

*Marjory Stoneman Douglas recalls touring the Everglades in a Houseboat with National Park Service Department Heads*

Interviewer: Well, lets go back and I want to ask you about the trip out to the Everglades in the houseboat when you saw the birds and...

Marjory Stoneman Douglas: Oh yes.

Interviewer: ...and you were told that there were...

MSD: Oh yeah, I remember, I can tell that. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

MSD: That was the time, as I told you, when the committee for the establishment of the Everglades Park brought down people from all over the country including heads of the National Park Service and other people. And we, the committee rented this big cruising houseboat called "The Everglades." It was a two-story houseboat with lots of staterooms and kitchens and all that, so we lived aboard. And we got on... let me see, I think we went aboard, in down the Keys, and then went right across from the Keys to the, in the houseboat, and anchored off the Middle Cape, and went up a canal to Gator Lake in small boats. And I remember there was the first time I'd ever seen roseate spoonbill in Florida. We went up a lake a way, we went up a canal and across some flats, and I remember, in the open marshy flats, back of the Middle Cape, I think, were covered with thousands and thousands and thousands of little wading birds. Plovers and little heron, and birds like that. We would go along in these small boats, and they would rise in clouds ahead of us, and come back to earth behind us, so we moved in a moving cloud of birds alongside. I'd never seen so many. I don't think you could ever see so many there again on those flats. We went down to Gator Lake in another canal, and that was a small lake that had a hurricane not too long before, so it was surrounded on one side by mangroves that had been killed and were silvery colored. The lake was blue, and on the other side were these banks of silvery white mangos, mangroves, I mean, and they were completely covered by roseate spoonbill. They were nesting there. The roseate spoonbill were reflected in the water; you never saw anything lovelier; it was a startlingly beautiful thing. Then we went on in the cruising houseboat along to Shark River, and went up and anchored in an open place, an open sound, and went up the river farther in small boats, again, just

rowboats. And we went up just before sunset, when the birds were coming in from where they'd been feeding on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, and they went over our heads in flocks and flocks and flocks, to where they were nesting. And they kept going over in the sunset, and in the twilight and then the full moon rose, 'cause we'd planned to be there at the rising of the full moon. So we could see them first against the sunset and then against the rising moon, which rose enormously right out of the Gulf of Mexico. And the birds kept going over and over until it was full dark, and we were so excited we were all standing up in these little rowboats, there must have been three or four. Mostly the men and just Ruth Bryan Owen and I, the only women, and we were standing up in the boat until it was full dark. The last we could see was the birds coming over the moon, and just at the end, Dr. Bumpus, president of Tufts College in Massachusetts, was in the last boat and at the last minute Dr. Bumpus fell overboard! (laughter) So that was the climax of that. Fortunately, we were, the women, were in the forward boat. They had to rescue him and take off his clothes, try to get him some dry clothes, people contributed what they could. Poor Dr. Bumpus, he was so excited by the birds he was exalted, people would say "Oh! More birds! More birds!" And that's when he fell overboard, so that was very funny.