. to sundown.

HOMESTEAD Bayfront Park: Located south of North Canal Dr., it provides an atoll type pool, free parking for 80 cars, free change rooms, checking facilities for 15 cents and refreshment stands. There are life guards on duty from 8 a.m. to sundown.

OVER ON Miami Beach there is an estimated eight miles of public beach.

And there are over 70 street ends which provide about 50 feet each of beach.

Starting with Jetty Beach from government cut to Biscayne St. there are about two and one-half blocks of public beach. Pine Park — Biscayne St. to First St.; Seaside to Third St.; Lummus Park — Sixth St. to 11th Lane, 21st to 22nd St.; 46th to 47th St.; 44th St. — 1/2 block; 72nd to 73rd St.; 81st St. — one block.

MIAMI BEACH has approximately 1,505 off street parking spaces near the beach area. The largest of these are at Queen Dr., between 5 and 15th Sts.; 350, 14th and Collins, 138, 21st and Collins, 170, 27th and Collins, 131; 46th and Collins, 332, 53rd and Indian Creek Dr., 186; and 72nd and Collins, 325 spaces.

Mein Kampf: Small Boat, Large Chart

The U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey won't approve it. What few friends I have in the Coast Guard don't approve of it. In fact, I'm not even too darn sure approve of it.

But it's a great idea. I got tired of struggling with charts in a small outboard runabout. Open one and the wind flips it around like a bull dancer's skirt. Try and flatten it and it fights back like a furious fish. Plant parallel rulers or course protractor on this muddied, lumpy thing and you can't work out a course worth a hoot.

So I took the scissors to mine. They behave now.

I bought a dime-store, three-ring loose-leaf notebook. I laid down two charts of my own waters, marked them off with ruler and pencil in eight by 11 1/4-inch pages, then cut them out, punched holes for the rings in the notebook, reinforced them with cloth reinforcement bands, then put them in the book.

Result? An easy to handle, easy to stow, easy to read book of charts.

Could Be Dangerous Substitute

TOOK IT OUT the other day, tried it out. Worked fine. Flipped open the book to a particular "page" and could hold it with one hand, steering with the other, while checking marker numbers, relative bearings to bore points, and directions.

It'll be the first to admit that this is a dangerous

Boating Safety Bill Faces Compromise Without 'Teeth'

By STEVE TRUMBULL
Braid Staff Writer

TALLAHASSEE — Florida's first proposed boat safety bill appeared headed for a watered-down compromise Thursday after a late hour joint House-

The first compromise was an attempt to appease the sheriffs of the state, who want to be the chief enforcement agents afloat. This proposal was little more than a registration act, with no safety

tion — with nothing left over for enforcement. Tom Henderson, the assistant attorney general in charge of bill writing, prepared the bill "on orders" of the oppo-

Miami Herald May 1, 1959:

Reads:

Homestead Bayfront Park North: For Negroes, the beach is located in South Dade on the north side of North Canal Dr., south of Homestead. Here you will find a small atoll type pool. A lifeguard is on duty from 8 am till sundown.

Homestead Bayfront Park: Located south of North Canal Dr. It provides an atoll type pool, free parking for 80 cars, free change rooms, checking facilities for 15 cents, and refreshment stands. There are lifeguards on duty from 8am to sundown.



Workers Set 71 Palms In Bayfront Picnic Area.

(Photo by Jack Levy)

Bayfront Park Adding New Recreation Area

Final grading and sprigging of a two-acre recreation area and the setting of 71 additional coconut palm trees in the picnic area, are among the scheduled improvements for Homestead Bayfront Park.

This play area will be used for unsupervised horse-shoe courts and a portable volley ball court will be made available when the area is ready.

Robert W. McNamree, park manager, has announced that a \$12,000 marina restaurant is on the drawing boards, and he hopes it will be available for the public before summer.

Plans are also to include two new gasoline tanks at the Marina for regular and marine white gas.

At present there is a pavilion-type refreshment stand operated by the department in the main entrance building to the still-like lagoon swimming area.

Bait and tackle shop is fully equipped to supply needs

of fishermen, including ice frozen bait and various sundries. A boat hoist for handling boats up to 2,500 pounds is adjacent to tackle shop.

County-owned outboard skiffs are rented at \$3 per full day for 14 and 16 ft. skiffs, which are provided with U. S. Coast Guard approved equipment.

Attendance for 1961 is over similar figures for the last several years. February 1961 showed a 10% increase over the same month last year. During the first 21 days in March, there was an increase of some 50% over the same period in 1960. Daily attendance thus far in 1961 has fluctuated from 250 persons on poor-weather week days to 2,870 on fine-weather Sundays.

In a monthly service award competition with the other three Dade County Parks, Crandon, Haulover Beach and Matheson Hammock, the Homestead Bayfront Park Marine has been awarded sixteen of the possible 18 monthly awards since the program's inception.

These awards are made on excellence of service to the public and general maintenance and operation of the individual installation. These monthly inspections are made by departmental supervisors.

In a recent lifeguard field day competition held at the Homestead Bayfront Park, representatives from all Dade County Park Beach Patrols, selected on the basis of time trials in their individual parks, competed in rowing, swimming and resuscitator equipment events. Winner of all three events and subsequently overall champion was Homestead Bayfront Park Life Guard David Wilder.

"A Newspaper for the Home"

Homestead News

SERVING THE GREAT SOUTH DADE AREA

WEATHER
(Official report from Sub-tropical Station)

	Max.	Min.
Mar. 17	83	57
Mar. 18	85	60
Mar. 19	85	61

The Homestead News Leader, March 1961 (front page).

Reads:

Homestead Bayfront Park adds improvements (spring 2 acres recreation area-71 additional coconut palm trees in picnic area, horse shoe court, portable volleyball, improve marina). Robert McNamree-park manager. Marina restaurant by summer. Currently pavilion-like refreshment stand by main entrance (white side), outboard skiff rentals, bait and tackle shop, --winner of 16/18 monthly service awards. David Wilder, lifeguard awarded in swimming competition from Dade County Park Beach Patrol

County Parks Swim Classes Start Tuesday

Metro Dade County Parks' popular summertime swimming classes for pre-school children, beginners and adults will begin Tuesday at four county parks.

Released by the Recreation Division of Metro Dade County Park Department and Recreation Department is the following schedule for registration and class beginnings at Matheson Hammock, Homestead Bayfront, Homestead Bayfront North and Virginia Beach:

Registration— June 12, June 23, July 7, July 21, Aug. 4 and Aug. 18.

Classes will start June 18, June 26, July 14, July 24, Aug. 7, and Aug. 21.

Matheson Hammock will teach swimming to preschools, beginners and adults. Homestead Bayfront Park will teach beginners. Homestead Bayfront North, colored, will teach beginners, intermediates and adults while Virginia Beach, colored, will teach beginners only. The two-week long free classes will begin from 8:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. in four sessions daily five days a week.

Further information may be obtained by telephoning the Metro Dade Park Department Recreation Division at PR 3-6385.

Funds Assured For Area Parks, Pools

Funds for nine playground parks and two swimming pools for South Dade were assured this week, and some of the parks will be ready next summer.

So announced Metro Manager Irving McNayr at the monthly meeting of Dade civic leaders held last weekend.

The county already owns the land, and money needed to develop playgrounds, ball fields, picnic areas, shelters, rest rooms and equipment storage buildings will be derived from the Florida Power and Light Co. franchise, announced Art Peavy, superintendent of the county recreation department.

Slated for a park each are Richmond Heights, Suniland, Cutler Ridge, Perrine, North Homestead and Pine Island. Leisure City is to get two parks. Additional funds will be used to improve the Perrine Community Center and to expand present facilities at Homestead Bayfront Park.

Pool sites will be Richmond Park, northeast of Monroe St. and southeast of Pinkston Dr., and Cutler Ridge Park, west of Cutler Ridge Elementary School and Coral Sea Rd. and northwest of Bahia Dr.

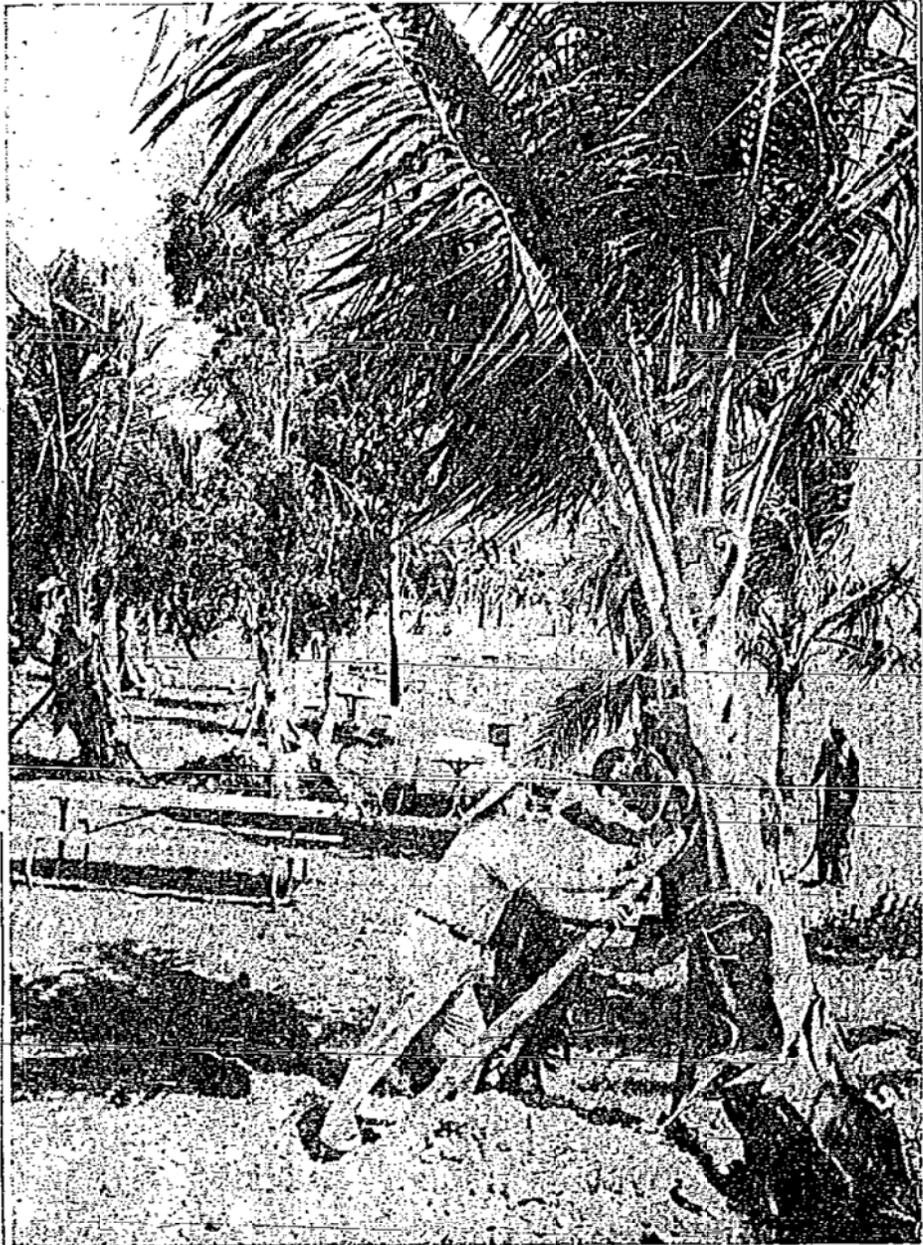
In Leisure City, land at the
(Continued on Page Six)

St. Faith Players Comedy Dec. 1-2

What happens to a Vermont family when they discover paintings of great monetary value in their barn will be amusingly presented, in "The Late Christopher Bean," Dec. 1 and 2 at South Miami Heights Cabana Club.

The three-act comedy by Sydney Howard, produced by St. Faith Players, is entertainment for the whole family.

Curtain time is 8:30 p.m. Tickets are available in advance from the church office or members of the drama group, or on play nights at the door.



PRETTY PLAYGROUND PALMS — Workmen at Homestead Bayfront Park lower a feathery palm tree into place to add the finishing touch to a now-being-expanded playground area. Improvements at the park

are part of Dade County's program of expanded recreation facilities, assured last week when Florida Power and Light franchise money was earmarked for park development.

The Homestead News Leader, November 23, 1961 (second front page): funding approved for park.



Homestead Bayfront beach; Picture Courtesy of Florida photograph collection, Florida Memory Project of the Florida State Archives (1968).

Appendix 2, Oral History Transcriptions

Interviewee: Julius Keaton, employee at Biscayne National Park and former Homestead Bayfront Beach attendee.

Interviewer: Iyshia Lowman, Biscayne National Park intern and MA student at USF

Camera: Charles Lawson, Cultural Resource Manager, Biscayne National Park

Transcription [Duration 30 min 50 sec]

Red text indicates indecipherable recording.

IL: Ready? Today is December 9th 2011. I am Iyshia Lowman, intern at Biscayne National Park and Master's student at University of South Florida. We are here with Julius Keaton at Biscayne National Park. Uh, and Julius, you agree to consent for the park and for my research to give your information to the...recording?

JK: Yes, I agree with it.

IL: Okay. Great. Let's get started. Okay, first of all just tell us about yourself. Tell us your name, date of birth...

JK: Hello everyone my name is Julius Keaton. Born September the 5th 1952 in Camilla, Georgia. My mother came south, and when I say south I guess about two and a half years after I was born. I've been in Homestead. Been working at the park, goin on my 37th year enjoying every minute of it.

IL: Okay, and do you mind stating which racial or ethnic group you identify yourself with?

JK: Uh, back in the day, we was called the n-words. [laughs] And that will push you over, but you gotta learn how to control the n-word. So...but I experienced a lot of that, especially on Saturdays when you had the opportunity to go to the army navy. That was uh, I say one of the cheapest stores at the time our parents could afford or my mom could afford and that's where we went. But all the time, we always go there, there be some individuals out of Tennessee...okay, mostly out of Alabama that use the n-word. "Where you, so and so, goin?" And my mom say Don't worry about that, keep goin." So one day mom wasn't with us [laughs] and we saw what the n-word really really means. We had to do little runnin, a little jumpin, a little hidin, a little throwin rocks...whole nine yards like that. Racial back then, there was a black section of the town and a white section of town.

IL: And this is here in Homestead?

JK: Homestead.

IL: Can you, uh, tell me about your experience at the beach at the time?

JK: Oh, oh, back in the day on Sundays we had a lot of good family outings and you know, like...on Saturdays, you had to do chores, once you finish your chores, you say, well, Sunday after church then the great-aunt will call up and say "Oh, we havin a picnic." And you holla "Where bout?" "On the beach." So on Sundays we come out here. Some days we come out here, the water be above the ground and we go in the picnic area or our parking lot area. Some early mornings you come out here and see bobcats. You see different species of snakes which black people don't like snakes [laughs]. So it was...at that age, I thought coming out here was one of the great experiences because you get a chance to get away and play with your cousins...to ya aunts eat some good southern food. And just enjoy the day.

IL: Um, how long did you say you lived in the Homestead area?

JK: Let's say pretty close to about 35 years.

IL: And do you still have family in the area?

JK: Yes, mother's here.

IL: So what kind of things did y'all do...a typical day at the beach?

JK: Oh, a day at the beach we play tag you it, we play, uh, underwater. We used to like Lloyd Bridges. Ya know we used to watch it on TV we figure we'd be like Lloyd Bridges and all that stuff. And we can only go so far, that was our favorite program, especially on Saturday. Sea Hunt. Boom. When we come out here, we thought we was Lloyd Bridges. We wouldn't have all the necessary equipment he would have, but with our imagination we just had a great time.

IL: What is your earliest memory of the beach?

JK: Aw, man...

IL: Like the 1st time you got here...

JK: First time I got here, my cousin brung us out here, ok, but we couldn't get in the water. That was the 1st memory, I mean, I was about 7. She brung us out here and wouldn't let us get in the water. I go..."no, you can't get in the water I just come to show y'all that. I go "Ah, mmmm!" [laughs]. Oh, god.

IL: So what did y'all do?

JK: Oh, besides that, we played tag, we played what ya call hide and go seek, duck n up. A lot of times we had to sit and watch the elderly play cards. [laughs] We ain't like that. Most of us we had rules and regulations. If you outta eyesight, you were never coming again. So you always supposed to be in the eyesight, so they could see ya.

IL: What's your favorite experience, your favorite memory of the beach?

JK: Oh, we used to have parties out here. The Leeves party. The Leeves were proolly the wealthiest family in the black community. And they daddy worked in, was a masonarian

[mason]. He had a truck and he always throw his kid's birthday party and then we always came on the beach. And we load on the back of that truck...and when I say load, we load that truck up! Come out here and Ms. Margery would have the food, the music be playin, and aw, man, everybody just have a good time.

IL: Alright, so were there places you could not go on the beach or did not want to go?

JK: Yep, you could not go toward the shoreline, toward the deeper water, ok? And like I say, uh, you couldn't be out they eyesight for so many minutes and that was the bottom line.

IL: Did black and white people share, use the beach together?

JK: No, this used to be all blacks, mostly how can I say...if you were light colored you'se on this end [points to the "white beach"]. Ok, most of the Mexicans, the Puerto Ricans, all us would stay on this side of the beach.

IL: OK, at that time did you know anyone who worked at the beach?

JK: Uh, we know the lifeguard. We known him for years...Mr. Ozell Williams and then it was, I think, Mr. Willie Bains. Because most the, most the lifeguards be the islanders from the Bahamas or Jamaicans cause they, you know, they know how to swim. [laughs]

IL: Do you know how long they worked here?

JK: Oh, no, no don't know that.

IL: Uh, did you got to any other beaches at that time?

JK: No.

IL: Okay. So, um, you said that there were parties out here and there was a dance floor...

JK: Oh, yeah that dance floor had goin on. We had a big round circle, okay, and the jukebox used to be right in the middle but on the edge and back then it was a nickel. Nickel used to play one song, so on a Saturday you had to have a couple nickels in your pocket to listen, but you had to have somebody to help you out there to put the nickel in and put the numbers in and all this stuff. It was, it was, it was different altogether cause that's when you met your elder relatives on Sundays when you used to come out with these collard greens, and cabbage, and cornbread, fried chicken, you know what I mean? [laughs] And then you sat and threw down. Most of the time on Sundays, that's what we're looking for, we're lookin forward to eatin everybody else's food. And after we eat, and after we eat all that we couldn't swim! "Oh you guys gotta sit down for an hour two hours, all that good stuff." Then, "you gotta lay down and take a nap." "Aw, man!" [laughs] That's the way it was. Back in the days, people was different. And it's much better now, I mean, much better back then than it is now. Cause people back then cared for one another. People these days, they'll rob you for nothin, they'll rob you think you got something...so, ya know.

IL: Can you just describe to me the dances? What it was like to be there?

JK: Aw, man. Looking at adults dance, you never saw that type of dance; they used to do on the dance floor and all that good stuff. And you know like the moves they used to make with the body and stuff. You go “Aw, man. That’s cool!” and stuff like that, you know. Like slow dances, you know like, when a kid sees another man put his hand on a woman butt, ya go “ooo” you know you get excited. Like they aint never seen part of the stuff you see out there you be amazed, it cuts ya, ya know.

IL: Um, at some point you told us you could see the white side of the beach from driving.

JK: Oh, yes. Okay. We had a white road and a black road. The white road starts on 162nd which was “farmers?” [9m50s] road, that’s where it split, okay? The road on the north side was the black road. The road on the south was the white road. If you get caught on the white road any day any part down there, you get stopped by the police. And you had to drive all the way back to the entrance to get on the right road. There...that was, that was complicated. Put it this way, I never saw certain things, racial things until we mostly yet travel back and forth on this beach, we could be broken down and stuff like that. Next vehicle pulls over especially if it was a different color minor [“minority”] like a white cop “Can I help you, boy? Or What you doing, boy?” Stuff like that. I wasn’t used to that. In the long run, it didn’t faze me then cause I didn’t know no better, but as I got older it really got to me. Cause I remember I pull in South Carolina one night well wasn’t more than about 2 o’clock in the morning, the man come, ran out the building with a shot gun, “can I help you boy?” And I know that I need that fuel, but I keep goin. [laughs] It was different.

IL: And how long had you been coming to the beach?

JK: We came to the beach til they closed it down. We used to come to like every other Sunday or either ya know, when a good outing or either that you made good grades in school, you do this, do that. Yeah, that’s how it works. We came to the beach close to about 7 years. Okay.

IL: And you said, uh, so most of your family came out here, everybody would get together...

JK: Family, parties, most of the uh families and that’s when the Leeves have their parties for the kids. And when I say parties for the kids, half of the community used to be out here, okay. That was good times. So Sunday my great aunt would say “since you’ve been a good boy or since y’all been a good boy, let’s go to the beach or let’s do this or do that.” My mother was afraid of the water so she didn’t bring anybody there. [laughs] When we went anywhere it was always the older, the elderly women that like to see stuff and do this or do that.

IL: Would there be any problems with the beach staff and, you know, having parties out here?

JK: Oh, no, no. Because everybody did they thing, we know we had to clean up and we used to always start as a unit. We used to say “okay you gone police the grounds, gonna clean up the grounds, before we leave we gone party. We clean up before we leave.” So you know like we don’t want to leave a mess and that’s what we did. Not only that they elderly people used to guide us anyway, okay. “Oh you can’t do this you can’t do that. Oh, Imma tell your momma, Imma tell your daddy. I aint gotta tell you momma, I’ll...” [laughs]. To me coming out here was different. We looked forward to coming out here. You can do your thing for about 4, 5 hours, then you know you going back home.

IL: Did they ever called the beach anything other than the each?

JK: The black beach, the colored beach, the nigger beach [laugh].

IL: Okay, can you tell me about living in Homestead, like...?

JK: Aw, man living in Homestead is all different together. It's still segregation, it's still racial and all that stuff. My early years my mom kept us close and we got to be teenagers we got to experience life on our own. I remember one year we was coming home from football practice, me and my brother we was the 1st blacks who played for Tom Harris Field. This is 1967 somethin like that and one night we was comin home from practice, it was late and uh, we made it to Flagler. Back then it was a whole lotta, how you say, big, big factories, big industries and the time and uh, ours was railroad tracks, once you made it to the railroad tracks you was safe. So we was crossing Flagler and they said "Where you?" me and my brother and his friend were comin home from football practice and I guess they was drinkin, whatever. Some country boys say "What you niggers doin out here?" I go "What?" "Oh we goin to so and so we gone.." Turn the car, they turn the car completely around and headed at us and I said, "alright boys let's hit the tracks." To the railroad tracks. When we got on the tracks we had plenty of ammuntion, we had rocks! And I placed my brother her, I put the other guy here, I said "alright, ready, chuck!" [laughs] Got right down there, throwin rocks. Oh, yeah, yep. Remember that night. That was the 1st experience that me and my brother went through that. After that, when we hit the tracks, we had no more problems.

IL: What other kind of things did y'all do for fun in Homestead?

JK: Fun? You know what duck and up is?

IL: No.

JK: It's a gem, you pick so many on your team and you got an hour to find all the rest of them. We would, okay, you got 6 on your team, you got 6. You gotta find all your 6 before you got a chance to go. Okay, we didn't have no boundaries. When we say duck and up, we split. You gotta find them okay. Yep, we played hide and go seek, we played tennis ball, we played one strike "stand mo'reef" [15 m36s] That's with a mop handle and a tennis ball. And you always pick the best catcher one with the good aim, cause once you miss you gotta run to 1st base, okay. The good aim will pick you off before you get to 1st base, and that tennis ball...that tennis ball. We played football, we played baseball, we had, I played little league baseball for a couple of years. Community back then it was more togetherness, not like it is now. Cause we always had baseball, we always had basketball and football. You can start a football game with anybody. It was real fun...until, you got to high school, it wasn't fun anymore. You had long hours to do homework and then they closed the only black school down here. Mase High. Junior and Senior high school. Closed and when I say closed I say closed it, but the opened it back up for junior high something like that. Okay. And then we had to go to South Dade High. We experience a riot, a fight, individuals goin to jail on the weekends, a lot of property got damaged, a lot of vehicles got damaged. It was...different altogether. It was Pail 11, 1970 when the riots started South Dade high school, you know all us guys were standing is the hall way. It started and really, it started in study hall. Cause that was the library. This guy was a white guy and insult

the black guy. And the black girl “That’s my brother, leave my brother alone.” He said “Oh nigger girl get out the, oh.” Once he said that word, it was on. That girl broke his nose. Fight started at the library and spread through the whole school. Okay. I say fight. That year we had...Miss Homecoming was a black girl. Okay. Once we started that school they wanted to know that they was out there reppin us. Okay. And...that year they told “Niggers go home and take your black queen with ya,” stuff like that. Then I go “Aw, man, god.” I never figured I could experience this first hand but it happened. One day we was standing up, ya know, like the guys normally stand up, ya know, and get ready for another class; these kids, the white kids come down the hall with guns. We go “Oh!” So we tried to make an exit. And the exits we tried to exit out that dude had put padlocks on there and locked the door. We go “Aw, man.” So we ended up squeezing out and believe it or now, we went through home economics. [in higher voice imitating female] “Hey, y’all can’t come up in here!” “Yeah, lady, they got guns we comin up in here.” Okay, we force our way up in home economics and all just went from there. I say yeah, oh it was awesome. Me and them got caught up on the 2nd floor out the class and...we uh, did some damage to the typewritin room. [laughs] [in higher voice imitating female voice] “Here where we did damage, do some damage here.” They say “Bait ‘em in her, bait ‘em in here!” I say, “Okay, I bait ‘em in here.” “Hey, what you white boys want!” So soon as they come in there, he whoop ‘em with one of the typewriter, push him in the corner, then “Bait some more!” [laughs] We was only doin, that was the only defense we had we was outnumbered, man! It was 2 of us against about 30 of them, but we evened the score after 2 hours. 2 hours. Man we had, knock ‘em out, drag ‘em in, and we lay ‘em on the floor. We didn’t know they had cameras in the room, like that. Since I was short, it only got my shirt. [laughs] It didn’t get my face, I was lucky. So you know all of us had to meet to the auditorium later so they start showing the films. They show that shirt, I go, “mmm.” I say, “You aint gonna wear the shit no mo.” Once I went home, I burned that shirt. I wasn’t wearin the shirt no mo.” 2 weeks later, every Friday afternoon, 3 passenger buses pull up to the school and if you on the list you get on the bus. Okay. My luck was I was not tall enough so they saw my face, they only saw my shirt. So after that, I go “Aw, man, I aint know it was gonna be like that.” We got kicked off the bus one day and had to walk home. We was South Dade High school, and you know we had to go through some white neighborhood. And once we start running, we didn’t stop. Okay? You talkin bout that was about it, yeah.

IL: Alright I just wanted to go back to...in your 7 years of, ya know, going to the beach...

JK: Comin here?

IL: Yeah. How has it changed through the years?

JK: How did it change? Um, in a certain way, it changed cause I got older...in a certain way like, another way like we used to come straight here, but after my aunt and them started bringing they fishin poles. And there was a big change after that. They used to fish over there, but we couldn’t fish unless they call us [imitating female’s voice] “Here, come and bring me this, bring me that, bring me that...” “Haha, you fall over n there and Imma hook you with this king pole and pull you out and all this good stuff.” To me when I was small, and my great aunt always used to bring us out and they had they rules and ya know you go buy their rules. They tell us a lot about racial and how to control this and how to control that. And that she that’s what it’s gone me. See, one of my great aunts, actually they went through slavery. Some days I would

travel with them or as I got older, they would take me to funerals and I had a van and I'd take them and they start telling me different portion of, different sections of like the story my great aunt told me one night... The boys that wanna go rabbit huntin they didn't want to go work in the field that day and then the white owner come by "Where the boys at?" "Oh they went rabbit huntin and all that good stuff." "Well, I tell you what, by the end of the night I want y'all off my plantation." So the end of the night they had to pack up and move. And I go, "Y'all went through that?" And they go "Yeah." And I go "Aw, man..." I say it gone be like that for us, it gone be a little different but it gone be better, baby. You gotta make it. If you don't make it, you waste your life.

IL: So how was it at the beach between the races? Did you see any white people or interact with them?

JK: Oh, yeah, yeah, check this out, check this out. We had, we had, back in the days we had the white landlord collect rent. I was his rider, okay? I was his rider, he'd come and get me on Saturday morning in his Dodge, "Come on lets go riding with me, come on." I say okay. We go riding in these black communities and ain't too many of them bother with him, but he get out, they gone rob him. [laughs]. So I was just like a lil stooley. He wouldn't get out of the truck, he say, "Okay go on so and so." [makes knocking on door sound]. "Rent man!" "Well who is it?" "Rent man!" [laughs] "Well tell that man..." "You wanna tell him yourself, ma'am, he's standing right out there, well you know he gotta write your receipt, ma'am. You gotta come on out, stuff like that." It was like that, it was nice, it was nice, yep. So Boyd used to come get me every Saturday, every Saturday time to collect rent? Come get me, used to ride through all of these communities. It was some good people. It was some good people. Real good people.

IL: So how was it on the beach after...after you were allowed to go on the other side?

JK: Oh, Oh, it was way different. That's when we, they started letting us fend out on our own as we got a little bit older. We start collecting the little fiddler crabs and stuff like that. It was, it was like, it was real amazing...like we go in the picnic area and you see these little holes and you see these little crabs come up and you go "Oh! Aw, man." Yeah, next thing you know you go looking for a stick, you dig em out. You dig, you dig, they come outta the hole. "Aw, man wait wait don't do it that way, don't do it that way." "How you gone do 'em?" "Put water in the hole they come out." And we figure out, put water in the hole they come out the hole, oh, they wasn't no different about it, it was fun. It was safe. I tell ya it was real safe.

IL: It was safe even after...?

JK: Yeah, it was the safest spot. Not only that, you come out here it's a different world anyway. You can see the water, you can see different creatures. That's does something to the kids mind. It was fun, real fun.

IL: So when were you able to go onto the other side of the beach?

JK: Which side? [laughs]

IL: [laughs] the white side, the white side.

JK: The white side? When it was integrated in '68. Right. We used to go to Virginia key a lot, cause all the brothers was out at Miami talking bout "we havin a picnic come up here." We used to come to Virginia key a lot. And then my mom said, "Ya know our beach aint "hardly naked?"[25m50s] Y'all wanna go to the beach all the time, we gone huh, take y'all local." "Aw, man." "Yeah, we gone all take y'all local." So we started comin to the other side.

IL: Okay.

JK: Before they started pricing! Uh, other side used to be free but it was different. What they had, we didn't have. They had swing sets, they had volleyball, we didn't have none of that. So when we did get over there, ya know what happened. [laughs]

IL: Were there any white people when y'all went over there?

JK: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. [laughs]

IL: So how was that?

JK: It was like...it was different altogether. That we you integrated, the 1st time you integrated. You got little black kids playing with little white kids and all that you know. On the shore line, it was very fun. It was different altogether.

IL: Um, they were allowed to play together?

JK: Mhmm, some parents just let 'em. Yeah, I'm like, "oh, it wasn't like this," they just let 'em.

IL: Oh that's how it was.

JK: Yeah they just let em.

IL: Okay, so overall living in Homestead for as many years as you have, what do you think is interesting about Homestead? What has kept you here?

JK: The most interesting thing about Homestead is Biscayne Bay. Okay. I don't care where you go , you can always go to the bay. It's different altogether. The bays is...it's like a ride...say you leave home and come out here, you walkin and you watch the sun rise. Okay, once you watching the sunrise you see different species of fish, crabs,...ya know, just out of the ordinary, you see different lizards that we never saw, and you see different species.

IL: Okay you like seeing different species.

JK: Yeah, instead of looking at 4 walls all the time. [laughs] Yeah, comin out here is what you call real, real, real, real country, real adventure. Ya know black people don't like getting in the water and all. [laughs]

IL: You didn't feel that when you were living in the city, in Homestead?

JK: No.

IL: Okay, you mentioned Virginia Key, could you tell us about it?

JK: Oh, Virginia Key? Virginia Key Beach was different altogether that's when you had to make that drive to get there. You gotta go up and across that bridge and then there was next to a sewer plant that was really freaked out. It would freak you out. There was 2 roads, you got one to the sewer plant, one to the beach. Get on the wrong road ya go "Aw, man, you missed the beach, you gotta turn around!" They sea was much different. They land since they was on the north end, they landscape was much different, much, much it was way different. And they trees. They landscape was way laid out, pretty. I saw very pretty. So, I mean you couldn't beat they sea at the time.

IL: Do you think it was better?

JK: Yes, better, bigger, okay? You go "whoa, alright." So then you can see the ocean. You can always see the bay over here, but over there every time you can see the ocean. And when you see a fish jump up or a dolphin jump up, you go "Aw, man, that's cool!" Virginia key was altogether different because it was right next to the lining, oh!

IL: Was it a different feel on the beach when you went out and played?

JK: Yeah, the sand. Once you put your foot in that sand and walk through it to get to that water...ooo, girl, oo. It was different altogether. They sand was most like...say you walkin on a sponge to get to the water it was different altogether. Cause then you see little species of fish, you like "oh man." You try to chase then and you like, "what you doin? You can't chase no fish! You chase 'em but you know you not gonna catch 'em, right." [laughs] Then you see little species of crabs, you know like, they water much cleaner cause close to the ocean and that was "ooo." Especially the breeze, when it blows north, blowing south it was...[mumbles]

IL: Did y'all play with family?

JK: Yep, family...family and friends. [laughs] Well, you know, all of us was like that. "Oh, I invited that neighbor, this neighbor, this neighbor and all that stuff." Once we get there, we had a great time.

IL: So you didn't play with anyone else besides family and friends?

JK: We played with everybody. We played tag you it, duck and up, and some would say, "what's that game?" We had to teach a lot of them the games we was playing on this end that they don't play on that end. Like stickball. Ya get a mop handle and a tennis ball and you got a game. And they "Ooo, that's fun, let's do that all the time, like the way you did it!"

IL: Okay. Is there anything else that you would like to say about Homestead or the beach?

JK: Homestead is improving and at the time the beach was our get a way, especially on Sundays after church. Looking forward to eating southern food. [laughs and mumbles] "When y'all gonna be there? You said you was gonna be there." You work hard and say your mind's gonna be there. It be a lot of us there. We had uh, 1 car, but sometimes be 8 or 9 of us in that car

comin this way. Sometimes there'd be more than that. Sometimes we be sitting on each other's lap. [laughs] It was fun, it was fun.

IL: Do you still come out to the beach with your family or anybody else?

JK: Do I still come out to the beach? [laughs] This is my getaway, which I call my plantation. Some nights after work, I come back out and fish. And you talk about beautiful sea, fresh. You can look at the nuclear plant and it's all lit up for ya. The full moon...and it's just different altogether. Yeah, I still come out here, matter of fact, I had plans for this weekend. [laughs]

IL: Is there...those are pretty much all the questions that I have. Anything else, you want to let me know.

JK: Thank you.

IL: Thank you. Is there anyone else you think we should talk to beside you know, who you already...

JK: Oh, yes, Boyd! Boyd was my old "running mate." [32m36s] Boyd Valentine. The mechanic, yeah. Yeah, Boyd.

IL: Okay. Thank you very much

JK: You're welcome.

Interviewee: Ozell Williams, former lifeguard at Homestead Bayfront Beach North

Transcription [Duration 25 min 44 sec]

Interviewer: Iyshia Lowman, Biscayne National Park intern and MA student at USF

Camera: Charles Lawson, Cultural Resource Manager, Biscayne National Park

Iyshia: We are here at Biscayne National Park on December 9th, 2011. This is Iyshia Lowman, intern with Biscayne National Park and USF Master's student. Charles Lawson is running the camera and we are here with Ozell Williams. Uh, can you just tell us a little about yourself? Where you were born? How long you've lived in Homestead? Where you're from?

OW: Sure My name is Ozell Williams. I was born in Camilla, Georgia, raised in Homestead, spent 3 years in service, US Army, and uh, went to school at Daytona, Florida...and the 1st lifeguard job I had was Bethune beach and New Smyrna Beach, which was the segregated beach for Daytona Beach, Florida. I left there and came back here, and I started working for Dade County Parks and Recreation which is Homestead North, which was a segregated black beach. I worked here for probably approximately 5 years then I went onto further with Dade County in all 37 years. This beach was basically for black citizens of Homestead, Florida and for Goulds, Perrine, Richmond Heights. As a matter of fact we...they had a bus that would pick up kids in the summer for swimming classes from Richmond Heights, Perrine, and Goulds bring them here, we taught them swimming and a lot of them became good swimmers and we were very proud of them. They used to say that black people couldn't swim, that was the biggest lie they ever told, but anyway it was a pleasure working here. We had a park manager here, Warren Ferguson. Mr. Ferguson who was very good and inspired us to do better for ourselves. Our head life guard was Harry Brit, myself, Nathaniel Thompson, and also we had swimming instructors here, who was Gary Brown and, uh, Paul Moore. We had custodians here who were Willie Bayne, James Bell, and Freddy Gascut. We had concession attendants here, who was Rosetta Scott and Clarice Davis. During the summer, like I say, we had the swimming classes and the beach would be open basically Saturday and Sunday and during the week when we didn't have a crowd they had Australian Pines along the road there and we would cut them pines down and that's why you don't see them cause we cut them down. So we was always doing something to keep busy.

IL: Can you describe a typical day at work?

OW: Okay we would get here, check the area, make sure that the area was clean. The concession attendant, not the concession attendants, the park attendants would clean the bathrooms and we would make sure there was no glass on the beach. People would start coming around 9:30 [am] we would stay here until 5 o'clock which was close. We had a concession stand where we could by hot dogs, sodas.

IL: Okay, were there racial restrictions on the beach?

OW: No, when we came to work we came to work, that was it. There was no thing about any...racial.

IL: So did you work on both sides of the beach?

OW: When they closed this side down, then I went to the other side, me and Harold Brit.

IL: Okay, when did they close this side down?

OW: I think it was 'round '64 or sometime. I'm not quite sure, but when they closed it down we went to the other side. And we never lost anybody here either.

IL: So do you know why they closed it, this side of the beach?

OW: Well, I guess it was a case for money, they had to...well the law stated that they had to...uh, integrate. That was like every place else doin around the south here.

IL: Okay, can you describe what it was like once integration started? Were there any differences, big changes, problems?

OW: No. As a matter of fact I never had a problem. It was very good, uh, when we got there, everything went fine. We were good lifeguards and we knew our job and we did our job.

IL: Um, how can you describe your relationship...were there white lifeguards?

OW: Yeah.

IL: Okay, can you describe your relationship with...?

OW: It was very good. Very good. As a matter of fact people had common sense. [laugh]

IL: Okay, did you have any problems with any of the white people on the other side of the beach, did you work both sides?

OW: Well, when they closed this one down, then I went over there, I stayed there until I went someplace else. No, I had no problem with anybody. When I told them they had to do something they did it.

IL: Alright...and can you describe your relationship with the other workers here?

OW: It was very good.

IL: Friendly?

OW: We more or less had a family type deal. Everybody was pleasant and that was good.

IL: Did you ever come to the beach...the 1st time you came to the beach you started working here?

OW: Yes.

IL: Okay, so you never came here like...?

OW: No, cause I was away. So when I came back, I applied for the job and I got it. Very easy because I come outta the surf so that was, this was not the surf, this just a little hole. When I worked at Bethune Beach that was surf. The ocean more or less.

IL: Can you describe Bethune and New Smyrna Beach, please?

OW: It was a very good beach, they had a picnic area. They had concession stands, they had a motel, and they had a bar there. So everything was fine.

IL: Okay, what are your thoughts on it compared to Homestead? Like...any big differences anything like that?

OW: It was a big difference because you were in the surf! This was just a hole. Otherwise you had to be a very good lifeguard up there. You couldn't just be mediocre, because you had to swim through the surf to make rescues. I guess that's why I got the job here so easy cause I was a very good swimmer.

IL: Can you walk us through a typical day at the beach?

OW: Well like I said, we come in we make sure that everything is open and clean from there we would set the tower up and when the people would come we would get in the stand and watch and make sure that they were alright. And if I took a break then he was in the stand, if he took a break then I was in the stand. Otherwise both of us if one was in the stand the other was walking around, making sure that everything was alright.

IL: Alright...and was that the same thing with the other beaches? Same kind of system like that?

OW: Yes.

IL: Um, Did you have any...um, you lived in Homestead?

OW: Yes, I lived in Homestead most of my life until I went into the Army.

IL: Can you describe what it was like living in Homestead, going to the army, and coming back?

OW: It was very different. Well you know living in Homestead, Homestead was very segregated. You couldn't go here, you couldn't go there. So I went in the service and I was stationed in England...and I got the chance to see all these beautiful things. Excuse me I said, "No way, is somebody gonna tell me where I can't go anymore." So I started going where I wanted to go. It was a big difference. As a matter of fact it was an eye opener. You seeing all this beautiful stuff here and you say "Gee, I enjoyed this!" And it set a kind of pattern of the way I wanted to live. Cause I saw the nice things and I enjoyed them.

IL: Did you have any family in Homestead?

OW: Yes, I had family and my, uh, grandmother raised me...grandfather...my mother moved back to Homestead. I have sisters and brothers. And uh, I'm sure it was alright growing up. I

can't kick. Because like I said basically when I was growing up, I was going to do what I want to do anyway. You can kill me but you can't eat me [laughs].

IL: Okay. And what did you do for fun when you were growing up?

OW: I used to skin dive, I used to hunt...yeah, hunt like rabbits and deer and all that. Deer, wild hogs and turkey. Life opened up for me. I start seeing beautiful things that I enjoy doing.

Charles: [to Interviewer: Can I ask a question?] So, uh, when you join the army you go off and you experience unsegregated life, what was it like to come back and take a job at a segregated beach? Well to be a part of the, a part of that system?

OW: Well I had to deal with it until things changed. But as far as I was concerned I was gonna do what I wanted to do anyway. Like I say, you can kill me but you can't eat me. I eat all the animals I kill [laughs]

IL: Were there any events or parties held at the beach?

OW: Well...was it July they used to have, well people used have big cookouts and all.

IL: And so did you work during those times?

OW: Yeah.

IL: Okay. Could you describe the cookouts?

OW: Yeah, the beach would be crowded, I mean jam-packed, but we had the rules and they followed the rules and everything was fine.

IL: Okay.

OW: we basically worked as a team. We was running the park we kept everything smooth.

IL: And so, when you came back from the service and started living in homestead again, could you describe your life to me then?

OW: Okay. When I came back and uh, I got a couple of old mediocre jobs and that wasn't working out for me, I was just waiting, I can't live outta this. So I said best thing is to go up to school. So I left and went off to school and when I was going to school that's when I became a lifeguard up there and when I got back here I became a police officer in the city of Homestead...and they had some segregated set up rules. It was about 5. We could not arrest the white people when it started, but after it started then if anybody did something in my presence I arrested them. Because if they told me you couldn't then, then I would've told them "take this badge." But anyway it worked out.

IL: When did you become a police officer?

OW: 1962. And I was working here at the same time.

IL: Wow, 2 jobs.

OW: Yeah, I had 2 jobs for years. You know if you want anything outta like you gotta go out and get it. She'll tell ya, I worked 2 jobs for yeas [referring to wife who was present]. She liked the Cadillac, and I wanted to buy them for her, she liked the big house I wanted to get it for her.

IL: Can you tell us about your experiences as a police officer? Do you feel it was...well you already said, you couldn't arrest white people technically, but were there any other issues like with any of the...your co-workers, your fellow officers?

OW: well when we 1st started, when we would do our reports we had to do them in the car. They had a squad room where everyone did the reports so one night, I had to do a report so I went in the squad room and I was doing my report. Then the sergeant came in and he says, "what are you doin'?" I said "what do you think I'm doin'?" I'm makin my report." "Well you..." I said, "Well I'm here!" So he says, "I'm gonna tell the Ch-chief." And I said, "You tell who you want to!" So anyway after that everything was squared away. Sometimes you have to reach out and get things what you want.

Charles: If, uh...why, why do you think they hired you in the 1st place if the interest would've been to have you do reports in the car and you can't arrest white people, there's a reasoning behind...

OW: That...That was all over the south, you, black people, white police officers couldn't arrest white people, okay. When you start and you take the job, you...you make the changes. See you can't change anything from outside, you gotta get inside.

IL: What would you like people to know about Homestead Beach?

OW: I want them to know that it was a very nice beach, uh, people enjoyed themselves, people learned to swim and uh, it was very nice place to be.

IL: Um, well, is there anything else you would like to include any like what was an interesting point about homestead beach?

OW: Well, an interesting point about it is that it was a nice place to work. That was getting people working here because I learned so much from the manager here that inspired me to be better. So that was very good.

IL: What were the other jobs that you tried to do that you said didn't work the, uh, best for you?

OW: Well, they just had little old mediocre jobs and you didn't make much money so I needed something that make money because I like to live good...I still like to live good. Cause God blessed me to retire. My wife is retired. We don't have a whole lot of money but we live good. I like lobsters, steak. So I just like to enjoy life.

IL: Um, and I was told the particular, the separated areas of the beach ya know, black people could go to the white, white people couldn't go to the black did you have any instances of that happening?

OW: No.

IL: Um, well those are all the questions that I have. Do you know of there is anyone else we should talk to about this particular project?

OW: Let see, one of the Parkertons is still living. I don't know his, his phone number, but uh...Nick can probably get it for you. It's, fellows name is Willie Bayne, he's still living.

IL: Okay, well thank you very much for coming out and talking to us.

OW: You're quite welcome, glad that I could be of help.

Charles: Um, if you could do an interp program here, if you were a park ranger, staff and wanted to point around what went on around here any particular story, anecdote, something funny going on something that would be of interest to national park visitors that come off the street, what would you want to tell them?

OW: Well, the picnic area was nice down here. People used to come out and do the little picnics, the little barbeques and all. They had the little dance floor and uh, people used to come out and fish along the side there.

IL: What was the dance floor like?

OW: It just a little round circle, cement circle and they had a little juke box. 'Course the jukebox was in the concession's place, but they could punch the little records outside. So they enjoyed themselves.

IL: How were the dances?

OW: Oh, they did the boogie-woogie [laughs]. The key thing is long as people happy that's what counts. Now that was the same thing with Virginia Beach they had up there, they had, course they had a little train and all that up at Virginia Beach. I worked there too. As a matter of fact, sometime when it would be real crowed there they would pull me from here set me up there, put somebody else here because that water had a lotta current in it and you needed your best lifeguards there.

IL: And how long did you work there?

OW: Um...I must've worked there about 6 years. And then I eventually went to parks and I stayed there the rest of my time. I ran pools and uh, tennis.

IL: Um were there any other races that were on the beach beside white and black?

OW: Well they had, the Spanish started coming when I went over to the other side. You had a few that came here before I went over there. So otherwise what happed is mix the beach, ya know, everybody had to go there up cause they didn't have any other place to go. But everything was normally good. We didn't have many problems because we always had the police force close by. Everything went fine.

Charles: Did the Civil rights act of '64, did that close the beach immediately? Or did the signs just come down and people could go on either side?

OW: No, no, no. When, the '64 came they closed it.

Charles: closed.

OW: Right, so me and Harry went over to the other side.

Charles: What happened to the rest of that staff over here?

OW: Oh, most of them had went to other jobs. But like I said me and Harry...Mr. Ferguson the manager, he went to another park. As a matter of fact he went downtown.

Charles: What happened to this property then...immediately when, what when on here afterwards?

OW: After they closed it, wasn't too much of anything. We just came over and kept it clean until they government bought it.

IL: Did they make any other changes, I know that there is a volleyball court over there and other stuff, have there been any changes over there?

OW: You mean over on the other side?

IL: Uh huh

OW: Well basically the boat ramps was improved.

IL: What were they like before?

OW: wasn't that good [laughs]. And then they improved the swimming. I used to do a lot of boating in the area. I dove for many years that was my fun at the time...and I was very good at it. She don't want me to go out now [referring to wife]. [laughs].

Charles: Skin diving? Scuba diving?

OW: Yeah, both.

IL: Alright, I'll say it again, that's all we have for you [laughs].

Interviewee: Boyd Valentine, employee at Biscayne National Park

Transcription [1h13m13s]

Interviewer: Iyshia Lowman. Biscayne National Park intern and MA student at USF

IL: This is Iyshia Lowman, Master's student at the University of South Florida, intern at Biscayne National Park. I am interviewing Boyd Valentine, employee at Biscayne National Park. And Boyd do you give me consent, uh, to video tape and audio record this interview.

BV: Yes, I do.

IL: Okay, this interview is going to be for Biscayne National Park as well as my master's thesis do you give me permission to do that?

BV: Yes.

IL: Okay, thank you very much. Okay Boyd first off, uh, let's start with some information about you. Would you state your name, uh, age, and location where this interview is taking place?

BV: My name is Boyd Valentine. I am 58 years old and this interview is taking place at Biscayne National Park...of Homestead.

IL: Okay, and what racial groups do you identify with?

BV: Black.

IL: Okay could you just tell me about your experiences at Homestead Bayfront Beach during the, uh, 1950s and 60s?

BV: When I go back, you know as time goes on, you know, bein that I'm 58 that ended in like in 19-, in the 60s the late 60s, mid 60s. I don't even know, remember what year, but you know my mom, she was a very protective lady. We didn't come to the beach that much, but when we came we came with people who she know was going to look after us make sure we wasn't getting into trouble or anything. But, uh, coming out here, I remember coming out here the...I remember the roads they were more like the 1st bridge up there, when you come in where the blinking lights are. That was the last chance you had to get on this to get on this side, you know to go to the so called black beach. And uh, I remember a sign said "colored beach" at one time and the other side of the road, I never experienced that until they did integrate but we used to come down the road with one area, it turns into more like a rocky road. You know, its gravel and we used to come around here and I'm trying to remember exactly how it looked, but I remember when we used to get in there things used to be a lot of, a lot of seaweed in some area...and we got into the water the rocks and you didn't notice them right then but they were you know you really had to get out so far the rocks got a little sharper...and uh, I remember fish being in the water, occasionally a jellyfish something like that, you know, occasionally I remember seeing a jellyfish out there and uh we used to we were so, we were actually comfortable out here. You know you come to the beach and everything, you have a little picnic.

There were not too many “Brazilians” out here. No, I can’t remember and snack bars and I can’t remember any lifeguards, not saying that there weren’t any I just can’t remember. One time actually I can say this now, my uh, a couple of my friends we played hooky and we came out here you know one of the other guys I hung out with, he had a car. We came out here and people out here they were actually swimming and we was swimming in the water. This, an incident that nobody knows about the guys that I was with they they’re dead now. There was this one girl I don’t know who she was now, she was a young girl around about 14. She was in the water and she got out there and she couldn’t touch the bottom, she got a little too deep and she start goin under and swallowing water and I swum over there and grabbed her. I pulled her back and then I walked her out of the pool and she was coughin and gaggin. I think she was drownin...and I pull her out, I pulled her out. She was pretty. I was looking at her and I set her down and she ran over. She said told her brother that, “Why didn’t you come get me? He had to save my life!” I say “Wow, I saved her life?” That was the end of that. I guess I did save someone’s life sometimes. I mean one time in my life, but it wasn’t like “wow, that would’ve been totally different if she drowned.” Girl drowns at the beach. I don’t know. At the black beach they prolly would’ve you know, they prolly...that wasn’t that other side that was this side over here. That was just one incident. Another incident that I remember we came out here, I can’t exactly say who we were with. I mean, like I say I’m 58 now and we had uh, like wieners and everything. Then the little fire roasted the wieners on the fire. I hated wieners, [laughs] still do. And we roasted the wieners on the fire, ya know. We had little marshmallows and stuff. I hated marshmallows too, especially when they were roasted, I mean I was a picky kid. It don’t look like it now but I was. [laughs] And um, we stay out here...I don’t know if this place closed at a certain time or not...but I remember the kids a lot of kids played. Ya know, the kids from up the, ya know, Randy??, Goulds uh, lot of them come up here. And uh, havin fun, I guess do what people do at the beach. And I like I told ya wasn’t too many times I came out here to swim, but we used to come out here and fish. On here what we call the Jetty now? That walk that goes to the Jetty? That actually the walk wasn’t there then. It was actually just rock that went all the way out to the end of the channel before they blocked it off and actually, I don’t know what happened now, but the tide actually come up here now then they used to. Cause we used to walk all the way to the end. And my Dad and I, my sister, we used to go out there and fish. And when we go out there people used to be in the little pool out right here. We called it a pool. And we come back to fish, we caught there jacks, barracudas. And then we come back and always wash them...and uh, you know, it was just fun people havin fun. And we go out there again, ya know and I spent most of my time on the Jetty with my dad was to go fishing. As far as the beach area, I didn’t swim too much in there. I learned how to swim when I was 10 years old. The boy scouts used to come out here. Now, for a long time I thought that there was a drowning out here. My friend usually said it wasn’t here, it was in a lake somewhere, but I thought it was out here when a guy by the name of Kelly Scott. He was in the boy scouts. The boys scout leader then, I don’t know, can I say his name? He’s dead now. Name was Joe Remy and Joe Remy was the boys scout leader and some way Kelly Scott drowned. That was a big thing in Homestead then. When he drowned, um, everybody, I mean a lot of people just didn’t die in Homestead like that especially kids. He, that thing, was, it’s more like a hurting thing. It was like “wow.” His family became loved by everyone because everybody giving sympathy and everything. And um like I say for a long time I thought it was out here and I’m pretty sure it was, but like I say Julius has a better memory than me. He remembers things like I can’t

imagine. But that incident you know it was a separate incident, I remember all the guys ya know when I got older right before they closed this down we used to swim across.

IL: To...?

BV: The other side, ya know just get in the water and swim across to see who could swim across. Now, I say "we," but it wasn't really "we." Me I used to get about 1/3 of the way out and I come back. I was cautious. I say "forget this." Then when the water got a little cold, a little deep, I didn't know how deep that water was, I just headed back. Like I say again, I never remember a life guard. If lifeguards were here, they were more out here in the earlier parts of the day and I don't remember who they were if they were here. You can scratch that.

IL: And when you swam out, that 1/3 of the way did you, you saw the other side of the beach? The white side of the beach or you just mainly saw the black side?

BV: Uh, no actually um, you couldn't, I couldn't I can't remember seeing you know they didn't have a lot of these buildings out here. You could hear things over the other side and where the headquarters building is now? Those were where weeds I mean mangroves. When you go out on the jetty you can see that side. It wasn't, it didn't look like it did today, but you can see on that side it was more like a foreign land. It was something that you always looked at and you saw wonder how it is over there, but you reluctant to go on that side as a matter of fact you wouldn't go, your parents wouldn't take you on that side. I can't remember if we were even allowed to go on that side...maybe to work or something like that but like I said it didn't bother us.

IL: Well, um what did you see when you look over there? Did you see people doing stuff?

BV: Activities you know, they was playing, you know you couldn't really see everything over there. You know they didn't have the things that they have now but you could see you know things that people just playing you know I can't actually I remember seeing people kinda I long way off like I say mangroves blocking a lot of things. You go out on the jetty you can see things, I didn't know, I really can't say, they kept the mangroves up so cant, ya know, maybe see people in bikinis ya know, I don't think, I don't think that was accepted. [laughs] It's true. It's more like remember how I said people very possessive of what's not theirs because you know one color or race they say "wow, That's ours," no its not. It's whatever, people have their freedom. They proly be ridiculed, persecuted and everything for doing certain things but hey, people always had freedom. Other people take it away from them. That goes on today, I will not get on--I will not get into that part. It goes on in a certain, I mean, if you really look close look between the lines you'll see it. And it's certain things you say "wow, people still possessive." They still shallow minded and that is one of the, that's one of the biggest things that...it, people say things they don't realize what they saying they actually don't. Like uh, I been a boat mechanic, I just say this right quick, I been a boat mechanic for ya know, I am Mercury [boat engine brand] technician. My title is boat mechanic, that's what the title, I say I'm not a mechanic! Mechanics don't exist anymore! They really don't, but whatever, you know, I say boat technician, boat mechanic and um, I have actually had people doubt my abilities. It's not uh, it's not too much you can do about people doubting your abilities. I mean, uh, all races can doubt you abilities, but there are some white people gonna doubt you, there's a lotta black people who gone doubt you, but there's still this tension that goes on, "wonder does her really know?"

No matter what you do no matter how things improve people can't accept things sometimes people can't accept things. They, they, I mean it's uh is more like uh a superior type attitude and a person feels better when someone is inferior to them and believe it or not it happens. It's a mental thing or an emotional thing whatever it is some people just feel better when they feel someone is inferior to them because it makes them seem like they're more than what they really are. And people have trouble with that they can't, uh, I don't know if it's, I think a lot of its teachin. People teach you and they get it embedded in you, I mean you get it embedded in you in your mind in the back of your head. I mean something I mean uh...you take uh, an animal and you can train that animal to do a certain thing. I mean it's hard to break that animal from that. I mean that is the way of life. Some people are like that. There was one guy I brought fishing. It was fairly recent about 2 years ago, I brought him fishing out here one night. He's an older guy and I'm not gonna call his name, but you know he's the dad of a friend of mine and uh his daughter said she knew this guy named Boyd Valentine that would take her fishing. Old guy about 70 years old, he was so afraid. He was asking questions like "Do any white people hang out there? You know, them people will get you out there, they bother with you, you could end up dead." I said "no, Biscayne is bout the safest place you can be in Homestead." I mean no one's gonna bother you out here and he was so frightened he came out here and you could see the nervousness on him. And, uh, after a while when he start catchin them snapper, especially when, uh, those 14 inch snapper, you could see him calming down. I mean, He was calming down, I mean tremendously. We allowed to catch, ya know 5 snappers over 10 inches, you know and I caught a few and gave them all to him, he was so happy. Well ya know I thought about that for a while, I say, this guy still lives in the past. His memory is so intense that it still affects him.

IL: But you helped with that.

BV: Oh yeah, I mean, it, I mean-momentarily. I guess it did relax him a little bit. I mean, he relax a bit more and he prolly seen something that uh, realize something that he never thought existed before that people really not out to get ya anymore. Ya know, you have some that, but a lot of people don't. I have friends of all races and I mean good friends, creed or whatever and I have never looked at it like that. I just look at it like people has been, most people been naïve to the world and um believe me its best to not say a lot of things because there's a lot of things going on that you don't know about and sometimes you can get paranoid. A person, sometimes I can get paranoid but I try not to ya know for my protectionary thing. I say wow man I may have gone too far...but Iyshia, in the early years of my life it was more intense than it is now. The older you get, the less it bothers you. A lot of things don't bother you now. You know you getting to me being 58 in 20 years I'll be 78 years old. If I, I'll be 78 regardless dead or alive. I don't have much, I don't have that much longer on this planet. Things just don't bother with you. I mean fear, it just don't bother you the way it used to. While you're reluctant to go here reluctant to go there, right now as of today I was born in the era I was discriminated against and people don't understand it. People think you're supposed to get over things. As a child, that's where you experience the most...you experience the most fear, caution, and everything else. That's when things are really burned in your head. And it's hard to get them out. When you're uncomfortable with things as a kid and uh if you were a kid and some you had some kinda fault with you and someone made fun of you, that's gonna stick with you throughout your adulthood. It's just certain things that someone could say that bothers you and there's some things that people can do now, there's some places that I could go right now I'm not comfortable at. Even if the people are friendly, I don't feel it, I see it, but I don't feel it. If it makes me uncomfortable I

don't want to be there. Believe me it's not fear, its emotions, it's the feelings that I get. It makes you...the feelings it, you revert to the old misery miserable type feeling you had and you don't like that type of stuff. I mean people right now anybody, if someone comes up to a person they says uh, something that makes them think of something that really bothered them before they don't want to hear it. Activities, a lot of things go on that you don't want to hear anymore. I heard the n-word so much when I was a kid. It was so, it was accepted, I mean it was really, I mean it was something over like nobody liked it but nobody wasn't saying anything too much. I mean, it was, I mean the people say it but that's how they address you and it was not like uh, spook, n-word and all this but I mean more like whatever and then you throw a racist word back or something like that someone comes in the car you know how they do and then you more like "wow." But Imma tell you, you're really not too aware of a lot of things until you are aware of them, until someone makes you aware of them. Someone starts retaliating...they are more like and then it starts bothering you and then that's when the anger comes it. Believe me if you don't control that, you don't get over yourself, it'll bloom, it'll emerge. You start thinking, doing, and actually believing stuff that's not even there. You know when someone can say a certain thing you relate it to other person who said it. A lot of people have different meanings and then some people just don't realize. Like we talked about earlier, what they are saying. When you get a super sensitive person like me that is it could be beneficial, but it's more of a curse. Makes your life very unpleasant a lot of times. You want to go to a neutral place but you don't feel it, I guess that's why I am so fascinated with Norway, cause I was thinking. So when I started researching, I kinda lost my feelings a little bit for it. You know I've gone to France some people say go back to Africa, I've never been to Africa. Never in my life have I been to Africa. Matter of fact, I've never been outta this country other than the Virgin Islands and that's American. I went to the British Virgin Islands that's as far as I been outta the country. I feel uncomfortable in a lot of things right now. I would defend myself in a lot of ways, you know, I'm not afraid of people. Never been afraid of people but so of now I'm not afraid to speak. I will speak my mind, people look at me and they're reluctant to say a lot of things to me because of...they say, you don't want to make Boyd angry. Those are degrading words to me. I don't wanna, I'm not the Hulk. "Don't make me angry, you wouldn't like me if I'm angry." I don't like that. I am not a violent guy or anything and um, when a person does something or says something always thought you supposed to...I mean in my mind I have to blown that match out before it becomes a forest fire. Believe me people will go too far. Sometimes a person does things, they get into they own zone and a person does a person will do a thing because they are trying to break you down so they can entertain themselves for some reason or they can feel like they want to feel about something and uh, so I always more like act defensive on a lotta things out here. People come to you on the street, you know someone just come by and just say a dirty word to you. And you're like especially, I look at people I look at the way they look, I mean, they all walks of life. You have people what they call different names...white people, black people, they have different names that they call people. They have the Southern people the Northern people and you some people are just totally ignorant, hateful, taught to be hateful, they kids they teach them kids to be hateful and I still don't know what they're doing. They use the words "They stink!" How? I never understood that. He say "they stink!" What you mean they stink? You know what stinks? Uh, a skunk, when he lets out his musk. I mean you still have that scent lingering and uh, a stinkbug stinks, a polecat stinks. People don't stink, unless they don't bathe. Now it don't take the black person, red person, yellow person, because that "they stink, they steal." Iyshia, what I mean, can you identify with that? How in the world, "THEY steal." I mean, they do this if you ever go on

the sight I was on you won't believe the things people still say these days. I never finished that sight cause I can't understand, Iyshia or Aaliyah. You know the singer Aaliyah? When she died in the plane crash, I read an article, you know, online that's where I usually read my newspaper now online, much better and it came in "who cares about this 'n-b,' she just a priority singing all that rap crap, they outta all die!" I say, "God, people is still ignorant. It's still go back to Africa." Who in America is from America? I know the American Indians when Columbus or when the Pilgrims came they were here. Columbus discovered America or RE-discovered America whatever you want to call it, America the beautiful. I'm not gonna get into some things because it'll be you know it was its not really appropriate, but uh...when someone goes into a place and claims "God's country or God's world," whatever. They take the uh, if you notice that there's a lotta kind of religions there are lot of different kinds of bibles and America has different cultures, religions in America. They say the land of the free, land you know or United States...United States of America, okay? You have, uh, the people who wrote the King James bible here new King James bible, the uh, this bible and then you have the people who wrote the Mormon's bible the Jehovah witness and then you have the Muslims and when you think about it you come to America, you say, "wow, all these other people in the world, they goin to hell." They have all the wrong ideal of wonder who deceived them. Tell me this part who said that we were right? Can you prove that we wrote the right bible? It was translated in the right language as us but the people will see they do the same thing. They will say those people are pagans, infidels, they are everything. People say it all over the world. Tell me whose right? You don't know. Imma say it right nobody knows anything. They can't even tell where they came from. I mean over the past, I mean we can actually record back, you know, from the bible 6,000 years how it become now in the last 100 years I mean people on this planet has came farther than they did in the 1st 5,900 years? You know how many, how much technology they have from 1912 to now? You go to that Pioneer Museum, you'll see in the 40s hey um the equipment that they were using, the telephones that they were using and the things that they have now, it was unimaginable back then that they have a cell phone this thing that they call a cell phone, touch tone. My phone here I can take it and read books, whole novels. This thing is just like unlimited, I really can't use it that good, but [laughs] you know. I mean that's for the one of young kids, you know born into this stuff still and old world you know, if um, if I could imagine a lot of things like what people think, I think it's a miserable, miserable life to hate. It gotta be. People, uh, ya know back in the 60s when uh James Brown you know started it, ya know, "Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud." Ya had the Black Panthers come out. The Black Panthers were a good organization, they weren't violent and everything, ya know, but people gonna make them look violent. They got to get the leaders out of there. They got to get the people that who's going to bring these people to the realization that they may be someone. And, uh, so they started saying all kinds of corrupt things about it, arresting the leaders, while falsely accusing them of things. Angela Davis...I mean geez wiz. Yeah, I mean it's uh, you wonder, ya know why did they do that. It's an ego trip, superiority, "I wanna be God. We are God." The white Christian race, uh, when I get to heaven "Wow, I love you black people music." These things I heard. "Music that you black people play in church...when I get to heaven, I'm goin to, I'm comin over to y'all side so I can hear that stuff!" I heard these things with my own ears and I was like..."wow...are you sure you gone get there?" I be sayin to myself, "Man, you gone have to pray just to go to hell." [laughs] Geez wiz what kinda attitude is that? What? I mean, when we when you get to heaven. Tell me this, Iyshia, how-who knows who's right? Anyone knows God? Do they? I mean you been told this, you been told that ya know. I mean when you young that's when you start believing things.

I mean anybody who can—when you think of these things if you can believe in Santa Claus without a doubt when you were a child. I mean this fat guy with the red suit insisted in your mind. He was real. No matter what the odds were you never doubted. You look up on your house you have a flat roof, you have the only thing up there is a pipe and you wonder how in the heck that guy got down that pipe. You never think about how that guy goes around to millions of houses in one night, you have no concept of time. You, really when you a kid, you really don't think about that there's a place outside of your little town there. You don't doubt. That is why people are so conceited with their thinking these days when it comes to racism! Because they taught as kids they have no doubt that people are inferior. That's why that beach was black, that beach over there white. 1/3 the size as that one. That was, I mean, when we started goin over there, people started goin over there I couldn't believe the size of that place. It was like, I'm not kidding, it's about 1/3 the size of that place. When I got in that water over there, believe me it wasn't too much tension because we went there a lot of people stopped goin. Oh, they honestly did, not kidding. Um, I remember getting in that water and walkin...walking out in the deeper water, I didn't feel the sharp stones anymore. They were all smooth. It was like "wow." I wouldn't have dared try to swim across there. I prolly wouldn't have made it. It's like "whoa, this is pretty nice you know." It's um, you forget about things using that picnic grills. I can do a lil picnicking out there and everything and um, the **solidity [34m35s]** of the water it's the same and everything but um, I could've swore that water seems cleaner. I think it might have seemed cleaner because of the, uh, sea growth on the bottom. Out here like I say there was sea weeds in there and there were some over there too but not like here and we had more. The sand looks better and the water couldn't seemed cleaner cause all the water come from the ocean and we still had the little fish over there.

IL: When it was integrated did you got to the beach more?

BV: Well I actually went, when it was integrated, I was uh, more like a teenager then, I mean my mom was more like losing her grip on me for confining me in a place. It was like, you gotta let go sometimes. I mean, I'm 15, 16 years old hey...you take off sometimes. You don't have to long as you be home at a certain time. Have too much...I mean I was one of the, I was a very good swimmer by that time, I was on the swim team at school and uh, so...I didn't have, I don't remember having a lot of trouble over there, you know when they integrated it. And you know like I said, I really don't know what year they integrated, I really don't, but I know that, uh, this place over here you still have to come at the entrance right there where the red light, the blinking lights there was a flood there and you turn off the main road, it was actually 2 roads come down and uh, it might have been the 2nd road I can't remember that good, but you came on down and that little bridge that place where you came in today, that little place where you went cross?

IL: Yeah.

BV: That was, that didn't even exist. That canal came all the way through. All the way through, I mean that was cut off, I mean could not get over there at all. As far as I know right now that side wasn't even workin and I don't know anyone that worked over there. I don't know all this place was the county's'. At one time and when they uh I think the park service actually had somethin to do with the uh integration of the place over here because you know this became Biscayne National Park it was come Biscayne National Park and it was uh I mean very historic out here, I mean Biscayne Bay and everything I mean that, it's a treasure out there, that place is

beautiful. And uh it's not like it used to be all the coral reefs and everything because I guess its I don't know if it's dying or it's not like it used to be. You know they putting in the effort to restore a lot of areas and preserve and then the water park. They did a great job. This a beautiful place to me, I don't say that too often. I love working here, I love being here. I like being here more than working. I don't want to work anymore. I been workin a long time, but I enjoy the park a lot. I stay here after work. I might stay here bout 2 or 3 hours. I mean, I don't, it's a lot of things that I don't be concerned about like I was. I be more concerned about safety walkin around town than you know out here. Any parts of town, aint no safety issue out here.

IL: How long have you lived, uh, worked at...here?

BV: I've worked at Biscayne since 2007. I worked at Everglades since 1975 up until 2007. Down in Flamingo the whole time. This my 36th year in the park service.

IL: Congratulations.

BV: Thank you. I never worked for anything else, I mean anyone else. I went to the military, from there to the National Park Service, always worked for the government. Apart from the few guy-jobs when I got outta high school. Get me a car or something.

IL: So you were born in Homestead?

BV: No, I was born in Greenville, Mississippi...and my mom, she was a single mom, she had 4 kids, we-some kinda way we ended up in a place called Coachville, Pennsylvania and believe me I remember that place. I was about 3 or 4 years old, I know I was. I remember we lived there, because she was a migrant worker. And uh this building that we lived in was uh people go I don't know who used to keep the kids while other people go work, I only remember the building. A long building and I know that that bathrooms or the outhouses that were at the end of the building. The rooms or the apartments that we were in proly rooms they didn't have a bath room. You went down to the end of the building to cook and to use the bathroom when you need to. And uh some kinda way I don't remember leaving Pennsylvania but I remember when we 1st arrived in Homestead. I get kids are able to sleep the whole journey. I guess as you come from Pennsylvania back on a bus back in them days I mean with the vehicle that the way they were made and the way the roads were very few that they have 27 oh, was the main road comin down here then. Ya know, I don't know how old US 1 is not really but uh I remember being in Pennsylvania one time and I remember being down here. The 1st place that I remember seein was Williams hotel, **Vica [41min]** Williams hotel. I'm gonna show you that in my book. A matter of fact I am going to if you're interested, I'm going to give you that book and I will, I mean I actually will, I like what you're doing here and it's a very cheap book. It's not really that special at all, I'm goin to get me another one, but uh I think you'll find it interesting. I remember um, Vica hotel and we were living in a place called Mary Russells for a night. And after that we moved to a place right behind 4th St on 3rd terrace a single road, you know terrace always cuts off and it was a long building we was living in apartment number 4. I was 4 years old I remember my birthday. I turned 4, so that made me about 3 years old when we were in Pennsylvania. You know back then when you was a kid that young time really don't exist an month is 10 years to you I mean things are bigger than they are these days. I remember we moving on over there place called Elroy school on a place where we moved called 6th court. Moving on 6th court we

stayed there, and like I believe about 5 years my mom met a guy by the name of Charles Williams, my step-dad, that's the one I used to call my dad. She met him and we had-you know she had more kids I mean actually she had 8 kids with him and she had 4 already so there was 12 of us. Ad um that's the one who used to bring me out here all the time. When we came but uh it was so many things that when on here, when you get this book when you read this book, very easy read, you'll see a lot of things that went on in Homestead. I mean, has a lot of information this book is written by ya know co-authored by Jesse Robinson and uh actually called it Jesse Robinson cause he was a great community leader in Homestead. And back then he came from uh a town up in he was born up in the Panhandle of Florida somewhere. You'll see it in there too and uh, great community leader like I say you know there a lot of activity went on back then, but it was major separation back then segregation. The town started right there at the Florida East Coast railroad tracks in Homestead which don exist and more. It's the metro bus pathway now. They dug those railroad tracks up some time ago right there at the tracks I called it white town. Florida East Coast Railroad was right there, they tore that building down too I actually have pictures of that tons of pictures of that thing somewhere but not from the beach though. That railroad when you go we used to go in the back of the railroad and the 1st place "boom" downtown right there on Mowry St. That was one of the main roads there but Krome Ave? That road is old. I used to see pictures of that you know renovation and everything I used to see pictures of I got pictures of that road when it was dirt, wooden building. That 1st national bank which is a police station now, Homestead Police Station that was the 1st National bank established in 1932 as the 1st national bank but that building was there way before that. It was much narrower than that used to be called J.D. Red a place on it be JD Reds and as time went on they actually expanded that building the to some JD Red they made it bigger and better and everything. That's when uh, Jesse started working there. He started working there for \$1 a day. I'm not gonna talk too much about that because that's all in the book. And uh you'll find that very interesting I love history. I mean you know, out here you know on the town history I like the other parts too. I mean I do research whole lot of things. I have a book called "Ghost towns of the old west." Well "Ghost towns of the old West" is actually, a ghost town is determined by you know a town that is not inhabited by people anymore and out west they have I mean this book is this thick. It has so many places on there that have a story right there. If you want to actually want to go back in time, I mean imagine. Oh man, that's the book to read. It makes you feel I mean gives you a feeling, a brand new feeling like it does when I go back in time you know. Actually let me tell you something lyshia, actually, being comfortable is way feels much better than being modern and back in the days uh, a lot of people were comfortable. It was a comfort zone a lot of people called it. And I always thought in my mind the less you know the less things you get into the more happier you are. You think about there are some things the more you get involved, the more complicated you know life could be. You know I mean? You don't have to sometimes right know you know I'm in so much activity now just being a citizen of the US you know there are just so many things you have to do these days you have to deal with everything and um it's not relaxation. You can't, it's not the part where you just sit down and just--there's no part sitting down and doing anything. There no such thing as sitting down and doing anything. If you do, everything around you deteriorate. And when I say deteriorate you'll end up with nothing. If you have a home and it's paid for and you just gonna enjoy your home for the rest of your life...miss paying taxes on it for 3 years. You know what they're gonna do. They're gonna sell your taxes to the people who out there waiting on someone and then when they sell your taxes it's more like on hold until for 3 month until this outstanding

interest rate goes up on it and some people can't pay it and then the next year they do it again and it I mean it doubles every 3 months or something like that and it get outrageous in about 3 years' time those people come claim your home. I mean you can have it paid for and they get it for a little less \$25,000. But the paid the tax people. They can take you house, you can't set round and do anything anymore. It's over its gone. So your whole life you gone have to be partially stressed out just to hold on to your life unless you move somewhere in Canada up in the wilderness and freeze to death. Someone told me if I ever move to Canada I'll never come back. I don't think that's true, when the weather gets below 50, it bothers me, I mean I like it but momentarily, I don't want to live in it. I've been to New York in the winter time, that is not forgiving. Oh, my God, I didn't know it could get that cold. It can. What a town New York, 10 minutes from Ontario where the snow, you have snow drifts where it actually snows sideways.

IL: [laughs] Weird.

BV: I mean, its blowing it's just a blizzard its coming off the lake I guess. Cold there. People get used to it. My daughter spent 2-3 years up there in the military. We used to go visit her "OOO." You can go from here to probably about a quarter mile down the road, I don't think I would've made it back. I would've frozen solid, it was cold. But you know they're native birds, not native, I don't know crows everywhere. I see crows out there when its 5 below zero walkin around. I don't know how in the heck they did it. They just walkin around, I don't know what it is. I think they survivors. Mankind should study crows. Not to be conniving like a crow ya know, study how they survive. You have any more questions? Let's gone knock some questions out, I mean.

IL: I have no problem listening to you talk, um, I want to know were there any parties, events, or anything that y'all would have at the beach or get together for?

BV: Talking about in my older days something like that? Oh yeah, uh, like I say the boy scouts come out here. Okay, I remember I used to put out newspapers. The Homestead News Leader. And it was a guy he actually used to work for the park service but he uh the main guy who recruited the paperboys, my brother started being the paper boy first you know then I took over you know. I mean we were making tons of money. 5-6 dollars a week, I man Oh man I mean, come on! And um the papers back then you know wasn't--they came out on Thursdays and Sundays and they were 15 cent a week. We used to keep the nickel and tha paper gets tha dime. And uh that's why you know we had a big paper route. Bo Ellington, uh, he uh what's the uh...Homestead News, the recruiter for the paperboys, he picked up he brought all our papers and everything and every now and then he would bring us out here and have a picnic. And uh, we'd have uh, we'd buy these big bag, he'd buy us this big bag of wieners called Circus wieners. I re—I would never forget those wieners they were the worst. Awfulist tasting wieners in the history of wieners. They tasted like they were made out of 70% flour. They were awful, but they was cheap. You get a big bag of 50 for about \$2, I'm not kiddin' and they cooked all of them and people run around happy they didn't care. Used to have sodas back then uh they had a few can sodas but a lot of sodas were in bottles. Ah, we aint had to many we had Kool-Aid in the big cooler and everything have it in a cup and I mean having potato chips. I can't remember havin hamburgers but we probably did I don't know and the uh--when we used to come out here we used to have chaperones you know we had grown people you know you have to have a certain amount of grown people to watch all those kids and everything so um, so we had

chaperones but you know but anyway uh, I don't remember exactly who they were we used to come here and we used to have fun. I mean the uh, I can't remember any BBQ grills in the picnic there might have been some there might have been the ones—some, there might have been a few. I don't think it was that many and I remember a shower being outside. We didn't have the inside shower over the other side they had the inside showers and outside showers but over here we might have had, I can't really remember, but I remember the shower you know when you go out you have to hit yourself with water 1st you know to get used to it before you get in the water. And Mr. Bo he was one of the nicest men you know I go—I can't remember, he worked at Everglades for a long time. He passed away some years ago. And he had a son names Winston Ellington, he's still around actually he's in that book as a little old kid. Winston's about 60, 70 years old now, but he was in the choir. Thing about it he looks that same way. Gosh. Geez wiz, I mean. And um, I don't remember coming out her to have a family picnic as a matter of fact I know we didn't, some people did, but we never did. My mom she, uh, she wasn't and activities, outdoor activities lady at all, you know. Like I said she was very protective and water like that...that's more like death penalty to her. That's dangerous like a lot of people think of snakes, deadly. All snakes should be dead, you know how some people think about snakes. And uh I mean when it comes to water she always warned us about water. "Stay away from that water!" Drown, she tells these stories about people drowning. Scare the crap outta ya. You know and when I started coming up my favorite thing was water I loved to swim. Used to be out there the few times that we did come out here and have a lot of fun. It was totally different. You know we had a pool in Homestead too.

IL: Oh, really?

BV: It was in Roby George Park. It was uh, for the black part of time. That's right on 4th St, Roby George Park. I think at 4th St and 11th Ave. Roby George Park is still there they had a pool. I don't know if it's still there now. I don't really think it was, but that pool was there a long time. Only black people swim in that pool. Now right on the corner of Camel Drive and US 1, there was a pool there, guess what pool that was? You got it! I never ever swim in that pool, I never thought of swimming in it. I didn't want to swim in it. I loved our pool the one we had. You know 8 ft. you know and I was in um, I learned how to swim in 5th grade. When I was in 5th grade we started goin to that pool in summer school. My mom always put us in summer school, that was the best babysitter in the world. And um, we used to go, that's when I learned how to swim, free swim lessons. Uh, and that's when I really got hooked on swimming and we uh, never...let me see. We never had a tragedy in that pool something like that. I swallowed some water but you know that's one of them things. I remember this one time, this black guy, it was a older man, he came out there he had a white boy with him. This boy was about 4 years old and he was there you know looking you know like "wow." This boy he got up on the diving board and he jumped in everyone like [gasps] and that little rascal went down and came back up. We never seen anyone that small swim. Say "whoa! You see that itty bitty boy he swimming!" I mean, heck, you know like we were 10 years old learning how to swim and I'm sure there were a lot of people that could swim but that young? I don't even really know when they put that pool there but that's how a lot of people learned how to swim in that pool, plus out here I guess a few people learned out here otherwise it was the canals. The rock pits that we did a lot of swimming in. Rock pit right off Reverend road, I remember swimming there as a teenager. I don't think that thing has a bottom. I mean you know how Florida is Florida goes down. I mean and its kinda [makes sound="flume"] goes in to nothing in some places. That thang is deep, it's still out

there now. I think it used to be Florida rock and sand and we used to have a little place called the mussel white. It was still, its across Palm Drive in Florida city. I think, uh, actually they start digging there again for rock and sand and well people used to go out there. I heard there was a few drownings out there. It's some—at the one right on Reverend Rd. and Davis Parkway it been quite a few drownings out there and uh you can't really call this a consequence of not having nowhere to swim because we did. You know in my days we had the pool we had the beach area out here. Sometimes people just chose to go out there and swim ya know kids they sneak off. I was one of them. Fortunately, I'm here now so I didn't drown, I could've easily drowned, but you got another place right off Lucy St and 6th Ave. Right now there is a neighborhood community center. There used to be a rock pit, it was and oh my God did some kids drowned out there. I don't know how they—I know we had some kids that drowned out there. They used to swim at that place. Its right behind that Fannie Turner which is called the...right behind Fannie Turners home. That's the home Fannie Turner was the 1st you know, maybe that actually established schools down in Homestead. She had a house build right there on the corner of Lucy St. and 6th Ave and it's still there today and it was back in the 30 something, maybe or maybe 40 somethin like that. It was nice, it was Commissioner Moss office right now but right there behind that street was the rock pit right in that area used to be wooded area and they used to warn us a lot. I mean the thing is we used to actually make up poems about not going to the rock pit. Um, "Don't be a fool, just swim in the pool. You might live long enough to finish school." That was mine you know. [laughs] 1s place. "Goin to the...flowers in the garden gotta be chopped swimming in the rock pit gotta be stopped." Written by I'm not kiddin one of the Florida City commissioner Eugene Berry. He won the 1st prize he beat me out. I bet if you talk to him now he's remember that. You know some of my experiences in Homestead, aw man. We didn't get our 1st vehicle til around 196—maybe '64, '63. My dad had a Chevrolet panel truck which they call SUV's these days. SUV's just came out. Chevrolet came out with a 6 cylinder engine size 230 engine, I remember that so good. He bought it from a guy named Mr. Israel who was from Nassau and the top speed on it was 80 but it only get 60 and wow we were livin high on the hog. People used to pick at our truck, make fun of it. We don't care. I mean that was like uh...escalade to us, the equivalent to these days and uh, I remember uh, getting out. [sound of someone opening and closing the door]. I remember living in that place on L. Lewis for the 1st time going to school. I didn't even know my name was Valentine until I go in the 1st grade. All my brothers and sister's name are Hudson. My mom names me after my grandmother because she said she wanted to keep the name goin on. You know I didn't ask the thing is like I caught hell with that name. I was Boyd Valentine. I didn't never think that there was another Boyd Valentine in the world. Who could be named—it was the doctor, the doctor that delivered me in Greenville, MS was named Dr. Boyd, she named me his 1st name and named my last name Valentine. The reason she named me his 1st name cause it was \$35 what it costed me to be born and she didn't have it he let her go so I was a k-mart baby. I was born absolutely free. It was like "wow" and my name ended up being Boyd Valentine, my grandmother name is Lindsey Valentine when she married a guy named Louis Valentine from Louisiana. He was in Greenville, MS because at that time they were workin on the levy. You know for the river and he met her then, but I didn't know she was married before then to a guy but you know she had a divorce and everything and my mom she loved her grandmomma which was Lindsey Valentine which I end up with the name Valentine. But guess what? I don't have any sons. Two of my daughters kept their name after they got married, naw, 2 of my-- all 3 of my daughters kept their name, they loved it. But the kids names

is whatever they were. Some of the girls named Valentine, but the boys Hortons, Nunezs, there aint no Valentine. If Tamera don't, I mean Tamera not gonna have any more kids. Kim...Angie, she has a boy named Valentine so I can go on. Maybe the grandkids are gonna have, I don't know I don't think I'll care after I'm dead, but I would like for it to keep on going. I love history, I like to go back. Ancestry.com, I don't fool with that stuff that's phony to me. What I believe is people to people dot com. Get me some old people that mostly gone now. When I was growing up I hung with old people they could tell you stories and their wise...most of them are wise, but you know they could tell you stories. Unbelievable. You know the stories they used to tell me, so things scare the crap out you. My mom used to tell me stories about in Mississippi and everything, a lot of things she kept secret like she didn't really want to think about them too much. She didn't have the most happiest life in the world. When she was comin up I made my world happy, I actually did, I do now. My favorite person, my favorite partner is me. I get off somewhere and I can do what I want to do in my mind. People can't relate to that and there's some people who can actually, actually deal with you and actually enjoy the things you enjoy. The people who don't they really don't understand the things that you are going through in your head. Sometimes you have to reminisce just to recapture that peace you had in older days like I said before modern times are not as good as the peaceful times you had back in the days. I mean the less complicated things were the better off they was. The less you know about a lot of things the better off you are like I was sayin earlier the different things as a kid you believe. You can either corrupt a kid or you can teach him some good stuff and a lot of people, some people they decide to bring up their kids like them, corrupted them. Discriminate, this person like this, I have never done that. I will never do that cause I have been treated bad and good by all walks...people and life and everything. People can be ignorant people can be naïve subject to anything sometimes they just can't sometimes they just can't I mean they're limited a lot of people are. I mean they're in a comfort zone if I go down this road here, I never have to figure out how to get through another road in life in the mind. And they get like that and they're not gonna accept anything. If it takes for a person to look at another person as being inferior to make them feel like someone they're gonna do it. And there, the mind is set that why it happens that from the days that whatever happened I wasn't there however all this racism started it started as uh, I guess it did with the Jews and the Germans...Hitler. I mean it been going on way before then you know Medieval days racism been going on, but you know the Germans actually looked at the Jews as less than animals. They honestly I mean thought in their mind that these people were below nothing I mean trash. They made them wear yellow—I mean I mean just so they could recognize who they are and you think to saw how is your mind ever, how can your mind be that corrupt and you can still feel like a human. I mean you think about that, if you ever recover in some kinda way...I think it'd be bad repercussions within yourself. I mean you'd be so ashamed of yourself and some people actually were. There were people who remember doin things and it came so kinda way they had a change of heart and they committed suicide. They couldn't even take—they say “how could I do that?” Some of them never did you know some of them came to America and lived to be 90 years old and some of these war criminals thy finally caught them. 87, 92 years old and gave them life in prison a whole 3 days, but that's probably how long they had to live I mean geez wiz. If like I say if you can um, just be taught they right thing. I mean if people could be taught the right thing which will never happen, look at the world today Iyshia. If you looked at people right now, you look at uh the leaders of the countries...I say plural, “countries,” you have leaders what are they doing why do they kill each other? We have this planet here, have enough resources for triple the amount of people right

now. You know what it is? Pride, I want to be God attitude, I want to be the leader I mean and people get into wars. Do you know that probably 80% of the people probably don't know what the hell they're fighting about? They don't have the slightest idea and then they go forth and say "I hate those people, they are dirty, they're—" What do you mean you hate those people you don't even know them? Somewhere, someone here, you killing up each other cause these people are telling you to kill up each other. That's the way I look at it. I can't help but think of that way why they doing it? Some people are crazy, I tell ya. Uh, World War Two—

IL: Boyd, I hate to cut you off, but , uh, I think we can—would you like to, we can go for another interview later on?

BV: Oh yea, I mean me I can talk for weeks you know.

IL: It's been an amazing interview like—

BV: Well I think you but I have a lot of things I can't talk for weeks, but you know I would.

IL: I was wondering, do you have anyone else you think I should talk to or...?

BV: Like in the park?

IL: Well anyone, anywhere that you think would have any information for me?

BV: Well, let me get some information to people, get they're permission and everything.

IL: okay, well can you...continue this another time thank you.

Interviewee: Robert McKnight, Miami Artist

Transcription [Duration 55 min 33 sec]

Interviewer: Iyshia Lowman, Biscayne National Park intern and MA student at USF

IL: This is Iyshia Lowman, intern with Biscayne National park, Master's student at USF. I am interviewing Robert McKnight. Robert, this recording is just going to be used for Biscayne National Park for their internship for their interpretation program as well as my Master's thesis, do you consent to that?

RM: Yes.

IL: Uh, if you just start off with some information about yourself. Your name age and where this interview is taking place.

RM: Uh, my name is Robert McKnight, I'm 61 years old were conducting this interview in Miami. Uh...

IL: So do you mind stating which racial group you identify with?

RM: Um, I identify with African American.

IL: Okay, you can face me, just face me

RM: Oh, oh, okay.

IL: Could you tell me about Homestead Bayfront beach?

RM: Um, I grew up in Miami we moved to the south in Richmond Heights back in I think it was around 1950 actually it was around 1960. We stayed pretty much in the Richmond heights area. We ventured out that area and gone south. As we got older, especially when I wasn't with my parents and I was in school. That was in the area that we used to go. Get outta school and go down south, I discovered actually the beach in when I was in high school. We would go there just to get away from the Richmond Heights area and it was [takes phone call. continues @5 min 17 sec]...

IL: Alright you were telling about your experience...

RM: Okay, um, yeah, when I was in high school, like I say that was an area that that we used to venture there down south weekends sometimes during the week to like get away from the Richmond Heights area and you kind of getting away from the parents and whatnot. It was the difference there was that beach was more...less used than we didn't go to Masters and Hammond and VA key beach. The other side VA key beach was further away and the only time I used to go to VA key was with parents. Then we would find a way to get a way down to Homestead because the beach I mean it was off on the, off beaten path. You go down...the roads basically follow the canal down, up to the base and because it was it was isolated you know and

you go through like the uh fields the plant fields and then sometimes summers we used to work at those fields. And then from there we go to leave the planting fields cause we used to cut sticks for pole beating and that was like a little side job that we did and what we used to do is go to the beach. I remember the beach it was basically a small hole, it was a hole in the away from the bay. It...Masters and Hammock was the same way because of the to get to-to get to deep water I mean water above your to your waist you had to go to into the bay you had to walk out a couple miles and then to get even in high tide you have to walk so far out and you had to catch steppin on the creatures especially with the little spikes...the urchins, sea urchins and stuff. So you had this uh, basically a swimming pool. The side and that was the swimming hole.

IL: Okay, can you tell me, what's your earliest memory of the beach?

RM: The earliest memory the earliest memory would be like around high school I didn't really remember going out to that beach as a child. Uh, with the family we used to we would go to VA key beach. Masters and Hammock we used to go past masters and hammock as I was growing up until like the late 60s actually in the 70s that we started going out to Masters and Hammock. And then we started going to I was in 7th or 8th actually, yeah, junior high we used to venture down south to go to we call it back then we called it Black Point.

IL: Okay,...and what did you what we some of the things you did while y'all were at the beach? At homestead?

RM: Uh, play games, you know swim and uh I wouldn't say drinking beer cause we want able to drink in high school. But basically it was go there and swim and sit on the beach and sit on the beach.

IL: What kind of games did y'all play?

RM: Uh, football, uh basically. You know or baseball. As a matter of fact the only reason we went out there was to play a little touch football. And then have like um, you know, dances.

IL: dances?

RM: Yeah, we had dances out there.

IL: oh, did they?

RM: Yeah, you know. I mean the whole idea was to go out there, go out there with some young ladies and you know, enjoy the sun and dance and play some sports and you know.

IL: So did you have formal dances or did y'all just went out there and...?

RM: No, these was just somebody would bring a radio and basically it was informal because we wasn't even supposed to be there. You know you couldn't really plan a whole lot because if you planned it you know the person who had the care usually got had to stay home. Somebody got wind that we was tryin to get away from home. You know so it was like, so it was like impromptu. You know it was time, you know...used to say sometimes "I'm goin off to work." I'd use of the car and you know I was off and we'd go. We'd go off there see who would show

up it was always like I say it was always impromptu. No plans. The only time I started planning to go out there was when I got a little older. Actually when I came back from school I was uh I go there, just because uh, coming down to Miami in, in Miami area a lot more things goin on that you get into trouble. You know there's a lot more trouble to get into in Miami so to keep from getting into trouble, you go to the south end you know in the I heard it called in the country you know.

IL: Um do you know the um when you started going to the beach what age, what year that was?

RM: Um, that would've been like '68, '70. 70s uh...up until 76 I stated I was I was uh, came back from school so '76 this tome to about the '80s I used to go there. A matter of fact I when I got a job with the county I used to go I got a job and worked for the county I used to go to the park for the job. Go down there to get supplies and materials. It was a county park in the late '70s and '80s I think it still is now.

IL: When's the last time you've been to the beach?

RM: That beach? The last time I would say would've been in the '80s when I left, I quit Dade County and I went from Miami to Orlando. I came back here, ya know in my 40s. '40s and '50s you know don't really go to the beach.

IL: [laughs] So you went to VA key beach and Masters and Hammock? What were those beaches like? From Homestead.

RM: Masters and Hammock was similar to Black point. Um, it was more there was more people at Masters and Hammock beach because it was a mixed beach after the—yeah actually around the 70s. VA key was always a black beach. We always go to VA key because uh, well most people from all comm—black communities went to VA key. You know a lot of the parties and things to do at VA key. Things between—um the communities, in the city in South Dade. I got a chance to meet a more people from different parts of Miami then down, down south. You know down south the only people that really most of the people that went to the beach were from down in the south end. You can go there but you don't meet any of the people from the North end.

IL: So like, how were the people down there and how were the people in VA key like? Were they different?

RM: Well you know, uh, back then it was like the only difference would be people called it country. The people just called it, you know it was, that's the country. You know, they slow and they backwards, you know. I mean-- its people think you know and um, it was a lot less uh, when you go to those beach when you got to that beach you didn't have the hassles between the you, come from... uh, Liberty City or Overtown, or Coconut Grove. You know it jus wasn't no especially among the black communities. No separation between where you came from. It was like this [puts hands together] you know because it was all Homestead...Homestead, Goulds, you know and they see there wasn't that much, kind of um, separation you know because it was that was the little community beach.

IL: Okay. Did you and your friends have any issues going to that beach?

RM: No. No.

IL: So they were kind of welcoming.

RM: It was all, yeah—It was always welcoming, and it would be--yeah like I say it was never there was I never felt you know that it was...I'm from Richmond heights I gotta hang with people from Richmond Heights. It was all kinda all the beach.

IL: Were there places you could not go on the beach?

RM: Uh, on the beach uh...

IL: Yeah, at Homestead.

RM: I didn't I didn't recognize the only place we used to go to is the swimming area, I know they like um the boat areas and since we never had boats, we—you know it's like you don't think about going over there it's like to go on a boat. You know you stay there where you park, go swim, you don't want to go in the uh, into the water, the bay because the one time, one time you step on the urchin or shell or something you cut your foot and the whole day blown. So we just pull up, go there, swim, and it seemed to me like there was always like the black people like sittin in the swimming hole we never-- I never paid attention to what anyone else is doing and um, just like I sayin the boats? The little boat docks the only time I really paid attention to any of the other things happening out there was when I was a, um, working with the county. I was a park service officer so I used to have to go there to you know check to see if the docks need to be repaired and document that and other than that...

IL: So you never saw anyone of any other races?

RM: I never paid attention. Yeah, I mean, uh, it didn't, you know the times I came there, um, especially in my younger years was more I'd say you...you know I never got, I never got hassled about being there. I went to the right there and swam and played on the beach, played on the down in the sandy area there and this was like '67, well '67, '68, '69, '70 so there was a little bit of integration you know in during that time I found that unless you like kinda looked for a problem there wasn't a problem. The same way at high school. The high school that I went to was integrated, just integrated, 3rd class and um, we had a riot there because someone was walking through the parking lot meanwhile a white guy was driving his car in the doughnuts in the parking lot, the brother decided to walk in the, in front of the car do you see, he was looking to start an issue. And the guy stopped his car and told him to get outta the way and then of course there was a confrontation. In, uh the 2, you know, the 2 groups and everything turned into a free-for-all you know hence we had a riot. They threatened to bring the KKK down, we threatened said bring 'em on and we see people riot along. We used to know them from Homestead calling themselves KKK. You know and going like "Man, I know you!" [laughs] But it was like that was the way it was if you go out and look for a problem, you'd find a problem. You just kind of did you're thing and this could be that uh, bad apple in the group that's gone, that's not gonna like the way someone's walking you know? And there's gonna be some others that just you know, take it. And it's like "You didn't, I'm over here so it's not, I don't have no problem with you, you know" And that was I used to, you know my time there.

IL: What high school did you go to?

RM: Um, Miami-Killian.

IL: Miami?

RM: Miami-Killian, we played like the, the South Dade back then was called the rebels. You know so they used to wear red...grey and blue. Red, grey and blue with the Confederate flag on the helmet. It was—you know, and we integrated. They—we integrated and 2 into the integration, no 3 years we played 'em. 3 years that's '70 like 4 years into integration they had to change that name. The same thing happened it's like "come on man," you know somebody..."they let's..." took that name was insulted by it you know every time we playing we was insulted we use it against them "We gone kick them rebels ass!" [laughs] You know and that was, uh, that's was the, that time the way the youngsters dealt with it, either we gone make some changes. If you alright with me the way-- what I'm doin, then alright with you but if there's things that you want to hold over me or I want hold over you, then we gone either have to change it or come down and look at it the same way, you know.

IL: Were you, have you ever gone into Homestead the city itself?

RM: Yep, yep. Um, the...back then...actually, actually when you think about it back in the 70s, in when I was in high school I didn't really go into Homestead. I went into Florida City. Um, because Homestead just wasn't you know, the place. I don't know if I start talking about it. You know its...it's not a place I wanna be. The people, I don't know nobody there. I know people down in Goulds, Florida City, so we avoided Homestead. You know, now later on when like I say after I came back from college Homestead was a different place. There was more Mexicans there than Rednecks. So it's like you go there...different feel, yeah, but I know, no, I never went into Homestead as even my I never my parents never take me to Homestead. Matter of fact, I ain't know like I, me, lived in Miami, there's places you never went to. This part of town I'm living in right now, you never came here. We would come as far as you know, 7th Avenue...uh, and its I mean it's like after 7th Avenue, man, we didn't come on this side til 7th Avenue.

IL: Why is that?

RM: We just didn't. It just wasn't it wasn't you know, our people wasn't over on this side so we stayed on the other side of by, they used to have the like orange blossom parade running down 7th Avenue? When they did the expressway, um, you stayed on the west side of the expressway you know as far as when it got to, the expressway when it got into Overtown now you know you on both sides of it, but this area here, uh, yeah, I only know 1 kid that went to school during the 70's that black guy at um Archbishop Curly. That was like rare in the, somebody who liked to go to school there. Edison was white school. Northwestern was all black. Same when you go down south. In Homestead, it was Maze High School. Uh, and that was it. The rest of the schools back down there Palmetto, South Dade, all schools in South Dade really didn't integrate until um, I know Killian when that opened up that was integrated in '66. Um, Palmetto integrated in like '64 because my brother went there, but South Dade stayed relatively un-integrated til '68 and there was still not that much not that many blacks going to school there. And they held onto the South Dade rebels thing for a while, and after they had the riot in

Killians, they had riots there then they decided to change the names of the school. You know and it wasn't it wasn't um, like any kind of real violent, violent riots down there, but it was just like you know people just you know didn't get along. You know and they didn't know that there were certain things they didn't like, you didn't like, they didn't like, and then they started out with boo-- I can't think of it the name is something, something ambiguous...pirates or something you know. Well as far as on the beach that little beach, um, you did you just didn't really pay attention that there was some there was an area where the whites when, but what I remember is they always had their boat. [laughs] You know we had to move the water area you know and plus because down there there's the island um, Elliot Key, and they would take the boats and go to Elliot Key. We couldn't go to Elliot Key. We didn't have boats so we didn't take a boat anywhere, we just swim, in that little tidal basin. Cause that's all it is they dig down below the tidal level and the same water that's in the bay when high tide you know comes in you know the water in there rises, when it goes out, goes down and enough so that you can always be, you can always be, uh, at neck level especially at low tide. At low tide and you know you be a little bit more careful about, whose swimming and...cause it's gonna be deeper.

IL: Can you describe any other things about the beach that you noticed? You notice any areas or anything like that?

RM: No. It was kinda sparse, kinda sparse. It had coconut trees. Uh, didn't have um, I don't remember having any kind of concession stands cause anytime you're out here you had to bring your own. Uh, I know that the beach, the, the dock area had like those, I remember it being kinda Spartan kind of beach where you made sure you brought everything you need to enjoy yourself there.

IL: Okay, so there was nobody who works there anything like that?

RM: Nah, until the county, until the county really took it over there was it was almost a "You're on your own." No, they had life guards. They had lifeguard, but then they still was almost ...cause they would they would the um, yeah the only thing I reckon there.

IL: When did the county take it over, do you know?

RM: I started with the county in '76. Um, and I know I only moved to the South end of the county until the 80s and then '83-'84 I was assigned to some of the park areas. So I'm pretty sure, I would say the county took it over that they had in '78 they had the progress that they had, cause they re-did they re-did the docks, uh, and I think they dredged the canals and the road, and fixed the roadway out there, cause there wasn't no roadway out there, there was just a dirt road. They put in a paved road so I think it's like I would say roughly I'm thinking like around the late '70s.

IL: Um, is there...what do you think about this project that you're involved in? What are your thoughts?

RM: I think it's I think it's needed so that we kinda tell the history how we use the resources how we how the resources served everybody and it's also if you shed some light onto on how people either shared or didn't share land and how they made, restricted others people's use to the land or how they you know either shared, shed some light on how we either have moved ahead as a

people as a people, not only as a people but as a human, as a race. Um, and because we had this thing of different beached, yet right in Key Biscayne you know you had 3 different groups of beaches you know and one was dedicated to one group of people one race and you had to go past them other beaches to get [laughs] to...

IL: So it's like white, black, then...?

RM: You didn't go to the "Obie"[38.33] beach. Right along the key, you come across, you're allowed to come across the bridge and then keep driving and go through that little gate and go to Key Biscayne, I mean go to VA beach. We didn't go to uh, Crandon park. I don't remember going to Crandon Park ever as a child. I always went, as a child we always went to VA key. We used to look across at what they call Bear cut and see the white people on the other side in the boats in the, you know everything. On the other side you have the black people and everyone had, you know, you had, a lot of us had our boats and doin the same thing but all on the other side, you know it's like...unmentioned divide right there in Bear cut you know.

IL: What beach was the white beach? What was the white beach called?

RM: Uh, on the other side is Bear cut beach and bear cut went all the way around to Crandon Park and like I said I never went around to Crandon Park until the late uh, actually until I came back from school. We used to go there in the summer...yeah, in about '72-'73.

IL: Was that a black beach or just...?

RM: It wasn't a black beach, it wasn't dedicated, you know what I mean? The only one that's I knew we had no problems going to was on let's call it the wait...nobody told us that was the beach, ok? My parents, that was the only beach they took us too. Okay, now, you know how they say "They know something that we don't know?" That's why sometimes we would venture, you know and look they wanted to like [imitates slapping] "what the hell's goin on over there?" They know that there was, there was unspoken or that word from their generation would know that this was the beach for us, when we go there, you know. Our generation was keep looking across there then you eventually went over there then they tell you had to get outta there and you like "no, man!" You know and it's just like on the getting on the bus. You can't, gotta sit in the seat, sit in the seat. Then it takes one person that says question why and then it's like a, it's like a snowball after that. Everybody's like "she gave it a try let me give it a try." Here we go with that, come and go over there and find out, "wow, that's a pretty nice beach." You know, got a another view of the ocean we looking across got this, this beach and it's got like this channel that drops some un-Godly 60 feet with the water running through it at 3 miles an hour and its jus if you get caught up in it, you dead. [laughs]. They say you do go out and swim...

IL: That's at VA beach?

RM: Yeah. When the lifeguard tell you don't go past the buoy, don't go past the buoy because if you keep—if you weren't strong enough, a weak swimmer. Naw, matter of fact you could be a strong swimmer, the the...current take you away. People drown like crazy, because they didn't listen to the, the lifeguards can get to you, they can try to get to you. You know when you're dealing with that that strong a current, um, they takin they life at risk to go after you. You know.

IL: So you saw people drown like at...?

RM: I've been there when people drowned, I wouldn't say that I saw them. They gather around somebody and they put a cloth over them, you know. I mean, uh, I didn't see uh, and you see the thing when the ambulance come down there, uh, you know, you know that something happen and somebody went way beyond the buoy [laughs].

IL: Wow.

RM: And that, that was you know, that was one of the-the reasons the beach was end up, end up closed for a while because it was with that such a treacherous current through there, the risk of having a lot of people killed or dyin, it's easier to say close the beach, then go swimming. Cause right now they have no swimming. You can go to the beach but they tell you only supposed to swim at your own risk. You know, as they advise don't swim. You know, uh, and uh, not to say that the other side uh look across and basically whites on the other side they had the, it was the same problem! So they the only, they had the luxury of going around to Crandon Park. Um, VA beach even though it's on its own little island there was a certain point that that wasn't the beach that we went to. So we didn't go past there's was a curve that comes around looks toward Miami Beach? That was uh, that was a separate beach. Yeah, and you can go down-- go down the same road that you used to go to this beach but you couldn't walk around to the beach to the one facing Miami Beach. This was, wasn't no sign to say, I don't remember no sign sayin it but every time I used to go that people would tell you that dock you couldn't go past this point. You know. And everything facing...uh, that would be east, southeast on VA key, you know it was black and anything facing Miami Beach it was basically the 70s it was a gay beach. Uh, and the one time it used to be a nude beach, uh you know, but that was unspoken up until a point a unspoken word. Rule.

IL: Do you remember seeing any signs?

RM: No, the generation I came up in, the signs, we used to hear signs. I remember hearing a sign, I never saw the signs. My—I would say people ten years older saw signs my generation we just we wasn't that sort of pictures of that remembrance of that Jim Crow. You know.

IL: Is there anything else that you'd like to say about Homestead Beach? Anything you think is interesting or...?

RM: I mean the one thing that always stood out with me was that that it was on the back side of the agricultural, the agricultural area. The times we used to work the fields and go, we used to call it "cuttin' sticks" The poles for the pole beans, and then we partied, that we can go, we would be able to cool it at the beach after work.

IL: Oh, so you the place where you cut sticks was right by the beach?

RM: Yeah, cause the all of the fields the plantin field on the all that area that's developed now over the racetrack is...

IL: Oh, I've been there before, I don't know the name.

RM: Yeah, all of that, then was real...go down, then you go down the road to Homestead Air Force Base and all of that. Around Homestead base, Homestead base was in the middle of it. Um, but then you can you know when you, when we used to go out in the mornings the talk was let's cut this, cut it cause the deal we had was faster you can get the amount the poles then you can go to the beach. In 17, back then at 17, it was like [imitates sound when cutting sticks at a fast pace] [laughs] You know and all the people would go "Slow down!" You're like "Slow down?" [laughs] We tryin to get outta here and go to the beach. "Naw, you can make this much money if you go fast, nah, but they told me if I go this much I can get this much money." I didn't you know, more than rationize cause I was making more than enough for me. [laughs] You know, uh, that's about, my recollection back in them times you know the generations like I say there was the generations that see the heavy Jim Crow and then there was the generation that when these thing stated makin people started making sense about the way things was and I mean that that was the generation that I came up in with you uh, beneficiaries of my parents fight to change you know. Cause I remember going goin to Killian and goin in the guy and you had the white guys on this side and the black guys on this side and you had the you know coach come in, the black coach, come in and like "h we gone play. How we gone play a sport together if y'all sittin over there and y'all sittin over there?" And then there's the Filipino [Filipino?] sitting in the middle tryin to catch flies, everybody lookin at him like, "What is he doin?" Basically by doin something uh, ridiculous you know everybody kinda relax and pull together. That was the generation, you know you lose. Sometime you took something stupid to kinda pull it together where, you didn't really put out those, pay attention to all those restrictions that were there you know and the fact that things were changing so you had to go with the flow.

IL: Is there anybody else you think I should talk to about this project, anybody that you haven't mentioned?

RM: Uh, I kinda asked my brother he doesn't like to do interviews with that kinda stuff [laughs]. Right off hand, uh, right off hand I don't have anybody like I say that I can talk to and see if they wouldn't be willing and I think sometimes some of it, some of the people that I know that live right down that have lived there for a long time. I got a few guys a few friends uh that I can ask and see if they would be especially if I can find guys that are willing to talk, uh, well I got one in mind, but I just have to find out of he's willing to...there's another guy David White is a name, uh, he's from...uh, you know...

IL: And you tell I would very much appreciate it I just thank you for doing this interview cause we don't have a lot of information on this right now. So you've gave me a lot of information. So...

RM: That's what I do, I'll talk, I personally talk to a few other people that are from my group and then find some of the...and you know my mother just passed last month so most the older generation is goin. Not that uh, my brother's a different generation, you know. So people are a lot of the good information is dying out only thing I can do is try to talk to a few people and see and let them know what you're doing in the research and basically the need to record stories, you know.

IL: Make sure, they're not lost.

RM: Yeah

IL: That's all the questions I have for you is there anything else that you would like to say?

RM: I think we're good.

Interviewee: Willie Synagogue, employee at Everglades National Park

Interviewer: Iyshia Lowman, Biscayne National Park intern and MA student at USF

Interview taken with audio recorder and with written notes [recorder failed, notes only].

- 1959: moved to Richmond Heights
- 1958: 1st day at Homestead Bayfront Beach, 7th birthday party
- carousel [corn dogs and sausage dogs cooking]
- 1 speaker on a pole in concrete slab: WMBM and WAMB AM radio stations played all the time
- Concrete slab [dance floor?] and a table
- beach meant for relaxing
- Grandmother states “Don’t you look over there at them white women!”
- would see white people walking on the boardwalk with “oasis smooth surface” [swimming hole]
- Rocks on the black side of the beach
- no incidents/mingling with white side that he can remember
- Virginia key had shootings and mixed crowds
- no drowning that he knew of at Homestead Bayfront Beach
- lifeguard’s stand would be by the carousel; sat there and slept
- when water reached waist, adults told them to come back so that the water was at a lower level
- His mom stated, “You could disappear.”
- He left Homestead/Richmond Heights in 1973
- There were packing houses on the road to the beach yet a separate road. It had trees with shaded areas
- He went to Miami-Killian High from 1965-1969

- By that time there was integration, the black side was closed down and they would take field trips to the white side. They were not allowed to be in bathing suits.
- The beach had as little as the black side, but had clean water and the sand was rotated by a bulldozer
- He was drafted in 1972
- 1968: There would be races down the road to the beach, and the “Colored only” sign was still up but had grass growing over it. The roads were still separate.
- 1968: South Dade High School riot started by his wife.
- Heard of riots in Miami every week
- Black students were sent to white schools, never the other way around but the blacks were never trusted in the white neighborhoods [they would steal from the mango trees]
- 1973: He had to take a race relations class in Miami Beach because he said the “n-word” around a group of blacks but was overheard by their white colonel
- Krome Avenue after 6 pm is dangerous for blacks. There would be lynching and cross burnings. There were no street lights.
- Women were accepted on the police force
- He states that people would stay in their comfort zones, usually outside of racist zones
- 1972: Olympics black power athletes from Homestead [Larry Black and Harry Tinkler]
- “Mexicans” didn’t go to the beach. They went to Miami Beach or Matheson-Hammock. Everyone that spoke Spanish was called Puerto Ricans or Mexicans by outsiders
- If they weren’t white they wouldn’t get that much attention [hole in the wall]
- South beach [drug attics in bikinis walk the street] = Virginia Key
- “Mexicans” [“oyez”] go to Homestead Bayfront Beach currently. Current idea of the beach = drug use, string bikinis or nude, and instances of underwear left in the water; not a place for families and kids
- Older residents tried to recapture comfort and relaxing times but they didn’t like the beach as it is now.
- 1965: pool for whites built on MLK Blvd across the street from black apartments, yet black men would sit on the roof and look at the white women at the pool. However not many people went to the beach.

- His dad worked at Everglades as a custodian until 1982 when he retired

Interviewee: Josiel Morera, Current Director at the Homestead Bayfront Park, Miami-Dade Parks and Rec .

Interviewers: Iyshia Lowman, Biscayne National Park intern and MA student at USF; Charles Lawson, Cultural Resource Manager, Biscayne National Park

JM: ...image and gives you some information on when this took place. Obviously in Nov 13, 1955 there was Homestead Bayfront Park North for colored which opens for the 1st time.

CL: Here you go you were looking for that weren't you?

JM: We have, I have a packet with some images of when this park was...I think I have some of when this park was actually donated [searches for pictures]. Virginia Beach is one of the most known popular

CL: No doubt, everybody...

JM: ...black beach, white and black beach kinda deal. But this is the other. At some point, this is interesting I was told that this was also a clothing optional beach, which was interesting because that wouldn't fly now, but it was definitely clothing optional. So they say that one side was nude and the other side was, you know, doing their thing. Let's stick to the basics. I'm just looking at this old image, picture of what was originally in this park.

IL: So you said in 1955 the colored side opened? Do you know when the white side was opened?

JM: I'll tell you right now when was this park according to... [Daughter brings in chair]. It says here...the date 1938. Reads from paper: "...with the completion of Homestead Air Force Base...United States took over Homestead Bay Front Park and cancelled their lease in 1947...the air force had moved just in time for the 250 bond issue became available...officially dedicated in 1955... November 13, 1955. And I think that says the same thing? So I guess it was both at the same time. You can make copies of this I have a photocopy machine downstairs. It really goes into a lot of cool detail of the relationship between the army, air force base, and the wall that we have towards the back of the shelter, there's this random wall back there, out of nowhere its colorful now; but we found out that is was used for shooting, shooting target. You know they used to have for the Cuban Army Missile. So take that with you and I have another image of the South Dade News Leader that talks about...it says: "Large crowd sees park's dedication." This was February 22nd 1951. It says: "the holiday of approx. 6,000 Dade county residents flocked to the colorful dedication ceremonies of the Homestead Bayfront Park. 1,200 acres Homestead Bayfront, Sunday highlighting. The program was an unveiling plaque honoring James; you know whatever they did...you know it goes into the dedication. I don't remember ever reading anything that says, goes particular into the white and black beach, but this is something I was able to get from the News Leader when the News Leader was down here and there was a continuing page 5. I looked for page 5, I can't find it, but I know it went into other details of what was going on in that park. I'm sure something of that nature was mentioned. But if you want to make a photocopy of this, you're welcome; if you want to make a photo of that, you're welcome. This is from the county's actual deed, you know when everything to place,

how it took place, how it actually ended up at the park. I had the privilege of meeting, which this would've been real good for you...meeting the daughter of the caretaker that lived here, cause obviously this was a home. And according to her this was the mom and the dad's bedroom [indicates room we are in] and that was the kitchen...they wouldn't cook in these houses cause they were made of wood, they would cook outside. And this area here was where the boats were parked. The little wooden deck they would go across and we talked about how they the girl which was pure white skin, blue eyes, pure Americans as American as you can get with the, you know, in this area, growing up in this area and having the little black boys from next door coming over and showing her raccoons and messing with her, you know kind of boys' stuff. And how the dad would come out and tell the boys to go back to the other side and this and that and how they lived out here especially during the mosquito time and all that, but kind of lost contact with her. She was sick, I mean she was 70 something years old and she was the daughter of the caretaker. So, you know real cool interesting story. I'm a little bit of a history buff myself; I can't stand being in a place and not knowing what was it all about. You know being in a place and 10 years, 20 years from now finding out that was such an important place and I never knew about it and I worked here. I worked at the Dearing estate in Cutler which is all of south Florida and history of how it started. Anywhere I go I try to find out how it started, they don't give us these things, you have to research. So for him to come over and ask "Do you know anything about this place?" "Yeah, I know. I wish I knew more." I have these little cuts and the times that I went downtown on a personal level and said I'm off today I just want to go and find out there's a lot of cool history. Not too much. You think it would be obvious, you think it would be all over the place but it's not that much. This is an original cutting from that. You can see how small it is too read, it's terrible. That's all I have. I don't have too much. I think I have an image that I can send you.

IL: Yeah, I would definitely appreciate that.

CL: How did this place fair against Andrew?

JM: It survived. The 1st floor was completely flooded. Standing downstairs it was about 6 feet of water.

CL: wiped out everything next door and this one made it. They were brand new buildings

JM: Right this one made it.

IM: Um, if you wouldn't mind I have to, I'm also doing this for my thesis so I have to get your signature saying that I can use this information for my thesis. Chuck also said that he wants a copy of the thesis so that will be available whenever I finish. This one says that your taking part in this research, second page says you allow me to audio record it.

Appendix 3, Current Views with Historic Descriptions.



Jetty Boardwalk (view to west) opposite existing visitor center harbor wall, 2012. The jetty represents the edge of what was the outside enclosure of the atoll beach at Homestead Bayfront North. This would be the view from the beach.



View to the northwest from the VC handicap ramp landing, 2012. The Homestead Bayfront North dance floor and jukebox was once present in this area.



Additional view (2012) of the area that once contained the dance floor and jukebox. View from the visitor center harbor edge facing northwest. Visitor center handicap ramp landing is visible to the left.



View to the northeast along the bay edge, 2012. The visitor center parking lot is on the left and the bay is on the right with picnic area between. This area was used in much the same fashion (as parking and picnicking areas) during the years of segregation at Homestead Bayfront North.



View of the bay-facing side of the Biscayne NP visitor center, 2012. The existing structure sits upon the footprints of the segregated beach's concession building and lifeguard offices.



View (to the west) of the main bulkhead of the visitor center harbor. The bulkhead sits upon what was once the sandy beach at Homestead Bayfront Beach North.



Canal access road on the north side of the C-103 canal, several miles west of the park (2012). This road was constructed to provide segregated access to Homestead Bayfront Park North.

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Biscayne National Park

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NPS Biscayne National Park, December, 2012

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Biscayne National Park

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