

*Marjory Stoneman Douglas speaks about early memories in Florida and natives in the Everglades*

Interviewer: When did you first see the Everglades and what were your first impressions?

MSD: Well, I mean, it's almost impossible for me to say. I came to Florida in 1915 and it was here in Miami and I couldn't tell you when I first saw the Everglades. My earliest impressions were always of this vast expanse of open sawgrass country within the southern part - the islands of what we called island hammocks of hardwoods -- situated on higher rock that was left when the water eroded the softer rock around it. Higher islands shaped by the falling water into sort of like small boats, boat ended and they all turned and go down in the same direction as the water covered by the hardwoods .

And very early on I saw what is now the areas, what is now the Everglades National Park and the 10000 Islands and out in boats and all that. There was no way to get across the Everglades when I first came down so you just had to stand and look at them. The Tamiami Trail, I remember, was finished as far as the Dade County was concerned but beyond that the Trail had not been begun from the West coast. So we could go out fishing in the canal and then look out beyond that at just the Everglades, there was no road anywhere across. To get from here to Fort Meyers you had to go up the coast to Fort Pierce and take a train to Orlando, and across from Orlando maybe to Tampa and down the west coast to Fort Meyers. You couldn't cut across. Or you could go in a boat around by the Keys and around by Cape Sable. It was a very untouched, unknown country always. Up until the time of the Tamiami Trail, people had only crossed it at great intervals of great difficulty.

I: People were not in the habit of going for excursions...?

MSD: Oh, no, I should say not, it was too difficult. The water was shallow, you know, it was running water but shallow water and only the Indians could get around in dugout canoes. There were attempts to cross it. I remember an attempt after I had come to the Miami and was working on the Herald. I remember an attempt of some men from Fort Meyers to cross it with two or three Ford cars and they had a pretty awful time. The cars bogged down and they had to be towed out and men got sick. They were days if not weeks trying to get across. One man had to be rescued on a

stretcher; he was so affected by the sun and the hard work of getting the stupidest way in the world trying to cross it. They would have done better to come over in Indian canoes.

I: So there were Indians living out there?

MSD: Oh, the Indians, of course they'd always lived out there because they knew how to manage. They lived in the Everglades in the canoes, and they lived on the outskirts. They lived in the Big Cypress and they would go to the coasts for fishing or they'd go to the interior for deer hunting. The Indians were perfectly flexible -- they lived all over the place. Wherever they wanted to go. But the white man has never been satisfied to live like the Indians, in harmony with the forces of the Earth, as it were. He has to change things, do things the hard way and all that was supposed to be intelligence I guess.