

FRED GREEN
Green Family Investments
St. Augustine, FL

Interviewer: Anna Hamilton
Date: 10/25/17
Location: Green Family Investments
Length: 47:41

[Begin Interview]

Anna Hamilton: [00:00:00] OK. And I'm going to start us off by just saying that this is Anna Hamilton. Today is Wednesday, October 25th, I believe, 2017. October has escaped us somehow. And I'm sitting here with Fred Green—it's about 10:00 in the morning—to chat about Crescent Beach and the changes that we've seen in our community. So to start will you please just identify yourself?

Fred Green: [00:00:22] I'm Fred Green. I'm a native of Crescent Beach. I've lived at Crescent Beach practically all my life.

Anna Hamilton: [00:00:38] Can you tell me when you were born, please?

Fred Green: [00:00:40] I was born August the second, 1927.

Anna Hamilton: [00:00:43] I was born on August seventh, so we're both close Leos there.

Fred Green: [00:00:52] A Leo.

Anna Hamilton: [00:00:52] That's right. And what do you do?

Fred Green: [00:00:53] I do finance at the present time, managerial estate.

Anna Hamilton: [00:01:01] And we were just chatting before I started recording. Will you tell me about how your family came to live in this area?

Fred Green: [00:01:08] Oh my father originally came to Crescent Beach. He was on a yacht. He and some other friends were going all the way to Miami and they stopped at Crescent Beach to spend the night on the way down. I don't know why they stopped but they ended up stopping and Daddy liked it. And they went on down south and then when they came back Daddy's says, 'let's stop at that place called Crescent Beach again.' And then he came down and stayed at the old Alcazar Hotel and went to Crescent Beach. And that was the history. Daddy ended up at Crescent Beach.

Anna Hamilton: [00:01:56] Do you know what year that was?

Fred Green: [00:01:56] No. That was before I was born so I would say it was in the '20s.

Anna Hamilton: [00:02:06] I wonder what it looked like back then. I wonder what he fell in love with.

Fred Green: [00:02:12] Well I don't know. He liked the Middletons, I guess, the dock they tied up [to], this side of where the bridge is now.

Anna Hamilton: [00:02:24] Nice. And your family was from Delaware?

Fred Green: [00:02:25] Wilmington, Delaware.

Anna Hamilton: [00:02:28] Tell me a little bit about your mom.

Fred Green: [00:02:28] Well my mother was from a little town in Delaware called Middletown, Delaware and she married my father. She was the second wife and she raised the family of three, which [was] my sister and myself and my brother. And my father was much older. My father was 65 when I was born, 70 years old when my brother was born. We enjoyed growing up at Crescent Beach. It was a good place.

Anna Hamilton: [00:03:10] And so what did your mom—what did she think about moving to Crescent Beach?

Fred Green: [00:03:14] Oh I have no idea because I was so young. I mean she loved Crescent Beach. We ended up moving into town from Crescent Beach during World War II because we only had—we had gas rationing of five gallons of gas a week which wasn't sufficient to go back and forth much. So we bought a house in town and we lived on St. George Street down by the lake.

Anna Hamilton: [00:03:47] Do you remember the address of your house on St. George Street?

Fred Green: [00:03:50] 290 St. George.

Anna Hamilton: [00:03:54] I'll have to go look at it and see. And what did your parents do in town? Why were you driving back and forth?

Fred Green: [00:03:58] Well they were—you had to go back—we were in school and we—Daddy was in the late 70s and he needed to be closer to the doctor and so forth. And that's with the gas ration. And you couldn't drive much at night because you had a blackout on your headlights.

Anna Hamilton: [00:04:31] Interesting. How old were you when you moved to town?

Fred Green: [00:04:31] So we moved to St. George Street back around 1940, I would say. '39, '40. I don't remember what year.

Anna Hamilton: [00:04:52] So when you moved to Crescent Beach—I know we're skipping back and forth a little—what house did you live in when you lived in Crescent Beach?

Fred Green: [00:04:59] Well originally we lived in a little house and when I was real little, I don't remember, but that Middleton had down on the river.

Anna Hamilton: [00:05:11] OK. I'll have to think about which one—

Fred Green: [00:05:12] It's not there anymore.

Anna Hamilton: [00:05:14] Ok. It's not.

Fred Green: [00:05:15] No.

Anna Hamilton: [00:05:16] Where was it?

Fred Green: [00:05:17] Well where the old bridge was, to the north, was Middleton's property. There was a dock there, and north of the dock was where the house was and across the little driveway was like a cabin and that's what we rented.

[00:05:45] [Phone rings]

Anna Hamilton: [00:05:46] Feel free to take that.

[Pauses to answer phone call; resumes]

Fred Green: [00:05:46] They're trying to sell you—

Anna Hamilton: [00:05:46] Telemarketers.

Fred Green: [00:05:48] Right.

Anna Hamilton: [00:05:51] You were telling me about the Middleton house.

Fred Green: [00:05:54] Yes. The Middletons. Dorothy Pomar was a Middleton. And of course she married Harold Pomar who was a bridge tender.

Anna Hamilton: [00:06:11] So he lived—he could walk to work just—

Fred Green: [00:06:13] Oh yes, yes. He walked to work. We all could walk right—because we lived just this side of Pomars. And just a few feet to the bridge.

Anna Hamilton: [00:06:27] That's such an interesting—it must have been so interesting to have the bridge come through there instead of where it does now.

Fred Green: [00:06:33] Yes.

Anna Hamilton: [00:06:35] Can you tell me about what it looked like down there?

Fred Green: [00:06:37] Oh the old bridge was the wooden bridge and the draw fell in one time [laughs] and then another time it burned.

Anna Hamilton: [00:06:51] Really?

Fred Green: [00:06:51] Yes.

Anna Hamilton: [00:06:53] From what?

Fred Green: [00:06:53] I don't know how—a small portion of it burned but I don't remember how much of it was burned.

Anna Hamilton: [00:07:02] Did that set back traffic?

Fred Green: [00:07:03] Traffic was closed while it was rebuilt. It was closed for several months.

Anna Hamilton: [00:07:10] And how much traffic did you see come over the bridge? I imagine it was a lot less.

Fred Green: [00:07:14] Well it was a dirt road and everything. There was very little traffic. In fact the traffic didn't really pick up much until after World War II.

Anna Hamilton: [00:07:29] Can you tell me about World War II in St. Augustine and Crescent Beach at that time?

Fred Green: [00:07:31] At Crescent beach, of course, originally we had plane spotters on the sand dunes where—Cubbedge Road. There's a large sand dune that's not there now. They pushed it down. But there was a place there and you'd go up and you'd spot the planes and call them in to some headquarters because we had the German spies come in on submarines at Crescent Beach and we had patrols by—horse patrols that would run the beat during World War II.

Anna Hamilton: [00:08:21] Wow. And is that something that you took part in?

Fred Green: [00:08:21] Oh yeah I worked up in the spotters—we'd call the plane in: Single plane or by-motor, which is twin engine.

Anna Hamilton: [00:08:32] And did you have any—can you tell me what that was like? It's hard for me to imagine what that experience is like.

Fred Green: [00:08:37] I really—a bunch of old timers used to come up, and the ones that was the spotters. But I don't remember much more than that.

Anna Hamilton: [00:08:51] Were there any close encounters?

Fred Green: [00:08:55] Not as far as planes go. Of course, as I said, there were U-boats and stuff out in the ocean and they patrolled. And the houses along the ocean couldn't have any lights or anything.

Anna Hamilton: [00:09:11] It seems like it would have been a tense time, locally.

Fred Green: [00:09:14] Oh it was.

Anna Hamilton: [00:09:16] Do you remember you or your family or your neighbors being afraid?

Fred Green: [00:09:20] No we were never afraid.

Anna Hamilton: [00:09:25] It's hard to imagine, for me, what that experience is like. I've heard people talk about the u-boats and the submarines very close off the coast.

Fred Green: [00:09:35] Oh one sunk off the coast.

Anna Hamilton: [00:09:38] Did it?

Fred Green: [00:09:39] Yes, but I don't remember exactly where it was. Somewhere—just north of Crescent Beach somewhere.

Anna Hamilton: [00:09:49] And one of the things my dad told me, after he spoke to you, is that you remember the marsh before Genung's Fish Camp.

Fred Green: [00:09:57] Yes. We lived across the street almost from the marsh. And my aunt had the house right across, facing the marsh.

Anna Hamilton: [00:10:08] And what did it look like? I know we talked yesterday on the phone a little and you mentioned there was a stream—

Fred Green: [00:10:14] Just a typical marsh. There's a little creek—there used to be a little walkway from—Gracy's house had a walkway to the river over that little creek that ran through there. And Jack Genung filled it up and dug the channel.

Anna Hamilton: [00:10:39] Do you know why you chose that spot?

Fred Green: [00:10:43] No I don't. I knew Jack real well. First time Jack ever went out of state my dad—we took him up to Delaware one summer with us.

Anna Hamilton: [00:10:52] Really?

Fred Green: [00:10:53] Yes.

Anna Hamilton: [00:10:53] Why?

Fred Green: [00:10:56] My mother—father didn't drive. And the chauffeur was going up early. So Jack drove us up and spent the summer with us in Delaware.

Anna Hamilton: [00:11:07] That's so funny. And just—I mean just visiting? What did he do?

Fred Green: [00:11:14] Oh he just went around with us the whole summer and he enjoyed it and we all enjoyed it.

Anna Hamilton: [00:11:25] And so would you all have been close in age?

Fred Green: [00:11:28] No. Jack was older than I am. He had a brother, Donald, which is the same age as I am. And Jack grew up down the river, north of the bridge.

Anna Hamilton: [00:11:44] I'm trying to think of which house was his.

Fred Green: [00:11:48] It's north of the new bridge, at the end of the seawall that has been there for years. And that's where Genungs lived.

Anna Hamilton: [00:12:00] Was his family here? Do you know very much about his family?

Fred Green: [00:12:07] His father—they fished and clammed and so forth for a living. That's what they did for a living. Now. His brother, or uncle, I don't remember which one, was Dr. Genung, who was a dentist. And he had a practice on South Dixie at that time, which is now U.S. 1 right at Moultrie Creek.

Anna Hamilton: [00:12:34] OK because I know there's Genung's Avenue or Street that's up there.

Fred Green: [00:12:38] Yes.

Anna Hamilton: [00:12:38] I figured it was—you know, there can't be that many Genungs [laughs].

Fred Green: [00:12:42] Yeah.

Anna Hamilton: [00:12:42] So it was his brother.

Fred Green: [00:12:43] Brother or uncle, I don't remember which one Dr. Genung was.

Anna Hamilton: [00:12:49] And will you tell me about Jack Genung. I was very little when he passed away—

Fred Green: [00:12:57] Oh Jack Genung was a real fisherman [laughs]. I used to say Jack could smell the fish. He knew where the fish were. And he was an excellent fisherman, excellent boatman. He used to run a boat for Mayberry Edwards. General Mayberry Edwards. Edwards used to design boats for Mercury Kiekhaefer. Jack used to run them for him.

Anna Hamilton: [00:13:34] So he kind of followed in his family footsteps with fishing and running boats and—

Fred Green: [00:13:39] Yes.

Anna Hamilton: [00:13:40] —and operating a fish camp.

Fred Green: [00:13:41] And his brother Donald, he was a merchant marine.

Anna Hamilton: [00:13:51] Did Jack have a specialty? One type of fish that he loved to go fishing for?

Fred Green: [00:13:54] No, he just liked fish, fishing. And he was good.

Anna Hamilton: [00:14:05] I remember him as being a very stern, silent man who was very—

Fred Green: [00:14:06] And chewing on that cigar [laughs].

Anna Hamilton: [00:14:09] Exactly [laughs].

Fred Green: [00:14:09] In fact, the last time I was in there with Jack I came in with Richard Boone, which played Paladin, and took a picture of Jack and Boone and he hung it up in his little shack there. I don't know if it's still there or not.

Anna Hamilton: [00:14:34] I would love to see that.

Fred Green: [00:14:34] Uh-huh.

Anna Hamilton: [00:14:34] I wonder what happened to those. I know there are some photos up but I'm not sure which ones were originals.

Fred Green: [00:14:37] Oh he had one with Richard Boone or Paladin, whatever you want to call him.

Anna Hamilton: [00:14:44] That's so funny.

Fred Green: [00:14:45] Richard Boone was a very unusual fellow. He was very bright but he's very quiet. And one day we came in from fishing and we tied up at the yacht pier in St. Augustine and some woman was on this big yacht, 100 and some foot long, with her two

grandchildren. And she got off and she said, 'Is that him? Is that him? Is that him?' I said, 'Yes ma'am.' She said, 'Do you think he would talk to my children?' I said, 'I don't know.' But Boone just walked right by them [laugh]. He wouldn't talk to them. But that was Richard Boone. You never could—People couldn't figure him out.

Anna Hamilton: [00:15:29] That's really funny.

Fred Green: [00:15:29] But he was a good fellow. We fished together all the time.

Anna Hamilton: [00:15:32] Really?

Fred Green: [00:15:33] Yes.

Anna Hamilton: [00:15:34] And when you would go fishing, where would you go? What would you be fishing for?

Fred Green: [00:15:38] Well when I grew up at Crescent Beach before the war we would fish on the sand bars. We—of course we didn't have electric motors or gas motors. We'd row across the boat—river. And—or we'd go down—walk down the bridge and climb down the pilings and get on a sandbar. And there was a good spot that we used to catch a lot of shrimp, take our shrimp nets and catch a lot of the shrimp. And two or three holes around there we used to catch a lot of bass. And a lot of sheephead when you'd fish around the pilings on the bridge.

Anna Hamilton: [00:16:21] Did you have a favorite that you were always craving?

Fred Green: [00:16:24] No, no. We'd eat whatever—Momma would fix whatever we got. If we had crabs, we'd have crabs. If we had sheephead—and of course my mother's favorite fish was a flounder and we'd get flounders by walking along the shore. We could walk from the bridge all the way down to about Devil's Elbow and back in the water at night catch a lot—spear a lot of flounders.

Anna Hamilton: [00:16:58] That's nice. How did your mother prepare that kind of food when you were growing up?

Fred Green: [00:16:58] She was a good cook. She could cook anything. Of course she would, on the flounders—usually she'd fry the flounder. She had—did bake them sometimes, but mainly fried. And of course the shrimp, you'd boil the shrimp or fry the shrimp. And crab, she'd make crab cakes. But it was all crab meat and not filler like you get in the stores today.

Anna Hamilton: [00:17:32] It's hard to get good seafood when you grew up like this.

Fred Green: [00:17:36] But of course you'd pick your own crabs and you'd have plenty of good crab meat.

Anna Hamilton: [00:17:44] When you think back to eating that kind of food when you were younger do you have your favorite?

Fred Green: [00:17:48] No, I enjoyed all on the food.

Anna Hamilton: [00:17:56] One of the interesting things today about Genung's is that the people who own it have tried to keep it a fish camp and kind of the center of the community. Was it kind of the center of Crescent Beach when you were coming up?

Fred Green: [00:18:08] No. It wasn't there originally. Jack didn't do that until—I would say it was probably in the '50s, Early '50s. Maybe in the '40s but I don't remember exactly when Jack did that.

Anna Hamilton: [00:18:33] I imagine it attracted a lot of people who then got to spend a lot of time together and maybe gossip or catch up on news in the community.

Fred Green: [00:18:42] Well of course they'd sit down and talk with Jack fishing and he talk fishing with anybody. And he was married to a girl, Eaton. Mary Jane Eaton was her maiden name and she originally lived Fort Matanzas. Her father was a—worked for Fort Matanzas.

Anna Hamilton: [00:19:10] That's interesting. She was local.

Fred Green: [00:19:11] Yes. We all went to school together, rode the school bus.

Anna Hamilton: [00:19:16] Where did you go to school?

Fred Green: [00:19:18] St. Augustine. Orange Street School was where we started out.

Anna Hamilton: [00:19:26] The high school. [Correction: It was the Orange Street Elementary School, which closed in 1981]

Fred Green: [00:19:27] Yeah.

Anna Hamilton: [00:19:27] And what did you do for your profession?

Fred Green: [00:19:30] Well I've been in—originally in electronics. I started repairing radios in my garage. And then I went, at the end of World War II, in business repairing radios and then when they were available I started selling them. And then when TV came out we started selling TV. I sold appliances and furniture. And I've been in all types of business. Museum, finance company.

Anna Hamilton: [00:20:10] And you still haven't retired. I mean we're sitting here—

Fred Green: [00:20:11] Oh no, I enjoy work. I look forward to go to work. It's a pleasure. If I had stayed home I'd go—I'd die soon. And you got to stay active. These people that retire and sit around all day, they don't last long.

Anna Hamilton: [00:20:31] My dad just had rotator cuff surgery and he was to—it's a long recovery process.

Fred Green: [00:20:33] Yes.

Anna Hamilton: [00:20:39] After about two days he was already [laughs] starting to go a little crazy.

Fred Green: [00:20:39] And that's why I get out of the house and my wife can do her thing and I'm not there driving her crazy.

Anna Hamilton: [00:20:46] What's your wife's name?

Fred Green: [00:20:47] Shirley.

Anna Hamilton: [00:20:52] How did you and Shirley meet?

Fred Green: [00:20:53] We went to school together. We're the same age and—but we never had anything to do with each other much until one day I was next door repairing radios and working on a public address system with another boy or two boys in the school and we were turned on the amplifier, 'Testing one two three four.' She was out there washing the car with a dog and she thought we were crazy [laughs]. And then a couple of years later she came into my store on St. George Street with her mother about something and then we started dating. And that was it. Been married for 66 years.

Anna Hamilton: [00:21:56] Wow. And you all still live on the river in Crescent Beach?

Fred Green: [00:21:58] Yes.

Anna Hamilton: [00:22:02] And you live right by the boat ramp? Is that right?

Fred Green: [00:22:03] Yes I do. My daddy paid fifty dollars for that lot.

Anna Hamilton: [00:22:11] Oh my gosh [laughs].

Fred Green: [00:22:12] That's inflation.

Anna Hamilton: [00:22:16] That's true. That's true.

Fred Green: [00:22:17] Because my father-in-law, he was an automobile dealer. He was a Plymouth Chrysler dealer. And you could buy a brand new Plymouth car for \$495 in 1938.

Anna Hamilton: [00:22:34] Wow. It shows you it's honestly not that long and a lot changes in a short period of time.

Fred Green: [00:22:38] Right.

Anna Hamilton: [00:22:41] And how long have you lived in the house that you live in now?

Fred Green: [00:22:46] Over 40 years.

Anna Hamilton: [00:22:50] One of the questions I've been asking for this project is kind of broad question, but how have you seen the river change since you've lived here, since you've lived on the river?

Fred Green: [00:23:00] Well I say—no major change in the river. Some of your drainage has changed in some of the sandbars have moved over a little bit and some of fishing holes are not there but they've moved to other places. But there's no real deterioration as far as fishing goes. We just have more people fishing all the time, more boats. As I said the solution to pollution is population control because man is the polluter.

Anna Hamilton: [00:23:45] That's true. Were you ever—one of the things I'm interested in is why the river has attracted you for so long.

Fred Green: [00:23:50] Well just growing up on it, I mean, it's just become natural. I enjoy the river. I enjoy fishing. I used to enjoy fishing. I don't fish much anymore but I used to fish at least twice a week after I got married and everything. In fact when I first got married I used to go out and catch trout in the morning and bring them home [laughs] and leave them and my wife would have to clean them [laughs]. And she did fuss once in a while, me bringing the fish home not clean. She was good. She cleaned them and fried—cooked them. And she's a good cook. I'm very fortunate to have a good cook.

Anna Hamilton: [00:24:44] She must love you a lot to—

Fred Green: [00:24:44] She puts up with me.

Anna Hamilton: [00:24:49] That's very funny.

Fred Green: [00:24:49] But when I grew up originally at Crescent Beach, we didn't have electricity. We didn't have water. And the mail service was by boat. You'd get mail three days a week. Mailman used to be named Willy Sanchez that ran the boat. And he lived at Crescent Beach.

Anna Hamilton: [00:25:14] And what do you remember about Willy Sanchez?

Fred Green: [00:25:14] He used to knit nets for one thing, and he had a lot of persimmon trees and grew persimmons. That was north of Jellison Road on the river, is where he lived. There was a fellow, Mr. Jellison, and then north of his property was Willy Sanchez. And we didn't get electricity until just before World War II.

Anna Hamilton: [00:25:46] Wow. Now you just said also that you didn't have water?

Fred Green: [00:25:49] No. We had a pitcher pump and for fresh water we'd have a cistern who would collect the water, rainwater, and that would go in the cistern. And that was our drinking water and water to cook and bathe with.

Anna Hamilton: [00:26:07] Was it very sulphury? Do you remember the quality?

Fred Green: [00:26:09] There was no sulphur in the water. The surface water is the same way you get the surface water now at Crescent Beach. It has a lot of tannic acid and it smells. But the only sulphur water around—there was an artesian well at Gracy's property. But it had salt in it so you couldn't drink it. Any artesian well more or less south of A1A and S3 has a lot of salt in it.

Anna Hamilton: [00:26:48] And I'm trying to think about where that artesian—was there more than one artesian spring?

Fred Green: [00:26:53] No. There's only one.

Anna Hamilton: [00:26:59] I'm just trying to think about where—and that's not where Genung's was.

Fred Green: [00:27:02] No, no. Where Gracy Road [Correction: Gracy Street] is. And you go—it used to go all the way to the river on the left hand side, which would be the south side. That's where the artesian well was and a swimming pool because all the water flowed went into the so-called swimming pool which had wooden sides to it.

Anna Hamilton: [00:27:36] Who built the swimming pool?

Fred Green: [00:27:37] Gracy did, I would say. They owned it so—And they — on the artesian well—it was a flowing well, and they had a little generator on there. It would generate electricity. So they said they had lights from it.

Anna Hamilton: [00:27:53] Oh that's interesting. So it must have flowed pretty fast.

Fred Green: [00:27:56] It flowed a pretty good flow, yes. Course the flow on an artesian well is down from what it used to be, due to all the farming areas.

Anna Hamilton: [00:28:11] Yeah, that's for sure. that's true. And I imagine it was clear.

Fred Green: [00:28:12] Oh yes. But it was salty. That what was the trouble with it.

Anna Hamilton: [00:28:20] That's so interesting. That's really interesting.

Fred Green: [00:28:21] But the artesian water in town didn't have any salt in it.

Anna Hamilton: [00:28:24] I wonder why that is.

Fred Green: [00:28:27] Well I don't know. Of course there is a—south of Crescent Beach is spring in the ocean and that might be what causes the salt to intrude back into it. I don't know. I have no idea.

Anna Hamilton: [00:28:47] It would be interesting to look at some of those geological charts to see how those are connected.

Fred Green: [00:28:48] Yes.

Anna Hamilton: [00:28:53] I will follow up with you if I find anything out. Also one of the things I wanted to ask you about is that I heard rumors that there were human remains found when Genung dug the boat basin. Like bones.

Fred Green: [00:29:03] I've never heard of that.

Anna Hamilton: [00:29:09] OK. It's just something I'd wondered if you heard. Let me look at my notes really quick. One of the names that I wanted to run by you was Gene Johnson.

Fred Green: [00:29:18] Yes, Gene Johnson had an oyster house south of—well at Summer Haven just on the right hand side of the bridge, south end of the bridge. And he roast oysters and he used to have a large oyster roasts there. Everybody used to go there. And it wasn't the cleanest place [laughs] but I remember once the board of health shut him down and Governor [W.] Haydon Burns was coming to town and I had invited him to Gene Johnson's [laughs]. So we went to Gene Johnson anyhow for an oyster roast.

Anna Hamilton: [00:30:08] Even though it was shut down?

Fred Green: [00:30:09] [Laughs] Yeah. But Gene worked originally for the Mellons and the Mellons—he collected the oysters and so forth for Mellons.

Anna Hamilton: [00:30:29] And do you know anything about his family? I cant—I don't know much about where he came from.

Fred Green: [00:30:32] No, I don't know anything about his family. I remember Gene very well. But family—you might find the Noles who used to run the hotel at Summer Haven for the Mellons. They might know more. I don't know.

Anna Hamilton: [00:30:59] That's a good idea. And what sort of man was Gene? What was he like?

Fred Green: [00:31:01] Oh he was a nice fellow. Very nice. Everybody liked Gene. I never heard a bad word about him. And he had good food, no question about that [laughs]. It just

wasn't up to today's standard. It was clean as far as the food was, but everything around it—it was a fishing house.

Anna Hamilton: [00:31:24] And what did it look like? I know the structure's not there anymore.

Fred Green: [00:31:26] I have a picture of it at home and there's a painting made of it in Americus Bank. The painting hangs in there of Gene Johnson's place.

Anna Hamilton: [00:31:44] That's interesting. And what was his specialty?

Fred Green: [00:31:48] Roast oyster was his specialty.

Anna Hamilton: [00:31:50] Nice. I've heard a lot of fun stories about nights spent at Gene's.

Fred Green: [00:31:55] Oh yeah [laughs]. Lot of entertainment went on down there.

Anna Hamilton: [00:32:04] And I understand that you were—you are a former county commissioner.

Fred Green: [00:32:08] Yes I am.

Anna Hamilton: [00:32:13] And can you tell me about that? What years were you active?

Fred Green: [00:32:13] I was the first Republican ever elected to countywide office in St. Johns County. Now all of our elected officials are Republican, by name only. A lot of them change their party because they could get elected being a Republican where they couldn't have Democrat, because the old Democrat party years ago used to be a very conservative party. But today they've become a liberal party. And as I said I was the first Republican ever elected countywide office back in 1967, I think is when I first served. And I enjoyed the commission. I served for two terms. And we zoned the whole county and put in zoning ordinances, building departments, hired the first county manager, because they didn't have a county manager before and we brought it up to date, the county operation.

Anna Hamilton: [00:33:38] Nice. And I understand that you also—you did a few things and I'm not sure if it coincided with your time as a commissioner. You named the streets in Crescent Beach?

Fred Green: [00:33:47] Oh yes.

Anna Hamilton: [00:33:47] Was that part of your work as a county commissioner?

Fred Green: [00:33:50] Yes. Because we were opening up some streets and they named Broadway and various names. So I named all the streets after the native people like Pomar. Got a senior block [laughs]. Middleton, Jellison, Gracy, Charles, it was Charles Gracy. And Cubbedge because—you used to live on the corner of Cubbedge and Middleton. And Mr. Cubbedge worked for the railroad and he had a little store there and then he had a little a garage apartment and above the garage apartment a fellow used to work at Marineland when they first opened up. He was a diver that cleaned all the little portholes.

Anna Hamilton: [00:35:02] Wow.

Fred Green: [00:35:02] And then Cubbedge had a son who married—lived in the house on the opposite corner from yours, west. Barney Cubbedge. And then across the street was his daughter who was married to Sheets. And now if you need more information you might be able to get one of the books that she wrote about Stanton Sheets and Crescent Beach.

Anna Hamilton: [00:35:41] I'll look it up, yeah.

Fred Green: [00:35:47] I'm just trying to think—I'm trying to think of what the name—I have a—I had a copy of it. But I don't know whatever happened to it.

Anna Hamilton: [00:36:03] I bet I'll be able to track it down.

Fred Green: [00:36:04] But it was Stanton Scrubs or something—I forget something about—he loved the hunt and everything. And he was a big hunter and it's a lot about that. And then there's quite a little bit about Crescent Beach in there.

Anna Hamilton: [00:36:21] Nice.

Fred Green: [00:36:21] Yes.

Anna Hamilton: [00:36:28] So you mentioned the Cubbedges and the Middletons. And what did the Gracy—you mentioned the Gracys.

Fred Green: [00:36:28] Yeah. The Gracy was from New York and they would only spend the winters at Crescent Beach. And next to them, they owned the house that the Howards lived in. Both houses have been torn down over the period of years. And the Howards maintained everything for Gracy. And Dick Howard—and Frank Howard—and they had a daughter. I forget

what her name was. But they all spent the—just the winters at Crescent Beach and the summers back in New York.

Anna Hamilton: [00:37:22] OK. It seems like there were a lot of people escaping the northern winter.

Fred Green: [00:37:22] Yeah. And then next to that going south were people named Clary that lived there. And they were from New York and they spent just the winters there. And then they started spending the full time there. And one of the boys, Bruce Clary, was a lawyer in Deland and a judge as well.

Anna Hamilton: [00:37:51] Nice. And you also named Charles Street, is that true?

Fred Green: [00:37:55] Yes.

Anna Hamilton: [00:37:56] And who were the Charles?

Fred Green: [00:38:05] Charles was the first name—you've got to excuse me there for a minute. Gracy, Charles Gracy.

Anna Hamilton: [00:38:24] I see. I didn't realize that.

Fred Green: [00:38:24] Yes. And then the Wells lived down there.

Anna Hamilton: [00:38:30] And that's the house my parents live in.

Fred Green: [00:38:30] They live in the Wells' house. I knew the Wells house and Lee Wells—they had a daughter, Lee Wells, who became an architect and their son was the same age as my brother. Nimrod Wells. And he was a pilot for the Air Force.

Anna Hamilton: [00:38:55] His name was Nimrod?

Fred Green: [00:38:55] Yeah, Nimrod.

Anna Hamilton: [00:38:58] That's funny.

Fred Green: [00:38:58] And they were originally from Gainesville.

Anna Hamilton: [00:39:03] The Wells were.

Fred Green: [00:39:03] The Wells were from Gainesville. And they would originally spend just the summer there. And then later years Lee built a little house on the corner—yes, a little house that's not there anymore or has been changed. It was right on the corner of Charles and road—now it's a little gray house.

Anna Hamilton: [00:39:55] On the corner of Charles and Gracy?

Fred Green: [00:39:57] Yes, on the east side.

Anna Hamilton: [00:39:58] Yeah. There's a—Mr. Blount lives there now. It's a little gray house.

Fred Green: [00:40:03] Yeah. I don't know if that's part of the house she built or not. But she had a little house there. I remember that. She was a good architect.

Anna Hamilton: [00:40:19] And so she designed that house, maybe.

Fred Green: [00:40:19] I would say so but that wasn't the house she ended up living in. She lived there for a little while. I don't remember much about it. But she ended up in house near the lighthouse. She had restored an old house and it was nice. She designed my house at Crescent Beach.

Anna Hamilton: [00:40:39] Oh I didn't realize that.

Fred Green: [00:40:40] Yes. She did quite a little bit of architecture work for us, a strip shopping center and various things. She was very very good. She studied under Frank Lloyd Wright.

Anna Hamilton: [00:41:02] Wow.

Fred Green: [00:41:02] She did a lot of houses in the restoration area as well.

Anna Hamilton: [00:41:08] It would be interesting to track her work and see some of the stuff she did.

Fred Green: [00:41:10] Yes.

Anna Hamilton: [00:41:12] And what about the Jellison family?

Fred Green: [00:41:15] Jellison, he worked for the railroad. And that's about all I can say. I knew him real well. We were very close friends. And his wife, she was invalid. And then Willard Howard, after Jellison died, Willard Howard moved in that house.

Anna Hamilton: [00:41:44] I imagine—was it hard to name those streets? Where there people who felt—

Fred Green: [00:41:49] Oh no, it was a very simple. Very simple.

Anna Hamilton: [00:41:57] Did you—is there a Pomar Street?

Fred Green: [00:41:59] Yes, there's a Pomar Street. It runs—Pomar Street runs north and south and it runs right into your father's property there at Genung's. That little street that goes through.

Anna Hamilton: [00:42:14] Oh yeah, of course.

Fred Green: [00:42:15] But that's Pomar Street.

Anna Hamilton: [00:42:17] And who were the Pomars?

Fred Green: [00:42:18] Pomar—Mrs. Pomar, as I said, was a Middleton. And her husband was a bridge tender at Crescent Beach. They had two bridge tenders. Pomar was one and Brinkley was the other one. But Brinkley lived in St. Augustine but Pomar lived right at Crescent Beach.

Anna Hamilton: [00:42:42] Was there like a dedication party for these streets?

Fred Green: [00:42:47] Oh no, no. I just made a motion and Commissioner Wiles at that time seconded it.

[Interruption: postman enters]

Fred Green: And how are you this morning?

Postman: [00:43:00] Good Mr. Green, how are you?

Fred Green: [00:43:00] Oh fine.

Postman: [00:43:03] Alright, you have a good one.

Fred Green: [00:43:03] Thank you. You do the same. And that's all it was to doing the streets. Problem with the streets and St. John County, we had so many As and Bs streets and a lot of streets of the same name. And so for the fire department and for the Sheriff's department it was complicated to find the various same street names in three or four locations. So we—that's why we changed the name.

Anna Hamilton: [00:43:45] Simplify it a little bit.

Fred Green: [00:43:45] Yes. Now the county, when they name new streets, they make sure there's nothing else with the same name in the county.

Anna Hamilton: [00:43:56] That's probably smart. Although there is Charles Street right here.

Fred Green: [00:43:58] Yes. Well just like St. George Street, there's another St. George Street right over here.

Anna Hamilton: [00:44:11] That's funny. I think we've—we've been talking for about forty-five minutes so I really appreciate your time. I just have one last point that I was hoping to ask you about, which is I know there was a lot of kind of underground smuggling that happened a lot at the boat ramp and the river. Did you ever see anything like that?

Fred Green: [00:44:27] Yes. The largest gun boat—the largest marijuana boats that came in at Crescent Beach came in right by our house. One day our dog woke us up in the middle of the night and some fellows were coming in the boat ramp with wetsuits on. It was in January. That seemed funny and that same day we had a county commission meeting and at lunch I saw the Sheriff and told him about it. He says there's a drug ring that has moved up from north Florida to north—from south Florida to north Florida. He said, 'If you see them again, call me.' So I saw him going out one night—afternoon so I called the Sheriff and he came down to the house, put his car in my garage, and I took my car out. And then another deputy came and they spent the night in the house and they put deputies up at the Bridge of Lions in town and at the inlet. And it was just like a movie where they radioed that boats are coming in through the inlet then through the bridge and then down to Crescent Beach bridge. And they unloaded one of the boats. There were three boats unloaded. One boat and then the sheriffs went out and arrested them. And there were two more boats but the other two boats were laying out there waiting for this boat to finish loading and none the deputies knew how to run the boat. My son Henry [laughs] took the boat with one of the deputies and they went out and arrested the other fellows on the other two boats and brought them in. I forget how many tons of marijuana they had and they were operating out of a warehouse out of Daytona.

Anna Hamilton: [00:46:55] Gosh. What a time. Did you ever hear stories of rum-running?

Fred Green: [00:46:58] Oh yeah. Oh yes. That was customary. But I don't remember much about it. I remember mom and dad talk about the rum-running but I don't remember much about it. I think somebody got caught right at Crescent Beach and threw the whiskey or rum overboard. I don't—I remember something—somebody got caught and threw it overboard but that's all I know.

Anna Hamilton: [00:47:29] Crescent Beach's sordid history [laughs].

Fred Green: [00:47:30] [Laughs] Right.

Anna Hamilton: [00:47:35] Well that's all of the questions I have. Is there anything you want to talk about that we haven't had a chance to?

Fred Green: [00:47:38] No, I think you covered, pretty much, the waterfront.

Anna Hamilton: [00:47:41] Well thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

[End Interview]