

*Marjory Stoneman Douglas describes Coconut Grove's early socialite scene*

Interviewer: And who were the people that you would associate with?

Marjory Stoneman Douglas: Well, all kinds of friends of those days. The people that had the Gulliver School, that started the Gulliver school, were kind of like a center, and there were a lot of us who played around in groups together. A great many of them now, so many of them now are dead.

Interviewer: Were they people who lived here year round?

MSD: Oh yes, people who lived here all year round who, a very close friend of mine was Marion Manley, a woman architect, who was a great architect. Built a great many things around here, and the Gullivers, oh, all kinds of people, but as I say, mostly dead now. Ms. Manley is still alive, I'm glad to say.

Interviewer: Oh, is that right?

MSD: Yes. She's not so old as I am, but I guess she's ninety by now. She retired long since.

Interviewer: Did you all live in this, in the Coconut Grove area?

MSD: Well, yes. When I came, I built the house in '26, came down here, most of my friends had... I liked Coconut Grove, really, better than Miami. It was a separate town when I built my house in '26, but it got taken into Miami in '28. But that was probably a good thing, because we couldn't have kept on with our own, we had to have our own police force and our own judge and our own fire department. The taxes would have really been much greater than they are being in the city. But I liked the people down here better, they were not only... there were a few very old families, which I really didn't know so much as the other people who had come down and had, many of them, very well to do, who had houses and estates from Douglas Road and the Main Highway running down to the Bay. Many of those people came down only in the winter, but many people I knew would take care of their houses in the summertime, or we knew them anyway. The Fairchilds were, of course, a great center, because David Fairchild brought down so very many people who knew him in other places. People like the great Tom Barbour, Dr. Barbour of Harvard who is head of the Department

of Comparative Zoology and head of the Peabody museum who was head of the Atkins Gardens in Cuba and came down, oh, very often and all kinds of interesting people coming and going, settling here and so on. Very interesting, we had a lot of retired college professors. Dr. DeGarmo, who'd been head of Swarthmore, and he came down early so there were four generations of DeGarmos all living in Coconut Grove and they've always been friends. The children, whom I knew early on, are now grown up and some of them are grandparents and still my friends. The DeGarmos and all kinds of other people. So all along the Highway there were these large estates with people who either lived here all year round or came down in the winter. The Mathesons and Arthur Curtis James and all people had interesting people visiting them, and we all rather had a very strong sense of community. So you would be invited to dinner, you know, at one place or another, and I remember being invited to the Arthur Curtis James', of course they were perfectly delightful. Mrs. James was a great beauty and Arthur Curtis James was a partner of Rockefeller and all. They were awfully nice people, and we all knew them, even people like me who had just a modest little house and didn't amount to so much. But I remember being invited to dinner, then to my horror being expected to play Bridge afterwards. Well, I've never been good at cards. My family, my mother's people were all very good card players; they played these extraordinary things called duplicate wists and then they played Bridge. I was threatened with dire punishment if I ever tried to play because I was the kind, I'd always trump my partners' ace and when they'd got through with the game they'd say, "why didn't you play your queen?" well, how did they know I had a queen? You know, that kind of thing, I was very suspicious, so anyway, it was to my horror at the Arthur Curtis James', I was expected to play Bridge in the evening. And they played, as a rule, for mild stakes, but anyway they were very kind. They put me at a table and the people tacitly agreed not to play for stakes on my account. (laughs) They were sure that I'd lose, probably couldn't have done it, and I'd manage to be dummy. I remember playing partners for a delightful man who was Mr. James' doctor who would come down, a delightful man, I've forgotten his name, and I could always manage to be dummy. And when I was dummy, he could win. (laughs) I remember, Mrs. Charles Deering who was great friend, she was a perfectly enchanting woman, so outspoken and so amusing, who lived down at Old Cutler. I knew her very well; I used to go down to lunch and dinner with her there. That was always great fun. And Mrs. Deering would always say to me, "You know, you'll never be a great social success if you don't play Bridge," and I said "Dear Mrs. Deering, I don't want to be a social success if I have to

play Bridge.” I consider it one of the least interesting ways to spend an evening that I can think of. I can remember spending evenings with people who were left over from the Bridge tables or there weren’t enough tables to go around and I couldn’t play, so other people they had a wonderful time talking to people while the other people are playing Bridge. I remember Johnson McCormick, who was her, let me see, Johnson McCormick, his wife was one of the Deering girls, Mrs. McCormick, naturally, a perfectly delightful person to talk to, you know. Telling all about Vizcaya and all kinds of things, plenty of things to talk about. I’d rather spend the evening talking. I consider conversation one of the great social arts. (laughs) Much better than Bridge, which is a destroyer of conversation. But that was always good fun with Mrs. Deering, she was a great gal. She was full of humor and bumptiousness and sharpness. She was older and lots and lots of fun; I was very fond of her. I knew her better; of course, I didn’t know James Deering at all. He was beyond my ken, well I think I may have, but he died very early so I wouldn’t have known him. I knew Mrs. Charles Deering when I was living here and I knew Mrs. McCormick and Mrs. Danielson, perfectly delightful, who were her daughters, you see. They were the heirs of Vizcaya, because James didn’t have any heirs, he wasn’t married, he had nieces, and so I knew them. And of course, the Danielsons are here now, and so on. It’s kind of old family stuff, the Mathesons... there are fourth generation Mathesons around, I believe know that one of the Mrs. Mathesons said, “You know, there are thirteen Mrs. Mathesons, what with grandchildren grown up and married and all that.”