

*Marjory Stoneman Douglas talks about Ernest F. Coe and his contributions*

(About 3:45)

Interviewer: (9:31) You knew, obviously you knew Mr. Coe.

Marjory Stoneman Douglas: Oh yes.

Interviewer: What about um, about that area motivated that man to such a degree?

MSD: Well, because that was the kind of man he was, he was a very great landscape architect. He'd come down here in the boom and stayed because he and his wife liked it. But by that time he didn't have any work he was really very poor, and his wife was ill for several years and died. And all he had was this queer little salary he had working as an executive secretary of the Everglades Park Committee. And he devoted his life to it. He always wore immaculate, seersucker suits that were a little ragged around the cuffs, immaculately clean but a little ragged. He didn't care. And he went out and he walked around in it, he slept out in it, nobody knew it better than he did. It was the whole thing that he felt was so completely unique. He almost felt as though it was his own discovery. But the sad part of it is, there is nothing in the Park that commemorates Ernest F. Coe. I feel very bad about it and I probably should do something about it. We should raise a fund of money to put up a plaque to him, certainly at the visitor's center. Some kind of a monument... of course the whole park is a monument to him, but his name is not anywhere on it and I think it's a great shame, I just don't know what to do about it, I should have... it's my fault, probably for not having done something about it long ago. I wish we could, I wish somebody would get started at making a memorial to Ernest F. Coe. Tall, blue-eyed, so gentle... he had a soft voice and he was so gentle. Such a nice man but he just absolutely dogged about it. Absolutely devoted and determined, he made a religion of it almost. Without him we'd never have such a park, ever.

Interviewer: And was he there at the dedication ceremony?

MSD: Oh yes he was. However, it was very curious, they had a last meeting on the acceptance of the Park by the committee in New York, and Mr. Coe went out with John Pennekamp and the others and it was winter and he had on his seersucker suit. Mr. Coe held out for those three areas that I've

spoken of, the coral reef, the Taylor Slough, creek, river, whatever it is, the part of the Big Cypress. And so, they said, “no, we couldn’t do that, it would have to be left out.” Spessard Holland and everybody said they couldn’t, and Mrs. Rowan said they couldn’t. But, when it came to the vote, Mr. Coe voted against the whole thing and he got up and left and went out into the cold weather and John Pennekamp had to rush after him and put him in a taxi and get him back to Miami before he froze to death, and he never had anything to do with it after that. Although it was, when it was dedicated, John Pennekamp made him come and sit on the platform with Truman. And Truman shook hands with him and praised him and all that, and Mr. Coe lived for a couple of years after that. But I think really in his heart that he was glad that it was established, I can’t believe that he wasn’t. But he was so rabid on the whole park, and of course he was right. But, at the same time, it is quite likely that we couldn’t have gotten the park without him. But anyway, he should be remembered, because without him we wouldn’t have had it. (13:15)