

Conversations with Carol



Stories from Carol Herzog's life in Fort Pierce
as told to Bob Vandermeer

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Introduction

This book is a rendition of conversations with Carol Herzog beginning in January 2019 and lasting off and on into the spring of 2021. I had had many conversations with Carol before that time, but decided in late 2018 that it was important that these stories be preserved for the enrichment of others who know Carol. Carol agreed to the idea of pulling these stories together and it is in the hope that many people will enjoy learning of the life of this gracious person that I present this volume.

As you will learn, Carol has had a long and rich life with many unique experiences. I considered for a long time how to organize this volume. I finally decided that Carol's life story should comprise the beginning of the tale, but that there were several topics that strongly influenced her life, and warranted additional expanded attention. So the volume begins with a chronological description of Carol's long life. Then there are three subjects we identified as life themes deserving special attention: her time with Bean Backus, her involvement with Savannahs Preserve State Park, and her love of horses.

I have attempted to preserve Carol's narrative as well as possible so that hopefully those who know her will enjoy hearing her voice as they read these pages. Changes have been limited to rearranging for chronological accuracy and editing for clarity.

---Bob Vandermeer, February 2021

Carol and I had the following conversation one day:

Carol: At a meeting of the Friends of the Savannahs, it was suggested that we drop the “h” from the spelling of Savannahs because it is used in the spelling of the city in Georgia. It was considered confusing, that we could do without the “h,” and that newspaper writers liked to have the most modern version and not the “African” version.

Bob: So you would like to restore, and have the Park use the original spelling?

Carol: Yes I would. I have abstracts that show the “h” was in the name since sometime in the 1800s.

Bob: So it’s historically accurate to spell Savannahs with an ending “h”?

Carol: Yes.

It’s historically accurate to use the ending “h,” and we’re going to take that step here, using that spelling throughout our story as a first step in an effort to restore the historically correct spelling of The Savannahs.

Early childhood

I am Caroline Crimmins Herzog, and I was born to James Francis Crimmins and Mollie Bunting Crimmins in Somerset Hospital, Somerville, N.J., on November 12, 1933. The attending nurse during the birth was my mother’s sister, Betty Johnson, and my uncle, Howard Johnson, was the attending physician. My mother and I moved to Fort Pierce, Florida shortly before Christmas that year, joining my father who had come down earlier to run the original Florida branch of the Heathcote Nursery. We moved in to a house on the original grounds of Heathcote Nurseries.

Frederick Pierce Fox had a nursery on Heathcote Street in Scarsdale, New York. He established the Fort Pierce branch of Heathcote Nursery in 1926 on 40 acres between Jenkins and Lamont Roads, adjacent to and north of Orange Avenue. The manager of the Fort Pierce Heathcote location was in poor health in 1933, and so Mr. Fox hired my parents to come down here and manage the Heathcote nursery. My father came down and started running the nursery while my mother stayed up north to be near familiar medical facilities and family until my birth. [Figure 1] The original Crimmins residence in Fort Pierce was at the southeast corner of that property (the current site of Big John’s Feed & Western Supply).



Figure 1 James Crimmins on his cart at the original site of Heathcote Gardens

I remember as a little girl following along with my father as he hunted rabbits on the nursery. The rabbits were a nuisance as they liked to feed on the palm seedlings. At that time, it was legal to hunt rabbits at night. With a light, it was pretty easy to kill the rabbits so the family and our German shepherd dogs ended up eating a lot of rabbit. I helped with the gutting and skinning, so I have never been squeamish about such things.

During these early childhood years, I began to become familiar with many of the plants being grown on the nursery at that time. There were a lot of large, exotic, tropical plants on the nursery. Eventually, I would be working on the nursery, but in those early years, I was still quite young and would just follow my parents around as they worked. And there was one plant that looked like a big bird, and it was bigger than I was. Everybody will probably guess what that was but I can't remember the name.

I have great memories of having people or groups arriving on horseback. Many people had horses at home that they would keep in a fenced area or tie up in their yard. I remember one group coming by that had a pony along and I was able to ride the pony solo. That was the biggest thrill of my life to that point and it ignited a lifelong love of horses. From then on, I was saving money for the day I could buy a horse.

In 1939, I started school at St. Anastasia's Catholic School. The school bus picked me up for the ride to the corner of Orange Avenue and 10th street in Fort Pierce. During that year, I suffered from asthma so badly that I went to live with my grandparents in Pocono Pines, Pennsylvania and even in that cold winter weather, the asthma disappeared up there. Perhaps it was drier with less mold. I missed most of that school year, returning to Fort Pierce in late winter before the end of school.

1940s

In 1940, I started public school in Fort Pierce. I started in the east end and 12 years later came out the west end (on the campus that is the current site of the Creative Arts Academy of St. Lucie). I rode the same school bus all those years with the same two bus drivers, two sisters. They had no trouble with kids misbehaving on the bus. We felt very safe and in good hands. There was only one bully but he was nice to me because he liked the pictures of horses and airplanes that I drew.

At that time, my favorite program on the radio was the Lone Ranger with Tonto, and their horses Silver and Scout. It was during that time that President Roosevelt died, and my memory of that event is vivid due to the cancellation of that week's Lone Ranger radio episode for coverage of the President's death. (Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945.)

I wasn't really wild about school. I wasn't really wild about people my age. I was an unattractive kid and the others seemed more attractive. It wasn't that the kids were mean, but just indifferent, I guess. I liked grown people because they were nicer. I graduated from high school when I was 19 because I had missed parts of first and fourth grades dealing with the asthma. Things changed as we matured. I've been to many class reunions since leaving school and those students have been friendly for years now.

My family moved to the northwest corner of the Orange Avenue property when I was 12 in 1945 or 1946. While we lived there, I remember shooting squirrels off the back steps. I'd have them skinned and in the frying pan before they cooled off. I used to ride our Guernsey cow and my father's mule while we lived there. I loved horses and I would convince my parents to stop to see Mr. Minton's mare whenever we were near his place just south of the Fort Pierce post office.

A friend gave me a baby bobcat that had been found as an orphan in an orange grove near the nursery. I named him Beetlebaum and he lived in the house with the three people and two German shepherds, but adjusted very well. [Figure 2]

Unlike most house cats, he would come running at a full gallop when he was called. One of his favorite spots was the top of the refrigerator and he would spring from the floor to that spot where he could see everything going on and monitor the progress of dinner preparation. He liked heights. He used to get on the roof and sound like a pony galloping around up there with his heavy feet. He would get into bed with me and I might not even know until he started purring,



Figure 3 Carol found a road-injured rattlesnake, finished it off, and brought it home for inspection

sounding like a small aircraft taking off. The

sound would stall and sputter and stop and start up again. It was

never steady, but it was loud, and I wondered how an animal in the wild could risk making that much noise at night.

I had other house pets at that time as well. I would bring in gopher tortoises and keep them in the bathtub for a day, and now and then an indigo snake that I would just turn loose in the house. My father loved snakes. As a boy, he lived in Scarsdale, NY, and used to deliver newspapers to the man who was head of the reptile house at the Bronx Zoo¹.

Occasionally, someone would deliver a snake to this man's house, and he would keep it in his house until he took it to the zoo reptile house. The man enjoyed inviting people in to see the snakes, so naturally he asked my father, the paper boy, in too. So my father grew to love snakes as well.

As an adult, he would find one and bring it home, holding the steering wheel in one hand and the snake in the other. So I was acclimated to snakes very quickly. [Figure 3] One time I was sitting on the ground having lunch and a black snake fell from the cabbage palm near me, landed on the ground and kept going. Indigo snakes are easy to catch, if you are quick enough, and they are quite relaxed and don't bite. I remember being stretched out on the sofa with an indigo snake stretched with me. He opened his mouth and took my bicep in his mouth, but didn't bite down. I think he was just testing it because it was pale and looked kind of like a rabbit's tummy or something similar.



Figure 2 Carol's mother Mollie Crimmons, and Beetlebaum

¹ Raymond L. Ditmars was the Bronx Zoo Curator of Reptiles from 1899 to 1920. He died on May 12, 1942. Douglas Brinkley in his book Theodore Roosevelt: Wilderness Warrior says Ditmars lived with his parents at 1666 Bathgate Avenue in the Bronx.

When I was a young teenager, I joined the girl scouts because their handbook talked about horsemanship. But at the meetings, all they talked about was cooking and sewing. When I asked about horsemanship, they said "We don't have any program for that" so I dropped out of that pretty quickly. There was another group at the time that referenced horsemanship, so I joined but when I went to their meeting, they had no horsemanship either, only cooking and sewing. Those experiences left me with a long term dislike for cooking and sewing but now I like cooking a lot. It took a while to take hold.

During the war years in the forties, we would go to town and the streets and bars were full of sailors. My father tracked down the ones who could play banjo and brought them home for dinner so we had a lot of good entertainment then. There were many, many sailors here at that time. The restaurants and hotels started to do quite well following the lean years of the depression. The navy occupied both beaches and we couldn't go there except when they wanted plants from the nursery. My father would deliver plants to the Navy facility on the South Beach of Hutchinson Island. Some of the officers stayed in the Fort Pierce Hotel, and I ran into some of them many years later at a late night party in New York City. When I told them where I was from, they mentioned the pictures of sailfish on the checks that they used to get from the St Lucie County Bank.

The military presence during the war was the way many people discovered Fort Pierce and some came back after the war to live here. It was unlike when General Development lured people back, offering them building lots to get their combat pay. General Development came to St. Lucie County after the War and bought huge tracts of land, as they had done in some other counties. They sold lots and soon had a new city that they then ran with company people taking the city officer positions.

Sometimes when we were in town and heard the train whistle, we would go to the train station to see The Champion come in². There was a raised platform with a roof over it where the Champion arrived and passengers and freight were loaded. It was an entertaining place as there was a washboard band that would play for passengers getting off the train and the Seminole people that came to town every Saturday would gather there on the platform. Maybe it was the closest thing to their chickees. There would also be people there to pick up mail that the train delivered to the old post office at Orange Avenue and Fifth Street. The train station was just south of Orange Avenue, east of the railroad tracks. Sometimes mail came in at night and would be put in our boxes then. We could go to the post office any time day or night and get our mail. On Saturday when we visited the post office, if we continued east, we would cross the street and go to Pagans grocery store and then there was a bakery and a beauty parlor. My mother visited those three places every Saturday morning. The old post office is an empty federal building now and there is nothing where the train station used to be.

During that time my father and I would work together to ship plants from the nursery to greenhouses or florists that wanted tropical plants. We would bring the plants to the train station at night after we finished at the nursery and pack them up to get them on the next train coming in the morning. My father also used to drive plants to greenhouses in Louisiana. This was before air conditioning and my father would get blocks of dry ice and put them on the floorboard near the vent and it would cool the whole vehicle.

² The Champion was a streamlined passenger train operated by the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad and Florida East Coast Railway between New York City and Miami from 1933 until 1979.

1950s

I went to the Ringling School of Art in Sarasota, Florida from 1953 until 1957. My father wanted me to take commercial art, so I signed up for that. Fortunately there was a lot of fine art used in advertising and we went to landscape classes three days a week, three hours a day and figure drawing three hours a day, three days a week. The figure drawing taught me the most because they were timed and they made me think fast and draw fast. Some would be just ten minute sketches and I must have been drawing without thinking because I got it done fast. In the landscape class, we went to many interesting locations, beautiful spots on the water, some with nice bridges and good landscape plants and it forced me to draw and paint something besides horses, which would be needed for backgrounds.

As I progressed at Ringling, I became more interested in fine art than commercial art and so I quietly switched to fine arts. We had some wonderful instructors there, some who did the covers for *Time* magazine and other publications. These were retired artists from New York who moved to Florida to teach at Ringling. So we were exposed to some very skilled artists who had already made a living at it and who had worked in many fields. It was a great concentration of artists to learn from. I feel very fortunate that I was going there those years when those artists were teaching. Jamie Doolin³ was a great figure instructor. I might recall some more later. We had very good draftsmen, even though those were often buildings. We had another instructor whose specialty was wildlife painting and he did a whole calendar every year of wildlife for Brown and Bigelow Calendar Company.

For six weeks in the fall, we would go to the Ringling circus training facility every day, where the performers were training for their annual trips around the country. We got to draw people hanging from their teeth and all kinds of things done by the web girls⁴ that we would never get in class because they were using different parts of their body to support themselves and they were in so many unusual positions. It was a real good test for us. It was a great treat and great experience for us when drawing figures to draw people supported by different things like their teeth and web girls hanging from their legs. The human anatomy was shown in unusual positions, which was very good for us to draw and learn. It prepared us for things that would come up and be demanded of us later in life and art.

Our instructor who did drafting really liked wild animal paintings. He had permission to go into the tiger cage with the trainer and feel the tiger's muscles and bones which would help him with placing them correctly in paintings. We were able to follow the giraffes around outside the cage and if we moved in a slow, stalking, steady way, they would suddenly feel like they were being stalked and turn around and look at us. Those animal interactions were a real treat for an artist.

In 1957, the nursery property was sold. My father had purchased the Savannah Road property (current site of the Heathcote Botanical Gardens) prior to 1957, and when the nursery property was sold, my parents bought the plants, kept the name Heathcote, and moved the plants to the current location of the Heathcote Botanical Gardens.

³ James Doolin 1932 - 2002

⁴ A web girl is a female aerialist that would perform acrobatics from a rope suspended from the roof and anchored to the ground.

I had returned to Fort Pierce that year after the Ringling School of Art. I had gone to the Ringling School with a student named Neil Warde. Neil had also come to Fort Pierce after Ringling to paint and be near me, I guess. But soon, I left to visit my aunt and uncle in Los Angeles “for a while” at my father’s urging. He described how the desert was in bloom and that the Marines at camp Pendleton would soon have their annual rodeo. I didn’t find out until returning to Fort Pierce years later that my father had sent me to California to get me away from Neil. When I left for Los Angeles, Neil went back to where his parents lived in Queens, New York. He then got a job on a Swedish freighter that was coming to California. The freighter came to California, and he persuaded me to marry him. Shortly before Christmas that year, we moved to New York, where his parents were, to Forest Hills Gardens, part of Queens, and I stayed there until 1966, even though we divorced in 1963. He was a good artist but a dedicated drinker. Shortly after we divorced, the alcohol killed him.

In New York, I first worked in a photo studio, then one that did encyclopedias, and then the L.W. Frolich Intercon International advertising agency, whose clients were pharmaceutical companies. That’s where I worked on a couple of publications on patterns of disease, therapeutic notes - lots of livers and kidneys. I did illustrations for the company’s periodicals that would come out monthly or quarterly, with each issue focusing on a particular disease, how it spread, and how it was monitored and treated. I did illustrations mostly for the articles but also for the advertisements for various treatments for the diseases. I remember altering one illustration of a dentist whose arm looked too hairy and they didn’t want to scare potential patients, so I brushed away some of the hair.

1960s

In 1966, my father lured me back to Florida. I had seen older people scrambling across the street to beat the taxis and I had thought “One day, that’ll be me.” So I left the hustle bustle of the big city and returned to Fort Pierce, which had also grown since I had left. My parents had rented a house on Delaware Avenue while moving the nursery to the current Heathcote site in 1957. When I came back in 1966, I moved in with them in that house.

While living in that house with my parents, I had a pet boa constrictor. The front door going onto the balcony was a nice sunny place, so I kept my boa constrictor right next to that door in her tall cage. She could go up high to be in the shade or go down low and be in the sun where she seemed to thrive. My father had a mynah bird in his greenhouse for many years and people would come in and ask the bird “Can you talk?” so the bird learned to say “Can you talk?” very quickly and everyone who came near her cage was grilled “Can you talk?” and sometimes children would give their name and the bird would say “oh” like she was disappointed. And one day when my father was at the house for lunch, someone came in and took the mynah bird and cage. The police were alerted and the radio station reported on the theft. The police were told by someone that they thought they had seen the mynah bird at a neighbor’s house near them. By the time there was a search warrant made available, a day had passed and when the police went and asked, there was no mynah bird to be heard.

In 1972, my mother decided to move that house from Delaware Avenue to the current site of Heathcote Botanical Gardens on Savannah Road. My father thought my mother was a crazy lady to want to move that house. The city had to remove every traffic light between the two sites. My parents had to put up a

bond, which my mother paid, to enable the move. They said “If you get the move done by 4:00, you’ll get some of it back.” They had to take the roof off and do some other work but they managed to do it by 4:00. Even though the move was successful, the city said “Never again” about removing and replacing all the traffic lights. My mother thought it was a very good house and that it should be on the nursery. It was an old house with lots of history⁵. It was going to be razed and replaced by a bank, and indeed there is a bank there now.

1970s

In 1972, the city of Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County, and the state funded the purchase of my father’s property and opened the Heathcote Botanical Gardens. After my return from New York, I worked some in the nursery and also on art projects. Randy Steffen was a well-known horse illustrator who was writing and illustrating a book about horse soldiers⁶. One day I was painting in Bean Backus⁷ studio and Randy’s wife came in looking for an artist to help with her husband’s project. Bean recommended me on the spot and so I went to work preparing tracings for him to paint for the book.



Figure 4 Carol with the one that got away

I was 36 in 1970 when I married my second, better husband, Joe Herzog (I shouldn’t make the other one sound too bad). I met Joe quite by accident. I was at Randy Steffen’s home, helping him do something to his illustrations for printing them and Joe came in. He was going to repair their horse trailer that had caught on fire. I asked him later why he was interested in me and he said “You talked about fishing.” Maybe he had mentioned fishing and I had talked about good luck days or something like that. A lot of women say they want to go fishing, but I had been doing it with my father. He would set up an umbrella in the boat, put his line in and then sit reading the newspaper. That was the lap of luxury for my father – away from work in the nursery and catching up with the Miami Herald.

My husband surprised me with a canoe early in the 1970s, so I could go and see all the places in the Savannahs that were so interesting and have very nice trips. I would paddle into the wind and then open my umbrella and sail back, which was a lot of fun. And I got to see a lot of the Savannahs from North to South. One day I got lucky while trolling in my father’s fishing boat. I didn’t know I had a fish on the line until we stopped for lunch and this fish came to life. When I pulled it up, it was an eleven pound bass. I put him on a stringer while we had lunch because I was going to take him to a pond near where we lived, at the Pinquet Apartments on Indian River Drive near Walton Road. When I pulled up the stringer, [Figure 4] he flipped once, broke the chain and swam away.

⁵ The Crimmins home was built around 1922. It was designated a Historically Significant Site in 2001 based on its architectural characteristics and ties to the life of the community. It currently serves as administrative offices for Heathcote Botanical Gardens.

⁶ The Horse Soldier 1776 – 1943, published 1978.

⁷ Albert Ernest (“Bean” or “Beanie”) Backus (January 3, 1906 – June 6, 1990) was a Fort Pierce artist famous for his vivid Florida landscapes. Carol’s time with Backus is described in more detail starting on page 15.

In 1977, my husband built the house that I live in now. He worked for a general contractor, usually running job sites, so he knew how to do everything that goes into building a house. [Figure 5] The spot we chose is good scrub jay territory with soft sand, very convenient for burying nuts. Some scrub jays were watching my husband work on a boat and became pretty friendly. One day they saw him inside on the porch and one came in and sat on his head and watched him glue wood together. [Figure 6] When we were gone for a day or so, and came home and opened the mailbox, three of them would land on my arm as a greeting (as if to say) "glad to see you back." They often met me at the mailbox and sometimes if strangers came, three of them would land on my shoulder and look them over, checking them out.

My husband and I had a raccoon farm here at the house (on Gumbo Limbo Lane) in the late 1970s that was licensed by the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission. I should have been taking moving pictures then. We kept a hay net hanging from a cabbage palm. When the horse was standing next to the fence, one of our raccoons would climb the fence, step off the top rail of the fence onto the horse's back, ride the horse to the palm with the hay net, walk up his neck while the horse ate, get into the hay net and turn around and unbuckle the horse's halter, throwing it to the ground with contempt, like it was some nuisance to the horse.



Figure 5 Carol and Joe's house shortly after it was built

The horse was used to the raccoons being in the pen. The first time one was in the pen, it was a young one, the first one we had. He had been named Bingo in a contest among the residents of Tri-County Rehabilitation Center where I

was working at the time. He was afraid to go near the horse until one day I was giving the horse a bath. Raccoons put their paws into water because it increases their ability to feel, their tactility. When your hands are dry, they drag. You can feel better when they're wet. Many people feel that when raccoons put their paws in water, they're washing. But they're not concerned with dirt, just feel. There was water running down the horse's leg from the bath and the raccoon couldn't resist feeling the water running down the horse's leg. The horse didn't mind and from then on, he was no threat to the raccoons.



Figure 6 Joe working on a boat under close supervision

The raccoons liked to go to the beach. At the ocean, Bingo would follow the Great Dane to the beach and dare the (other) dogs to come near him, he'd sit down in front of the Great Dane and look like "You should come and get me if you dare." [Figure 7]

The raccoons were first born in a cage that was outside and we would leave them there with the mother. It was a two story cage and she kept them upstairs in the dark part. [Figure 8] There was a sliding floor that opened to her floor. When she was downstairs eating, I would open the upstairs and I could reach in and get the little babies to count them, check their genders and get them used to me. When they were between five and six weeks old, I started bringing them in the house one at a time because mother would be giving milk and I didn't want to leave her with a full udder. So I let her keep the last one a while longer until she was drying up. Then I brought that one in and they would all stay in a box under the bed upstairs. They would hear me coming up the stairs and start sounding like peeping baby birds. Even though my husband was in the bed above them, they knew I was coming.

We advertised the raccoons in a magazine about plants and farm implements that went around the state. I advertised baby raccoons, captive bred, bottle fed, flea free, licensed by the Game and Freshwater Fish Commission. Seldom did anybody call about trees that we advertised but the phone would ring off the wall about the baby raccoons. I would have prospective buyers come out here and go in the cage and show them the size (about six feet long and four feet wide) as required by the game commission, and have them pet the adult raccoons and let them know they had to be handled every day. They had to be a normal part of the raccoon's lives and the raccoons couldn't be kept in small cages and neglected. When cared for in this way, they stayed friendly, even with strangers.

Prospective buyers had to pass that assessment and then they had to come in and feed the baby raccoon that they wanted. Then they had to put them in the bath tub and gently spray the baby raccoon's stomach with a hose so that the baby would produce immediate stool and puddle. Then they wouldn't have to worry about them having accidents in the house until they were fed again and went through the routine.



Figure 8 Bingo playing on her swing



Figure 7 Bingo and the Great Dane

So I wanted to be sure they wanted to do all these things, and I had their phone numbers and I could call the game commission if I felt that any were not being treated well, which happened

once. But most owners did not mind the routine. As the raccoons got older, they tended to be good at getting loose. And often after about the third time getting loose, the owner would let them stay loose. We had one friend who kept his raccoon until it was elderly and it had a heart attack in the vet's office. He would take his raccoon for daily walks while he read the stock report. One day, he took a nap and the raccoon disappeared. When he woke up, he looked for the raccoon but couldn't find it. As he was searching, he stopped to rest under a tree, looked up, and there was the raccoon in the tree.

In the late 1970s, keeping raccoons became illegal, because the state didn't want any native wild animals kept in captivity, and we released our raccoons. But there was one that kept coming back and going in the cage at night. I sent a picture and a letter to the game commission about this one and they grandfathered him in for life. He stayed with us and he was my husband's. Every day after work, when my husband came home, he'd go in the cage and the raccoon would get on his shoulders and check him for fleas. They can't check their own necks, so they check each other's necks, and he felt my husband required that, too. His teeth would go like a machine gun. He never found a flea, but felt compelled to check every day. He lived nine years in captivity. When the law was changed, vets were not allowed to treat naturally occurring conditions, but they could treat injuries from road accidents or the like. This raccoon had a urinary tract infection, which was a naturally occurring condition, so he couldn't be treated and died after nine years in captivity. I don't like that law because we should be able to have symbiotic relationships with other animals.

I worked at Tri-County Rehabilitation from 1975 until 1977. I taught the mentally challenged clients how to take care of plants, how to propagate, fertilize and keep them watered as therapy and also job preparation. We had a little shade house. The clients were so proud of what they could do. I think they enjoyed it more than any other department at the place. I would hear how much better behaved they were than people working indoors.

1980s

I started working for the Florida Department of Agriculture in 1984, and worked there for 14 years. I had been growing some citrus rootstock and the nursery inspector from Indian River County was helping our inspector here because there was so much work. He came to our house on Gumbo Limbo Lane to see my trees. I wasn't home, but he told my husband "If she knows anything about citrus, send her to the farmer's market, 8:00 Monday morning." So I went and they hired me to look for citrus canker.

At first, I was inspecting garden centers that sold citrus, keeping track of citrus that came and was sold or discarded. Every tree that they bought had to be accounted for, so we would know if they came from a nursery that had canker. The Caribbean fruit fly was also a problem. We were rearing sterilized fruit flies as one means of control and a parasitic wasp that would lay its eggs in the fruit fly larvae as a second way. The wasp larva would eat the fruit fly pupa, killing the fly and come out as a new wasp, looking for a mate, food and a place to lay its eggs.

After working with the garden centers, I started working in the citrus groves, including the greenhouse's commercial groves. I worked in groves mostly in St. Lucie and Indian River Counties, but some as far away as Cocoa. I didn't find citrus canker but I was told that I sent in some of the best samples for analysis. Before I left the Department of Agriculture, there was talk of a new leaf miner moving north through Central America and the Caribbean and a new kind of aphid. The day after my job ended, somebody found the leaf miner.

In the late 1980s, my husband's heart was failing and we took a plane ride to a hospital in Texas so he could be evaluated for a heart transplant, and they had pictures in the hospital of a team of heart transplant patients that played on a softball team. That was very encouraging for us. [Figure 9] In June of 1989, he had the heart transplant at Shands Teaching Hospital at the University of Florida, followed by six months of rehabilitation there. We were told that he got a good one. One day he was out on the porch doing some electrical work and he hadn't turned off a certain breaker that he should have, and suddenly he was knocked across the porch and his heart never skipped a beat. He thought that was a good sign.

The doctors monitored patients quite well. He had to go back a couple times each year. I guess the procedure was fairly new. He was number 49 at Shands and they would take little pieces of his heart, put them under the microscope and look for signs of rejection. The new heart gave him



Figure 9 A flyer for Joe's surgery benefit event

fifteen more years, but ten years later, he needed a kidney transplant.

1990s

I left the Agriculture Department in 1998 because my husband needed more care then and the Department needed fewer people. I think I worked just three days a week during my last year. The Department was running a successful fruit fly sterilization program, decreasing the severity of the problem. The fruit fly larvae were spun in centrifuges in Gainesville and after sufficient spinning, they would be infertile, and we would release the sterilized insects to breed with the wild ones to diminish new generations. This worked better than the parasitic wasps, I think because the wasps didn't survive in numbers sufficient to do the job. The wasps were easier to work with when released because the fruit flies would go to one's eyes looking for moisture. But the wasps would just fly around calmly and wander away.

2000s

On the last day of 1999, my husband entered the hospital in Gainesville and a few days later had a kidney transplant. It went quite well, he felt well and was calling people around the country to tell them how well it went. Then on the third day, he was very sick and it turned out his colon hadn't awakened. The nurses in hospital were trying to wake it up but he just got worse. It was hard to get the nurse to call the doctor. She told me that she hated to call him in, which made me think he lived out in the country somewhere and had to drive to town. It turned out that there were four doctors on the floor at all times. Finally, when a doctor (one of those who performed the transplant) came in, he listened with his stethoscope and said "You have to go right back in to the operating room. Sign this. If you do, you've got a 50/50 chance. If you don't, you've got none." So he did go right back in and they found he had lots of diverticulosis, and would likely be back for operations in the future that he would never survive. So they removed the whole colon, the large intestine, and gave him an ileostomy, which is like a colostomy but it connects to the small intestine. That worked well, but the shock of the second operation was really taxing and it took a long time to get (his) strength back. That surgery gave him five more years. He didn't drive anymore but he was still always a cheerful person. Going around in a wheelchair shopping didn't bother him. A lot of people look very solemn in a wheelchair like they don't expect to be noticed or spoken to, but he would get up a conversation with anyone nearby.

At home, he loved to read. He and his doctor here, Dr. Koors, would exchange books, especially about military topics, military history and current military events. I think Red October was a favorite of both of them as it was popular with many people. Dr. Koors had been the flight surgeon for the Blue Angels but I don't know why they needed a flight surgeon. He advised us to "Stay out of airplanes that have only one engine." Which we didn't. One time before Joe's heart transplant, he and I went somewhere to lunch with one of Joe's bosses and his wife in his boss's single-engine airplane. We hit rough weather coming back through Vero Beach with lots of clouds, poor visibility, lots of heaving. I always enjoy that heaving up and down with the air currents, even though we were all a little nervous.

2010s

Mariposa Cane Slough Park became a city park in 2011, primarily due to the efforts of Shari Anker⁸. Before it became a park, Shari and her friend Robin and I went in to look around and see how much wildlife we could find. [Figure 10] The first thing we spotted was a lot of white spattered plants, and we looked up and saw a red shouldered hawk on her nest. She seemed to be successfully raising her brood there. Another thing we were glad to find there was a large beehive on a cabbage palm. At one time, the beehive was damaged, and after that, there was the flight of the queen bee coming with a big following of drones. They moved into that area, but it got more damaged, so they moved it to another tree. They seemed to like that general location, so they stayed there. It was full of mulberry trees, laurel oak, live oak, and of course, cabbage palms with great shade and lots of wild coffee that produced very attractive red berries underneath the hive.



Figure 10 Shari Anker and Carol at Mariposa Cane Slough Park

Another time before it became a park, I went there before dawn to see what kind of wildlife would appear. I brought a camp stool and sat there waiting to see what kind of wildlife would wake up. I heard some big birds arrive chattering in low tones, very happy sounding voices. They landed in trees near me. Not long after that, I heard a crack, like a rifle report, followed by a crash as if something landed on the ground. So I aimed my camera up into the tree, although I couldn't distinguish what was there, and took a picture. Then there was another crack and another crash. I took my camera to Walgreen's and had the film developed. What I couldn't see in the dark turned out to be bald eagles. They were in the air after taking off and I could see their white heads and their big bodies. I guess the spot didn't pass muster since they never built a nest there. They must have decided that the timber was too fragile.

One day, the city brought a busload of commissioners and city employees to see all the parks, and they stopped there, as it was just becoming a park. Some of them were apprehensive and didn't want to go into a place that looked so wild, because there would be spiders and who knows what else there. But I was walking with some of them and after eating a few wild coffee berries, they saw they tasted alright and were very pretty. They began to enjoy their surroundings and were glad it was going to become a park. On subsequent trips, we've run into other wildlife. I'm glad the commissioners weren't with us because one friend stepped over a rattlesnake and alerted the other two of us. So we walked around it and it was pretty relaxed and stayed to be photographed from many angles. He's been seen again a time or two. We're glad he found a safe place and that he didn't want to waste any venom on us because he needed that for his hunting.

⁸ Shari credits also George Jones and the Conservation Alliance of St. Lucie County.

With Bean Backus⁹

When I was 14, in 1947 or 1948, I started as a painting student with Bean Backus in his studio. He had been painting while serving in the Navy in the South Pacific and I started painting with him when he came home after the war. Bean Backus was the most influential person in my life, one of the best and most democratic people I ever knew. He thought we had too many chiefs and not enough Indians. You never knew who you'd meet at Bean's. I remember sons of Latin American dictators and industrialists from the north dropping in. His place was the center of the universe. Bean and Patsy, his wife, used to come to our house for dinner and my mother would cook curry dishes that he enjoyed.

I was studying in Bean's studio mostly on Saturdays because I was in school during the week. At first I painted a picture of a Mexican cup and saucer, then a wild native orchid, and then I was off to horses. [Figure 11] [Figure 12] One of the other people studying with Bean was Jim

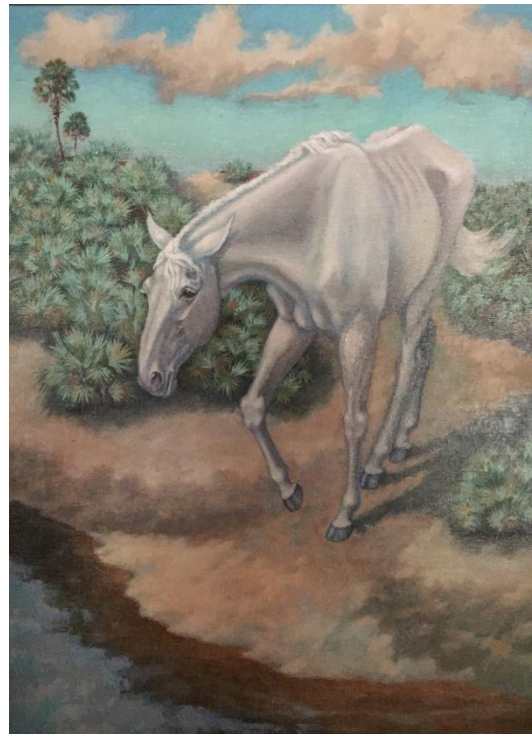


Figure 11 The Old Gray Mare painted during Carol's time with Backus



Figure 12 Cutting Horse - a scan of a poor quality slide of another of Carol's horse paintings

Hutchinson¹⁰. Jim was the brother of Bean's wife to be, Patsy. He was a teenager and his sister would bring him to the studio. He was with Bean just a very short time because he didn't need much help. He became a very successful painter of Seminole and Miccosukee people while living with them in south Florida.

We used to get our paints from Beanie. A distributor came by and we stocked his studio. We could buy those paints. He didn't recommend different paints except red, yellow, blue, and white. With those colors, we made every other color we needed, which was good training for beginners. There was

⁹ Backus was a prominent Fort Pierce artist who under the early patronage and encouragement of Dorothy Binney Palmer created many vivid Florida landscape paintings. He taught and / or inspired a group of local young African-American artists who eventually came to be known as the Highwaymen, referring to their practice of selling their works from the roadside along local highways. Many of Backus' works are seen in the A. E. Backus Gallery and Museum in Fort Pierce.

¹⁰ James F. Hutchinson was a nationally prominent artist widely known for his vivid and striking works of the Seminole and Miccosukee people while living on the Brighton Seminole reservation for four years starting in 1959.

one exception – to paint flesh, we needed alizarin crimson so skin didn't look muddy. He recommended that we paint what we saw and what was familiar to us. There would be a few of us every Saturday, and he would go from one student to the next to see how they were doing and make suggestions if he felt they were needed. There were usually 5 or 6, maybe up to 10 students at a time. Some people flew from other towns to come to the class and would get picked up at the airport.

I would see Harold Newton¹¹ frequently talking to Beanie about his paintings and I saw quite a few. He had excellent, or I should say flawless perspective. He painted very appealing landscapes, some showing stormy weather and some regular days. Harold was really the first of those who would become the Highwaymen¹² and may even have inspired the group of painters that became the Highwaymen. He started out as a young man with interest in painting and Beanie encouraged him. He inspired some of his friends to start painting when they saw how well he was doing. It seemed like a more appealing field than picking citrus. Beanie was very welcoming to these young men and an inspiration to many people. There was no segregation in his studio. Everyone was welcome. There were a number of musicians that used to play at the studio, and that was an unsegregated group too. It was a very good place for a young person growing up in a segregated society to be, because segregation didn't exist there, even though it was the law elsewhere. I painted at Bean's studio until I went away to the Ringling School of Art in Sarasota in 1953.

After I moved back to Fort Pierce in 1966, I started working with Bean again. The illustrator Randy Steffen's wife happened to come by one day when I was at Bean's place. We started talking and I told her that I had one of the Western Horseman magazines with Randy's cover on it. And she mentioned either to me or to Beanie that Randy wanted someone to help with some of his work and Bean recommended me on the spot. I worked with Randy on his book about horse soldiers (described earlier).

Also during that period, I met Alfred Hair, another one of the Highwaymen, a short time before he lost his life¹³. He painted on his own and he just stopped by the studio now and then and discussed work with Beanie. He had set up a separate working area and he and his friends worked there producing art in a more systematic production setting looking to produce quantities of art that could be sold to support a profitable business.

¹¹ From Wikipedia: Harold Newton (1934 – 1994) was a landscape artist and founding member of the Florida Highwaymen, a group of African American artists. Newton was successful in a time of racial segregation and disenfranchisement. He died in 1994, a year after suffering a debilitating stroke.

¹² From Wikipedia: The Highwaymen, also referred to as the Florida Highwaymen, are a group of 26 African American landscape artists. They created a body of work of over 200,000 paintings despite facing many racial and cultural barriers. Barred from mainstream galleries, they sold their paintings door-to-door and from the trunks of their cars along Florida east coast roads.

¹³ From Wikipedia: Alfred Hair (1941 – 1971) was a painter from Fort Pierce who, along with Harold Newton, was instrumental in founding the Florida Highwaymen artist movement. In 1970 (sic) Hair was killed in a barroom brawl at age 29 and the prodigious output of the movement's artists began to wane.

The Savannahs¹⁴

My first recollection of the Savannahs was in the late 1930s, sitting in a Piper Cub, waiting for my father to get the propeller going, while I pulled out the choke. We were on the west shore of the Savannahs, a little south of Fort Pierce. It was the Fort Pierce airport because it had a firm beach that people used as a runway. We had hoped that Eastern Airlines would come in there, but they chose Vero Beach instead.

Then I remember it was a good place to fish and my husband, Joe, and I moved very close to it in Walton, in 1977. That house, where I live now, is part of the Savannahs Preserve State Park. It grew up all around me, and I'm very grateful because I had worked on getting the Savannahs into the park system. This was because of all the bad things that were happening there. Vehicles were coming in and driving around until the water came in through their windows, bringing a wrecker with them to pull them out when they got stuck. They stirred up the bottom so much that there was turbidity in some places for three years afterward.

Before we moved in to this house (on Gumbo Limbo Lane), we were aware of illegal things that were happening in the Savannahs. There was a limit of ten horsepower on any boats in the Savannahs, which would rule out airboats. But the airboats were there. And I'd go to the County commission meetings and mention that to the sheriff. He put up signs to keep the big motors out but the people would just pull up the signs and continue with their big boats. So we wanted the property to become a state park so there could be more control.

Marjorie Silver Alder and I were members of both the Indian River Drive Freeholders Association and the Conservation Alliance of St. Lucie County. In 1972, Marjorie called me and asked if I would take a reporter for the Fort Pierce News Tribune on a trip through the Savannahs. She knew I had been canoeing in the Savannahs and was very familiar with the marsh. The reporter, John Bartlett and I agreed on a time and he came out to interview me and take a canoe trip on the Savannahs. He was surprised at the abundance of birds and the beauty. He knew there was lots of wildlife there but to see them and get their pictures was a very satisfying thing. After doing the article, he saved the pictures of birds that he later gave to me. Sometime later, someone from the Stuart News came up and we were walking in the Savannahs and met some neighbors on horseback. So we gave him a chance to ride a horse and view the Savannahs from that height and he wrote a nice article about it. That was when the illegal causeway (described later) was there and he crossed the causeway on horseback.

Before the state started buying land, the area was basically an eleven mile strip of connected lakes and ponds privately owned by many different people. Properties weren't fenced off so intruders just had to find a way in through the brush and they were home free in the marsh. Even after the state started buying land, fencing the property wasn't practical because there were many private properties that interrupted the state land boundary. The property went from Jensen Beach Boulevard in Martin County up to Midway Road in St. Lucie County. The only other boundary was the railroad and they didn't want people crossing their tracks. The intruders went into the property in many places, some from their backyards, some from other people's yards, whatever way they could get in. One day, 14 vehicles came over the railroad tracks just south of my house, trespassing through the neighbor's yard. They brought

¹⁴ Carol refers to Savannahs Preserve State Park as the Savannahs



Figure 13 Swamp buggy damage in the Savannahs

their own wrecker, and started driving around in water up to their windows. When they lost traction, the wrecker would pull them out.

They would sound pretty cheerful during the day when they were out there playing in the water, but then sometimes they would get stuck or camp for the night. Then it would change from singing to swearing, which came through our upstairs windows loud and strong. It was the Wild West of St Lucie County with the rowdy behavior and trash left behind. [Figure 13]

There were other bad things happening at the time. A developer wanted to put in condos on Indian River Drive. They put in

an illegal causeway, near the current canoe launch site, to get through from Walton Road. They also wanted to have a golf course on an island in the marsh. Fortunately, they trespassed over land not contiguous to theirs, which enabled us, St Lucie County Conservation Alliance, and Martin County Conservation Alliance to persuade St Lucie County to have the causeway removed. Even that was quite a long struggle. Port St Lucie owned some of the property and they wanted to use it for more housing. Their mayor said



Figure 14 Working on the illegal causeway

“Why do you want to preserve the Savannahs? It’s just a bunch of weeds.” It was a happy day when we watched them taking the causeway out. I bought a map of the area and I was viewing it from my horse, so I could see a long way. [Figure 14]

I worked with Dr. Walter Stokes quite a bit during this long process. He would look out for the troubles that were happening there. He had a small vehicle with a crane on it that he used to carry his boat. He would put his boat in the water and look for places where water was coming in, possibly carrying

undesirable plants and nutrients, and the three creeks that drained the marsh¹⁵. He was afraid of development projects coming in and digging ditches or canals, altering the hydrology and drainage of the area. He was very interested in maintaining the basin marsh, keeping it as a separate, isolated pure body of water. He never brought water along on his outings, just a cup to dip his drinking water from the marsh.

Dr. Stokes wrote many letters to Tallahassee advocating for Savannahs preservation and blocking the damaging development projects. I would see him many mornings after I dropped my husband off for work, and he would pull out the latest letters he got back from Tallahassee. He turned some people there into conservationists. This was around 1975. There was consideration in the early days of naming the conference room in the Savannahs Preserve State Park Education Center after Dr. Walter Stokes.

There was some discussion in the early days whether the Park should be managed by the state, or one or both of Martin and St Lucie Counties. In the end, we were fortunate that it was the State of Florida that would take over. When that was decided, the state began acquiring land piece by piece. The state had set aside money for purchasing land that was endangered or would be an asset to the state to have as parks. We were lucky to be doing this at that time, when the state had money allocated for that purpose, so, whenever there was a piece available, the state bought it. Since people paid taxes on land in the Savannahs that was often under water, or access blocked by the railroad, bit by bit, they were willing to sell. But there were a lot of people who were not willing sellers. Some people would take their canoes or kayaks over the tracks and did enjoy the water.

Reubin Askew was the Florida governor who got the ball rolling. The state had allocated some millions of dollars to acquire land under his watch. There were lots of properties being considered and it took a while to get the Savannahs moved up on that list as a top priority for purchase.

During the late 1970s when I was exploring the Savannahs on horseback, I made a movie from horseback, showing the sand miners' big excavations. I got one picture of a front end loader filling a dump truck with three loads of sand. They took the sand to the Fort Pierce port and it would be put on a ship and go to the Bahamas to make concrete. So we were losing our Atlantic Coastal Ridge to another country. I wanted to film all the things happening to the Savannahs, which would help to persuade the state to buy it. There was concern at the time that all the sand mining would damage the hard pan and disrupt the water levels in the Savannahs. Of course the mining company said it wasn't hard pan because it wasn't black. It was tan or something and they tried to sound like they weren't really going through hard pan and who knows? The water level naturally fluctuates due to rain and drought. But some residents felt like their water pressure was less and that the water table was being lowered.

So I showed the movie to the County Commission and to the Indian River Drive Freeholders, the neighborhood association that goes from the Martin county line up to the Fort Pierce city limits. I think

¹⁵ Chris Vandello, Savannahs Preserve State Park manager, provided the following information: There were three outflows at that time. 1) Indian River Estates. Prior to Indian River Estates development, there was outflow towards Platts Creek to the north fork of the St Lucie River. 2) Hog Pen Ditch created in mid-twentieth century. This ditching dragged directly from the marsh to Hog Pen Slough of the St Lucie River where the Crosstown Parkway bridge exists today. This is the only remaining drainage of the Northern Savannahs today. 3) Warner Creek drained the southern end with sheet flow to the Stuart inlet. It was also ditched and straightened mid-twentieth century.

the movie inspired the County Commission to set a certain depth past which they couldn't mine, and ask the state to consider the Savannahs as one of their earliest purchases. And I think some people in the Freeholders Association decided to sell after seeing the movie, as their backyards were in the Savannahs, their water supplies were at risk, and they were paying taxes for land they couldn't utilize. Others weren't ready to sell, because some liked to walk to the Savannahs from their place. I used to cut my Christmas trees there and have the horse bring them back the mile or two to the house. I would cut three, one for us, one for my parents and one for a friend and after each tree was sawed, we would sit down and have a sip of Bailey's Irish Cream. [Figure 15]



Figure 15 Carol and Spinner bringing home a pinus clausa (yes that's really the name) Christmas tree

In the 1980s, the state had made many land purchases and much of the Savannahs was in the state park system. The public was enjoying the hiking, canoeing, kayaking, and horseback riding, but land acquisition was still in progress, as it is to this day. There are still some parcels on the state's list to be purchased¹⁶. Some of those are definite holdouts who may never sell. The state may buy some properties from the descendants of those current owners.

The part of the Savannahs Preserve State Park that is off Gumbo Limbo Lane south of Walton Road belonged to one owner, Ransom Tilton. It included five parcels, each of which he gave to one of his children. None of them stayed too long and the State was able to purchase the parcels one by one, which made several places for park rangers to live. It had a nice workshop that was really a hangar for ultra light aircraft. People who had ultra lights and were in their club were able to keep their airplanes down here. They had a nice runway running north and south (the runway is now the Park burn pile and approach) and occasionally they would have a get-together with other clubs, even from the other side of the state. They would fly over and some had pontoons so they could land on the water. That hangar was damaged in the hurricane in 2005. Part of it has been replaced and used as a workshop for the state park.

Horses

During WWII, the Coast Guard used horses to patrol the Atlantic Beach on horseback. When the horses were no longer needed, the Coast Guard auctioned them off on the corner of Delaware and Sixth Streets in Fort Pierce. A friend who had given me Beetlebaum, my pet bobcat, bought one of those horses. I was

¹⁶ Chris Vandello, Savannahs Preserve State Park manager, provided the following: (The Park) is still acquiring new properties within the optimum boundary of the park. I would estimate we have acquired roughly 125-135 acres in the last five years, including mitigation parcels with the Crosstown Parkway, through private and agency donations and land conservation purchases.

young and living with my parents, and I was very good at saving money. I never spent it on silly things because I was saving up to buy a horse. I finally had enough money and the time came for an auction in Fort Pierce. I took my money out of the bank and bought my first horse, Smokey, for \$100 when I was fourteen. The horse had been at a girl's camp in North Carolina, and the horses there didn't get ridden in the winter time.

It was during the school year and when I got off the bus after school, I had to walk a quarter mile down a dirt road back to the house. My parents surprised me by borrowing a trailer and picking up Smokey while I was at school. They tied him by the dirt road where I'd be walking and then hid in the bushes. When I came along, I was surprised to see the horse and didn't get on right away, not being sure what to do. My parents then came out from the bushes and urged me to get on. I mounted Smokey and enjoyed the ride back to the house.

I had Smokey until I was 19. I was going away to school and I didn't want to leave the responsibility to my parents, so I gave him to a rancher who often had visitors come, so he'd have a horse for them to ride. And then I didn't have a horse again for some years.

While I lived in California, I knew a polo player that wanted someone to start training a girl's polo team. One person would lead the horse and I would hold a belt that was around the rider. The first thing they did was lie down forward on the horse and then backwards, and when they were feeling secure lying down on the horse, they would slowly spin around and I held on to their belt, keeping them confident. They would feel very secure as the horse moved, becoming aware of the muscle work underneath them and gaining confidence that way. The point was to keep the three bones at the base of the rider's spine on top of the horse's spine so they were traveling like one unit.

When I lived in New York, near Forest Hills where I lived, was Forest Park. There was a place there where you could rent horses, and I asked for one with a pronounced spine that was very manageable. They gave me a very suitable horse that was quite bony. You knew where its spine was. I had friends that I was showing what I had learned in California, to lie down on the horse forward and backward, keeping the three bones at the end of their spine on the horse's spine at all times. It was a great way to anticipate the horse's next move.

My husband surprised me with a horse named Spinner in November 1976. He had never seen the horse but had just heard me talking about him. I had been riding him in a dressage class which was intended to make the horses more saleable. The owner had three and she thought a little dressage would help them.

I was up in Vero Beach one evening, shopping for Christmas, and while I was gone, my husband was on the phone making calls to arrange the purchase. I worked at Tri-County Rehabilitation Center in Salerno at the time, and the next day at work we were having a party because of the good work that the clients were doing in the shade house propagating plants, weeding and taking care of them. Other clients wanted to come, too.

So on the day of the party at work, my husband went to the pasture, and met some people who could point out the horse. He had borrowed a trailer and my father's truck, but they had trouble getting the

horse to go into the trailer. This was before cell phones so the people helping went somewhere to use a telephone and while they were gone, somehow my husband persuaded the horse to get into the trailer by himself. They were way out west of Fort Pierce at the time and they started out for Salerno where the rehab center was. They got stuck in some soft sand and by the time they got out of the sand, the brakes were poor. So they coasted through all the lights between Fort Pierce and Salerno when there was no traffic coming.

So at this party for everyone that wanted to come, suddenly my husband's parents turned up saying they were about to go shopping in West Palm Beach and they just stopped in on their way. And then my parents showed up saying they were going to look at plants at another nursery and they just stopped in. I thought "What a great coincidence!" Then I was told to go to the front door and there was my husband and another teacher holding a big black horse, and I realized what was happening. All the clients, be they physically or mentally challenged, knew about this event ahead of time and didn't say a word about it, they were so glad to be in on the secret. It was a great celebration. We gave bareback rides to rehab center clients who thought they'd like to ride a horse. When we were done, I tied the horse to a tree and we went inside but I found out the horse liked me because he started whinnying, not wanting to be left behind. I knew him well because I had ridden him monthly in the dressage class. When it was time to go home, we couldn't get him into the trailer, evidently because he didn't like my husband's driving. So we started out for Walton with me riding bareback and my husband driving the truck and empty trailer back. I didn't follow my husband but just took all the shortcuts I could find from US 1 through Salerno. Sometimes I had to take longer routes. I wanted to go through a golf course that would have cut off miles but I saw there were still a few people out there and thought better of it. We came to the bridge crossing the St. Lucie River to Sewall's Point and I didn't know how Spinner would do because there was a metal framework that you could see through with the water and boats passing underneath. But he saw the boats approach on one side and pop out on the other and paid no attention. He didn't even slow down.

We had started from Salerno around 2:00. It was November and when we got into St. Lucie County and onto Indian River Drive, it was getting dark. On Indian River Drive a few miles from home, it was very dark so I went in to Edenlawn Plantation and borrowed a little flashlight. And by little, I mean it was like a fountain pen with a button you push so people could see there was something coming down the road. It was just a little light but a black horse on a black road at night was just a little safer when we got the flashlight. We made it home about 6:00, found a big bag of horse feed on the truck and gave him dinner. We were lucky to have made it home that day. [Figure 16]



Figure 16 Spinner at 28 after a bath and Finesse Cream Rinse

Having the horse, I began exploring the Savannahs, going north on the east side of the lakes, which we can't do anymore on horseback. I was able to see the Savannahs from Jensen Beach Boulevard to north of Midway Road from horseback. There were several places where the bottom was firm and I could cross on a horse. There was one place on top of the Ridge where I could see the Savannahs lakes to the west and the Indian River Lagoon to the east from the same spot, but only from the top of a horse. This was a spot a few miles north of

Walton Road on a trail parallel and close to the tracks. At that time, and probably still, the pine needles were so thick from the sand pines that they muffled a lot of sound. And the sand pines were thick so when the train went by, you could hear it, but it wasn't the loud sound that you would hear out in the open, even though it was quite close.

There are scrub jays scattered in that area and sometimes they would follow horsemen who had fed them in the past, I guess. When you're on a horse, a lot of animals are not afraid of you like when you're on the ground. On the ground, you're a tall narrow animal walking on its hind legs. But on a horse, you're kind of like a tick on a dog. You're not so threatening. Sometimes squirrels would jump from tree to tree following me. Sometimes birds would be very startled, come off their rookery, producing a startle dropping, and circle once before coming back again to land.

I remember riding one day in the Cattlemen's Parade in Fort Pierce. From there we went to the South Beach to visit a friend, and it turned out to be her 60th birthday. So she got her first ride on a horse as a surprise. And then I rode him over across the road to the beach and into the ocean. That was the first time I had him in the water. [Figure 17]

Sometime later, I found out the Tri-County Saddle Club liked to go riding on the beach, and we would get dates from the county when we could do that. But riding on the beach was



Figure 17 Carol's friend on Spinner before their swim off South Hutchinson Island

nowhere near as much fun as riding in the ocean. The horses are so smooth when they're swimming. There's no detectable gait and they sink pretty far in the water. Their shoulders, part of the rider and the horse's head are the only things above water. When one horse goes into the water, the others that may have been apprehensive will follow. It is so smooth, good for the horse and fun for the rider. We rode on Frederick Douglass beach because there's no dune there to be damaged by horses going up and over. You start on the beach and just go down to the water. That's why it was chosen as a horse beach. Many of the people in the club worked building the nuclear plant and when that ended, many of them took their horses and moved to western states, and the club dissolved. But it was a very nice experience.

I had Spinner for 20 years to the day starting in 1976. He was an endurance horse and 100 miles was his specialty. He had been in the Florida 100, the Georgia 100, a few more and then the biggest one in the East at Pisgah National Park Forest, where he got to spend two nights at the Biltmore Estate.

Spinner was very rarely sick. It cost more to take care of a cat that was sick. The vet came out here and treated him for colic a couple of times. I used to buy hay for him and the few times he had colic it was from hay that he couldn't digest well. He had been poisoned once from aerial spraying of a nearby grove and after that he could take only certain kinds of wormers. Then the medicine Ivermectin came along and that was very tolerable. Spinner lived until he was 31, when he died unexpectedly. [Figure 18]

Epilogue

If you are reading these words, you have evidently been entertained by some stories from Carol's life, however random and incomplete they may be. Neither Carol nor I have any previous experience putting together a project of this nature, so knowing that you've gotten this far, I am happy that you've been able to overlook my beginner's presentation. I want to thank Carol for her generous gifts of time and effort over more than two years to make this volume possible. I have been enriched by getting to know Carol better, and understanding her generosity and heart. I finish the project with a larger and richer view of our natural world. As temporary stewards, we should seek to preserve nature's bounty and help future generations to respect and understand our proper relationship with the natural world, as Carol did for so many years, and continues to this day. – Bob Vandermeer, February 2021



Figure 18 Carol riding a neighbor's horse in 1998. The photo is captioned "Last ride in the Savannas 1998"