

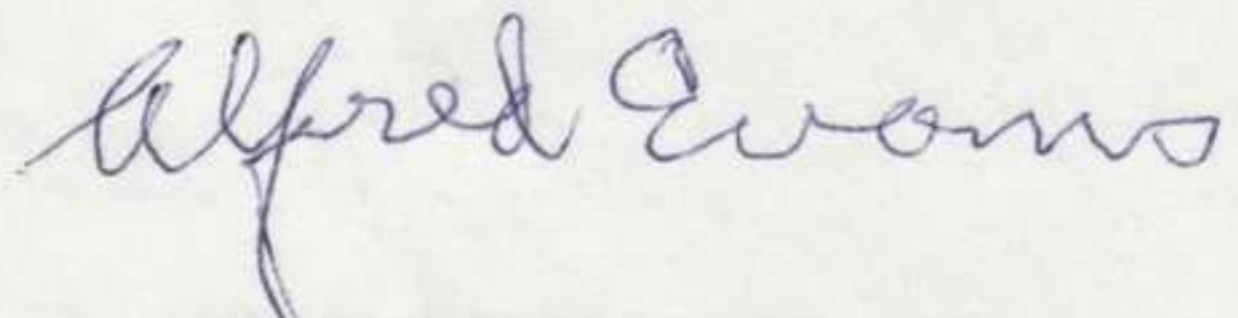
INTERVIEW

ALFRED EVANS



THESE REMINISCENCES ARE THE RESULT OF AN INTERVIEW WITH
MR. ALFRED EVANS OF BOCA GRANDE, FLORIDA, BY MRS. GEORGE (MARY SAM)
WARD IN MAY, 1973.

THE INTERVIEW IS RECORDED ON A TAPE WHICH IS PRESERVED BY
THE ELEUTHERIAN MILLS-HAGLEY FOUNDATION. A VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT OF
THE TAPE WAS MADE AND IS ALSO PRESERVED. THE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
REMAIN ESSENTIALLY UNCHANGED. MR. EVANS HAS REVIEWED AND CORRECTED
THE MANUSCRIPT AND BY HIS SIGNATURE BELOW INDICATES THAT IT CORRECTLY
STATES HIS REMINISCENCES. THIS MEMOIR IS DEPOSITED WITH THE
ELEUTHERIAN MILLS-HAGLEY FOUNDATION WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT IT
MAY BE USED BY QUALIFIED INDIVIDUALS IN ACCORDANCE WITH ACCEPTED
ARCHIVAL PRACTICE AS ADMINISTERED BY OFFICIALS OF THE FOUNDATION.


ALFRED EVANS

This is an oral interview with Alfred Evans in May, 1973 at Boca Grande, Florida. Mr. Evans was Mrs. Louise Crowninshield's second chauffeur during the last five years of her lifetime.

MSW - How did you happen to work for Mrs. Crowninshield?

AE - Well, I came through immigration I think in 1923 through my brother, W. Evans, somewhere around there, I drove before I came down that winter. I drove Episcopal minister on dog team and he wanted me to come down so I decided to get everything straightened up -

MSW - That was in Newfoundland?

AE - Yes, Newfoundland. Came through Hamilton, Mass. The Episcopal minister went there as minister of Christ Church.

MSW - Now, when did you first meet Mrs. Crowninshield?

AE - June of 1954, after World War II. In World War II, I was in the Air Corps and I was stationed in Alabama and these people owned one third of Alabama at one time. They wanted me to stay there and I spent my winters there. I came back this time, my brother asked me if I wanted a chauffeur's job and I said "yes" without thinking of taking it. I was in the construction business. He came up one night and he told me that Mrs. Crowninshield had called him and he wrote to her and told her that I might be interested in the chauffeur's job. So I called him up in Boston and he said, "You better call Mrs. Crowninshield, you said you'd take the job," so I called her up and she said that she was very sorry that I had another job and didn't tell her what I was doing. She said, "Will you come and see me in June?" "Yes I will." So I went and saw her and finally ended up my job. I told her if the job was open by October I'd get rid of my contract and I would come. She said that would be fine so that's how I started with her. Two days, I think, after we got to Marblehead we left and went to Wilmington, Delaware and we stayed in the original du Pont house there every spring for one month and in November.

MSW - Was that the first time you had been to Delaware?

AE - Yes, first time. Montchanin is the name of the place.

MSW - What kind of a car were you driving at that time?

AE - I drove her Cadillac. She had a Cadillac, a Buick, and a Pontiac, several trucks there on the farm. I was amazed to see the flowers in the front of the house as I walked through.

MSW - Did you help to move down here when they came to Florida?

AE - Yes, I took the girls, 3 dogs and a parrot. It took about 4 days to get down there. We stayed in Wilmington of course the first night. We stayed in Halifax, I think, that section of Virginia the second night and the next night and the next night if I remember correctly we went to South Carolina and the next night we got to Stark, Florida. They were fixing 301 then. We spent the night there and then they told us to get to sleep early and start to catch the ferry to get across. We got the 3:00 ferry and Henry met us down at the ferry and showed us the way up, like a narrow road going through trees, angles, everything.

MSW - What have been the biggest changes you have seen in Boca Grande between that time and this?

AE - The biggest change is what they are doing right now - canals, roads across. Of course I don't like it as well.

MSW - What were some of the first activities that Mrs. Crowninshield started doing down here?

AE - Of course she had started quite a while before I came with her in '54 and she had started a woman's club and clinic. That was before I came down and Mary said when they first came down that they moved into this fisherman's shack-cottage and the pump was out in the yard and she and Mrs. Crowninshield had to pump the water for washing and cooking and so forth, and a little narrow road there that the people from the station pushed the cart up with the bags, etc. There was no road there at that time. That's what they tell me. Of course when I came the road was there and all - also lights on the road, and so forth. We had a sewer. Streets was lined with these Australian pines, very beautiful. Right across from Fugates where this gas station is now was a forest of trees there. Down to the marina, you got your gas. Harry Widdows had a grocery store.

MSW - Speaking of the little cottage, did Mrs. Crowninshield go fishing?

AE - Mr. Crowninshield was the one who liked fishing. She went fishing but she didn't care for fishing. She liked to go like on up to the little Gasparilla and take rides up there, have picnics, and then she used to go over to see the birds come in at Useppa - and that was very interesting.

MSW - What type of birds?

AE - All types. They would take their lunch or their supper with them and they just had it in the boat there and watched the birds come in to roost about 5:00, started flying on the roof - pelicans, all kinds of birds. I can't mention all of them.

MSW - That was the little island across from Boca Grande?

AE - Yes, about seven miles - Useppa Mongongo. Were you over there? She took those trips quite often in the evening. She asked me to go along because I liked it. I liked the water.

MSW - Was Mr. Barry down here all the time you were here?

AE - Yeah, yeah. He went to work for her when he was 14. And all the time he was in the service they paid his wages. I was the second chauffeur down there after Henry had a kind of shock due to too much sugar. He drove on long trips and to different homes and so forth. I liked both of them so well. I liked the people and decided to come back the next year. I didn't plan to come back when I started.

MSW - Did you like Florida better than Massachusetts?

AE - Yes, getting away from ice and snow and I did a lot of shrimping. Most days you could go down and the dock would be lined with people from all over the world.

Mrs. Crowninshield she gave a big donation for that school. Before that school was on the two corners there, built this the first year. Mr. Crowninshield was one of Roosevelt's Rough Riders, and Mr. Crowninshield rode his horse along the beach too. You knew that did you? And I think the horse was one that he had or one like it that he had when he was with Roosevelt in Cuba. I never knew Mr. Crowninshield personally. My brother in Boston knew him quite well and liked him but she was so nice, Mrs. Crowninshield. All her guests were wonderful.

MSW - What kind of a person was she? How would you describe her?

AE - She was a very outgoing person and she talked to everybody the same. I remember one thing about her that I thought was quite wonderful when she was going on her last trip. She suffered a lot of pain because I used to see her early in the morning as I set the fireplace and Mrs. Hammond thought she couldn't see anyone. Mrs. Crowninshield was getting ready to take the train to Boston and she heard this voice and she'd say, "Sure I'll see him, send him in."

MSW - Well, that was nice.

AE - This old colored fellow. They looked to her like a mother more than anything else. She didn't know them as black people. I thought that was quite remarkable for a person who suffered like she did. And when we went down to the train and I helped her on the train and I told her, "Mrs. Crowninshield, when you get to Boston and they get you fixed up, and you come back to Delaware I'll have these horses all picked out." She loved the races but she never bet more than \$2.00 on a race. She used to pay my way in, give me \$10 to bet on the races and then we'd check as we come out how we came out. But she said, "Well, I hope so." But she said, "I want you to know one thing, in the five years you have been here, the years you have been here, have been the most pleasant and my guests adore you and you have been so nice to all the help." And she said, "I certainly appreciate it."

MSW - Did she suffer a great deal?

AE - Oh yes, terribly. I used to come in the morning and set the fireplace. She was lying on the couch and I didn't realize it at first, but, her room, Henry probably showed you where her room was in back, and I didn't know it until she spoke to me, at the fireplace. She said, "Alfred, don't run away. I want to talk to you." I said, "I'm sorry I disturbed you, Mrs. Crowninshield." She said, "No, you didn't. I couldn't rest in my room - on the couch." But she wanted to give me a house down there. I told her she had always been wonderful to me. I didn't want a house and

and she wanted me to take a trip down to the Keys. She said, "Take the car and go down." I said, "Well, Mrs. Crowninshield you have to go back to Delaware. We don't have enough time." She was very thoughtful about people. If she'd see anyone, I mean she wasn't too busy. Those colored people when they came. She sent a lot of people to school you know.

MSW - Did she?

AE - Didn't anyone tell you that? Yes, she sent a lot of people to school and helped people that was not so well off. Helped lots of ways. She was quite remarkable that way. That's what I liked about her. I tried to come back another year and another year come until she died. But everybody, I think everybody liked Mrs. Crowninshield. They appreciated what she did. She did an awful lot for the island. When the train came in she was always here to meet the train. I think I have some snaps of that. And I have a snap, I must look it up, the last picture taken of her. She told me as a rule she didn't like to have people take pictures of her but she said you have been so wonderful, so she stood up with 2 others. Mrs. Rhoads was one. If I find that snap some time I'll send it to you. That was her last party. And I do have one where you could see her in the station. She was quite large. I'll see if I can find that and if I do I'll send it to you. To your address in Wilmington.

MSW - Thank you. I'd appreciate it. I certainly do appreciate your coming down and talking to me.

AE - I know she would like that very much.

MSW - I'm sure she would too.

AE - She was really quite wonderful. I was in the hospital the night she died.

MSW - I'm sure she appreciated her friends being there with her.

AE - Oh she did. She was a very interesting person. Did you ever know her?

MSW - No. I'm sorry I never had the opportunity.

AE - Chandler of course told you of her.

MSW - Yes he did. Thank you again for talking with me.