

South's Greenhouse, Springfield Illinois - 1922-2012:

The History and Influence of a Family Business

An Oral History

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with Monica Kroft

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Introduction

Gloria Lynne South was born June 25, 1953; the only granddaughter of Charles and Hazel South, founders of South's Greenhouse in Springfield, Illinois. The South family operated the greenhouse from approximately 1922 to 1991; and the associated wholesale evergreen business continued to bring Gloria, her siblings, and other family members together for their annual wreath making ritual through 2010. Plans are underway to remove the remaining structures from the southeast Springfield property by June, 2012.

When I (Monica Kroft) met Gloria Snodgrass in 2008, it seemed evident that her close relationships with her brothers centered on their work together at the family business. Gloria's stories about time spent in and around the greenhouse led me to wonder how growing up in a family business might have affected communication among South family members. I grew up in a family business which involved employees going out to provide service to customers, rather than customers coming to a place of business as with the greenhouse, and I was curious to find out about the similarities and differences between our experiences. Gloria agreed to partner with me to talk about the dynamics of communication within her family and document the history of South's Greenhouse. Her life experience, combined with my background as an interpersonal communication scholar and interests as an oral history student, equipped us to successfully achieve the goals of this project. An added, and unanticipated, benefit of our collaboration was Gloria's recognition of additional, taken-for-granted skills she and her siblings may have developed as a result of growing up in the family business.

Background

Small family businesses may be overlooked as significant contributors of community resources. I made several visits to the Lincoln Public Library's Sangamon Valley Collection and searched the *Decades* folders, business files, and other publications featuring Springfield businesses from 1950's to the present (the life span of the narrator). I found news articles and photos which focused primarily on large employers and businesses located in the downtown core. Small businesses situated in other areas of the city received little, if any, attention. A search for information about greenhouses, plant nurseries, and florists in the *State Journal-Register* archives had a similar result. Research librarians assigned to the Sangamon Valley Collection were also unable to locate relevant resources, other than listings in the *Polk Springfield City Directories*. My somewhat fruitless search demonstrates the need to supplement existing documentary sources and make information regarding the history of small family businesses in the Springfield area available to scholars and the general public.

The oral history interview is a tool well-suited to adding "more history" (Frisch, 1990, p. 187) by documenting the experiences and perspectives of individuals or groups that might have been intentionally or unintentionally overlooked (Bornat, 1998). Capturing and recording memories "offers a glimpse into the life styles, belief systems and values of ordinary people" (Grele, 1991, p. 283) that may not be available in conventional historical documents. This oral history project illustrates how small business owners may be uniquely positioned to influence their families and communities due to flexible schedules; opportunities to build close relationships with customers, employees, and family members; and connections to their neighborhoods. My conversations with Gloria document many examples of ways in which

South's Greenhouse, a family-run business, influenced the lives of family members, neighbors, employees and children on Springfield's southeast side.

Methodology

Gloria (narrator), and I (interviewer), met for two evening conversations one week apart at Gloria's home in Rochester, Illinois. Prior to turning on the digital recorder, we briefly reviewed procedures and signed the *Assignment of Rights* form. I had prepared a list of tentative questions to launch the conversations, and I encouraged Gloria to guide the dialogue in the direction of topics she felt were most important. I acknowledged that she was the expert on both South's Greenhouse and communication among her family members, and my role was to assist in documenting this information for the public record. I personally transcribed the recorded dialogue to ensure accuracy and capture nuances that a third party might overlook. Once the recordings were transcribed, Gloria reviewed the document and contributed several edits and clarifications. In the interest of readability, response tokens (e.g., "mhmm", "okay"), requests to verify spelling, and false starts that do not substantively add to the conversation have not been included in the transcript. Vocalizations, such as laughter, and intentional gestures are indicated in parentheses; and corrections or clarifications added after our conversations were recorded have been placed in brackets. Words spoken with particular emphasis appear in **bold** font. Dialogue participants are identified as "N" for narrator and "I" for interviewer.

Transcript

I: This is Monica Kroft with the University of Illinois Springfield, and I have asked Gloria Snodgrass to talk about the history of South's Greenhouse, located at 1936 S. 19th Avenue [Street] in Springfield, Illinois. This is the first of two interview sessions at Gloria's home in March of 2012. Gloria, before we start talking about the greenhouse, I'd like to ask some biographical details. You mentioned in a previous conversation that your paternal grandparents were really important to you and to the greenhouse, and I am wondering what their names and birthdates were.

N: My grandfather's name was Charles Emmet South.

I: When was he born?

N: March 28, 1904

I: And how about your grandmother?

N: Hazel Bell South. She was born April 22, 1902.

I: And do you recall what year it was when each of your grandparents passed away?

N: Grandma passed away in December 31, 2000, and grandpa, it was October 7, 1967.

I: Can you tell me the names and birthdates of your parents?

N: My father, Robert John South was born August 13, 1924.

I: And your mother?

N: Dorothy Vern [Williams] South. She was born January 18, 1928. My mother is still living, but my father passed away June 20, 1985.

I: Now you and your siblings were involved with the greenhouse as well. Can you tell me their birthdates, starting with the oldest?

N: That would be Charles Edward. He was born December 2, 1951. Next was me, Gloria Lynne, June 25, 1953.

I: And then who was next?

N: William Robert

I: And when was his birthday?

N: November 9, 1956.

I: And then next?

N: John Richard, August 27, 1958. James Allen, July 9, 1960.

I: Then you have one more brother?

N: Thomas Ray, June 29, 1963.

I: And all of your brothers except Chuck are still living?

N: Yes.

I: And were there any other family or non-family members who had major roles in the history of South's Greenhouse, besides your immediate family?

N: Oh boy. Not major roles, I mean, because it was such seasonal work. I think every kid that lived in the southeast side of town, [including] all the Christie boys; but nobody had major roles. They were all part-time people.

I: Gloria, I heard that South's Greenhouse started in the early 1920's. Do you know the specific year?

N: 1922 or 1923 would be where I would lead you to.

I: And tell me about who started the greenhouse business and how that came about.

N: My grandfather, Charles Emmet, was working at another greenhouse [Factor's] that was owned by his brother Louie and another man. I don't know the other man's name. That greenhouse was on South Grand, which was five blocks away. And my grandfather and grandmother were married at the time, and he [grandfather, Charles Emmet] decided he wanted to start his own greenhouse. So they [Charles & Hazel] actually purchased the house that my grandmother had rented a room in and then they built one hothouse right off the back end of it. And so they [grandparents] started just with one small hothouse that remained there until the day we tore it down. He [Charles] just decided he wanted to go into business for himself, so he bought that house and one lot, and then as things progressed he ended up with six lots and a huge greenhouse.

I: So did his brother come to work with him then, or did he stay with the other [greenhouse]?

N: No they had their separate greenhouses. He kept his greenhouse on South Grand which was larger than my grandfather's. But then grandpa had his on 19th – we just always said 19th & Ash.

I: And how did your dad become involved then, or at what point?

N: I think he was like us – from birth (laughter). When you walk right out your back door and the greenhouse is there and it was a family business, everybody worked. So when he got out of the service that's when he went and got his degree in Horticulture at the U of I.

I: So did your father have any other siblings?

N: None.

I: None, just him?

N: [Yes]. And so when they moved back to Springfield, they bought the house across from the greenhouse so that he could work there.

I: Later then, once your parents were married, what was your mother's role in the family business?

N: I know that she was like us, that when it was the busy, busy, busy seasons she was over there, and then when it was the down season she wasn't in there quite as much; unlike my grandparents, who were out there with dad every day. The three of them, in the down season, kept it going, did all of the maintenance and all of that, where Mom just came in during the peak times when extra hands were needed.

I: I noticed in the City Directory at one point that your grandmother, Hazel South, was listed as a florist. Do you know anything about that?

N: That was probably just because of what the greenhouse was. Probably when they called a census, or for the City Directory you would have to write what you did, and she probably just marked florist. And I know that when I had to file forms, I was instructed in the beginning to say that we were a florist even though it was a greenhouse. We never did arrangements or things like that, always bedding plants. My grandmother had a fourth grade education. What she learned was with her green thumb out in the greenhouse.

I: Hands on?

N: Yes.

I: Well do you recall how the business changed over the years? Was there a particular peak time period that you remember, or a particular tough time?

N: Well, like everybody else during the Depression I have heard them say that it was rough. But I also know that during the Depression they would plant two of the lots with their leftover plants and let people come and get food out of the two lots. Peak times? Oh, my goodness! When my father passed away in the '80's, it took all of us to keep it going because he had built such a good reputation. During the 70's and 80's a lot of people were getting interested in gardening at that time and plants, but he had a good stock of plants that it worked out. We were very, very busy during that time.

- I: Why do you think there was kind of that peak in interest in gardening during that time? Do you know?
- N: No idea. I don't know if people were getting back to nature, you know, like they did in the '70's. I don't know. Also, at that time you didn't buy plants at grocery stores. You didn't buy them at Lowe's. You went to a greenhouse and bought them. Not every place had plants like they do now.
- I: Well, that's one thing I was curious about. Who were your primary customers? So they probably were not grocers or market stands. Were they mainly people in your neighborhood, or all around the city?
- N: All over the city – they were just people who were putting in gardens. He had no wholesale business in the greenhouse side of it, and he did not do any landscaping. We did maybe one or two [jobs] where we would go out and plant marigolds for Mazda around their [parking lot], but we did no landscaping like your big greenhouses do now. We had enough to maintain what we had going. No, just common people were who came in.
- I: Were there any regular customers who were particularly memorable?
- N: Oh, yes, even when we kids had the wholesale business of the evergreens, we had people that came in and bought wreaths from us that had been regular customers of the greenhouse. I can remember, in fact, the Taft brothers - they both lived in Rochester at the time – they always had a competition over who would get the first tomato. They would come in and one would get my grandma to give him tomato plants and one would get my dad to give him tomato plants. We had a lot of returning customers. When you had a good product people came back. And dad was very knowledgeable and he shared his knowledge when you had a question about plants or bugs or whatever.
- I: Do you remember the Taft brothers' first names? Or did you know their first names?
- N: Wayne's deceased, but what's his brother's name, because he's still alive. I cannot remember the brother's name. If I come up with it, I'll let you know. [Don]
- I: And then later, when your grandfather and your father and your grandmother each passed away, what changes did that bring to the greenhouse?
- N: Well, it brought a lot. We kids had to make a decision about what we were going to do with this business. We had all worked in it, but none of us had done the managing side of us. My dad was 60 years old and he still had lots of years left, so we thought. With his death being sudden, it was just like, here you have this business. And so we talked about it and had lots and lots of family meetings and decided that we wanted to try to make a go of it. My grandmother, who really owned all of the land, said she would keep the greenhouses; and we were responsible for the utilities, but we wouldn't have to pay her rent or anything on any of the ground. And so we decided to at that point incorporate it because that would protect our

families if we were not able to make a go of it. So then we asked who of our siblings was interested in running it. And there was three of us that said we would be willing to do it. So we just had a ballot vote – nobody knew who voted for what.

I: Oh, a secret ballot?

N: Yeah. It was interesting when we went to incorporate it. I had one brother that did not want to be part of the corporation, but his wife did. Everybody else was wives and husbands. We sold our stock at \$1 a stock, so it cost you \$10 to buy the stock, so we had \$100. And then some of us loaned the greenhouse upstart money for things, with grandma not charging us anything... The inventory that we had to purchase was the seeds. We already had the stock plants. We already had the pots. We already had the dirt. So our upstart fee again wouldn't be too bad. Jim had a degree in business and he accepted the position, and he managed it for five years, with my brother Tom coming home from college [the first year]. And we were able to get him college credits because he was a business major at the time, so he did an internship helping with the upstart of the corporation. And let me tell you, was that ever a learning experience (laughter), because none of us had ever seen that side of it.

When Dad passed away, I put all the books together from receipts and his checkbook and visiting people that had given us supplies over the years. They were probably one of our best sources as to what to do - those people that sold us stuff - because they came in because they liked my dad so well and the business had never been a risk to them or anything. They came in and explained to us, "Your dad usually bought this amount of this and this amount of that". And I had a couple of friends who had greenhouses and I asked them questions about the cut plants. And see my grandmother was still alive at the time, too.

I: That's what I was going to ask, was what her involvement was at that point.

N: She was still alive, too. She didn't know the business side of everything, but she certainly knew the plant side of everything. She knew to tell us, now's the time to move all of our stock plants back into this.... She knew that end of it, and knew it very well. She had done it since she was, what, 22.

I: Was she pretty active in the business until she passed away then?

N: Yes, well, yes. She was very active...

I: At least in an advisory role?

N: My dad passed away in '85 and I'm going to say probably in about '89 she had to back off. She had a heart attack and broke her hip and started having some dementia problems. She came out and made wreaths with us, though. We would take greens in and she would cut greens for us. Up until that time she would know, this is when you feed these plants, this is when you do this. And we had her knowledge, and we had the people that we bought stuff from's knowledge, so we didn't do too bad for six people that knew nothing. And we had my mom who had the same knowledge of some of it - most of it. When spring work would

hit, she would be over there working. And we had all of our knowledge of what we had done. We didn't always know why, but we knew that we did it. We finally got it all in the same bucket and made it work (laughter). That was probably the hardest time that we had, and it was unfortunate that it was at the peak time of the greenhouse, too.

I: When I met you, you and your brothers were involved in just the wreaths – and did you do roping as well at that point, or just wreath making?

N: We had a wholesale business. The only thing we made on site were the wreaths.

I: And so when did you start doing that?

N: Dad was looking for something to fill in the winter months. Another guy came to him; it started as a flocking business where they'd take Christmas trees and flock them. I was probably 11, 12 maybe, when that started, and then that business just grew into the wholesale business that it was with grave blankets, and wreaths, and roping, and other supplies that you need for Christmas time.

I: So this wasn't something that you just started after your father passed away, it was something that he started? I didn't understand that.

N: He and Jack the first year I remember flocked everything. I was over there with my hula hoop one day, and Jack, "Let's flock your hula hoop". I started crying and they took my hula hoop and flocked it. I was like, "I don't have a hula hoop anymore". Dad said, "We'll buy you another one".

I: Do you remember Jack's last name?

N: Not a clue, because he was just in business with my dad one year, and it was not a happy union. He went out and collected money and never brought it into the business, so they were only together one year. Then my dad and grandfather and grandmother took that business and ran with it, too. So we would have that in the winter, and then we would probably have the month of January we'd be cleaning up. February would be a down month for us kids, but dad would be at that point starting the seeds so that they would be growing in February and March. But come April, here we were back over there again. That would go until about June – end of May - first part of June. And then we had to clean up, but we didn't have to work over there all the time in the summer months. But then, come fall we would put in hardy mums that we would cut for florists so they could have fresh flowers. So it was almost a year-round operation with different phases.

I: Who decided what was going to be grown each year? Was your dad more likely to go with tried and true favorites, or was he more likely to try new things? How did he decide, or was he the one who decided?

N: Yes, he was the one that decided. Every year we would go to Chicago [or Champaign] to a big flower show. When we were kids, we were just going to Chicago. Then, as we got older,

we realized what was going on. And you would walk around and you would see what Ball had put out, and then that's how he would pick what seeds he wanted to have – like for petunias and marigolds. At that point he would go to discussions on the tomato plants; that's when Better Boy and Big Boy and when all those came out. And then, when he found out it was something that customers liked, obviously he would throw in a new one every once in awhile. But he stayed with obviously what the big selling plants were.

I: So was that the main vendor he purchased seed from, then, was Ball?

N: I think so. That's who we primarily purchased from, so I'm thinking, yes, that he did the same thing, because that rep would come around. That was their office, was my grandmother's kitchen. I can remember them all sitting around the table ordering seeds and things like that. It was primarily the Ball rep that came around and talked to him.

I: What about your competition. Do you recall any other growers in the area?

N: There were lots of small greenhouses. There was one, Burt's, that was probably about three blocks away. Uncle Louie's that was up on South Grand, that was five blocks away at the most. There was Suttill's, although they had different things that they did – Suttill's than us – they still sold plants at that time. That was, what, five blocks the other direction. It was not a cutthroat competition by anybody. If we didn't have something, we would send them up to Uncle Louie's or we'd send them over to Burt's. They did the same thing. If they sold out of something, they'd say, "Try South's". "Try Suttill's". None of it was cutthroat, they were a group of friends trying to help each other out. It wasn't that type of work environment.

I: Were they more likely to carry similar things, or were there areas that each specialized in?

N: I think they all carried similar things. I was probably in my Uncle Louie's greenhouse about five times in my whole life, because we were all so busy doing our own thing. I was probably in Burt's never as a kid; probably as an adult I went over there a couple of times to talk to the owner when we had our greenhouse and they had their greenhouse. They came to us and bought. And if you would run out of something and they had a big supply of it, we would sell to each other wholesale. So everybody had what they needed.

I: So it was more cooperation, it sounds like, than competition?

N: That's a good way to put it. I would say it was more cooperation than competition. We never compared prices. I couldn't tell you what anybody sold anything for. We knew what we had to sell it for, and that's what we did. Burt's had their people. Suttill's had their people. Uncle Louie had his people.

I: Everybody had their favorites.

N: I would say more so that they all sold the same things. When I went over to Burt's as an adult, I saw most of the same things that we had. Now, Uncle Louie's, like I said, it was a bigger, bigger operation than ours.

I: Do you remember much in the way of changes through the years and the kinds of things that people were looking to buy and the kinds of things you planted and carried?

N: No.

I: Pretty much the same?

N: Pretty much the same. You had your people that knew you can go to South's and get kohlrabi. You can go to South's and get pole beans. We just kind of carried the same things. My dad every once in a while would venture out into something just a little bit different, but if it wasn't a go he didn't stay with it. He didn't advertise.

I: It was totally word of mouth, then?

N: Yes. If you didn't advertise, if you didn't put in the paper, "Hey, I've got la-da-da exotic plants, come on in". It was to the point where we had our map of the petunias, and the yellow ones went first, and this brand went second, and then the striped ones, and then the purple ones, and then, you know, the dark blue ones. It always looked the same to me. No, I can't think that we ventured out too far in lots of different things.

I: Do you remember any things he tried that were different?

N: Probably more the vegetables than anything; trying a different type of pepper. I can remember him one year giving one of the guys who put in 100 peppers. He would say, "I'm going to give you these six plants. I want you to compare them to what you put in everywhere else and let me know at the end of the season". So he did stuff like that. And that's what we would also put out in our garden to see. If it was really working, then next year he might put in a bigger supply of them.

I: So he did a little bit of testing. How about for equipment and those kinds of things. Did he check out what was new and invest in new kinds of things or go with the tried and true?

N: Tried and true. Probably one of the things we did that I honestly don't know if anybody else did, or if they did after we did, was he bought a dirt sterilizer.

I: What was that like?

N: It was like a big oven that you put dirt in and then you heated it to a certain temperature. What it was there for was to kill the weed seeds and anything else that was growing.

I: Was it in trays, then, the dirt, or pans?

N: It had just like a metal oven, then it had the bars that went through it and then those heated up and heated the dirt up and you cooked it. We called it cooking the dirt – and did it stink – called cooking the dirt for so long, and then you shook the dirt out of it and moved it over to

the next spot. Then dad would add things back into the dirt like sand, vermiculite and fertilizer. One of the things I remember when I was the youngest was going around pulling weeds. That was one of our first jobs we had was pulling weeds out of the pots. When we started sterilizing the dirt we didn't have near that issue any longer.

- I: So were you pretty good at distinguishing the weeds from whatever was supposed to be growing in the pot?
- N: He would put us on things like geraniums where it was easy to tell; we didn't get any little ageratums or anything like that where we could pick out the wrong one. So when we started sterilizing dirt it wasn't 100%, but that eliminated that job the most. So then your next job was you went out and brought in the sterilized dirt. So the boys brought in the sterilized dirt and we would work from that. We didn't plant in the benches, we always planted in packs and things like that so we didn't have sterilized dirt in the benches.
- I: Do you remember any other new kinds of things that he tried?
- N: No, I really don't, because we did not go to any of the watering systems. He liked to water by hand. He did that twice a day, the whole greenhouse. He said, "That way I'm looking at the plants; I know what's going on". You have those sprinkler systems... Now he did have one area that he did try a mister for a while, but he didn't like it nearly as well as being able to get in there to soak the plants as he saw that they needed to be done.
- I: So did he use a hose or watering can?
- N: Hose. We had spigots throughout the greenhouse and long garden hoses. He would go up and down each bench, then he would tuck that hose away and hook up the next one, then go and down each bench, then go out and do the hothouses outside and do that twice a day.
- I: Was that ever a job that he gave to anyone else, or did he want that so he could keep an eye on the plants?
- N: He always did that once a day, but he might have Chuck or John would water in the afternoon – mostly in the afternoon; he let them water in the afternoon. I guess I did see my grandpa do it, but I remember seeing my dad do it more than my grandfather. I don't remember seeing my grandmother do it, but I'm sure she did, just because that's the kind of woman she was. If it needed done, she did it.
- I: What are some of the gardening words of wisdom that you recall either your grandparents or your father passing along to customers?
- N: Do not plant your tender plants until Mother's Day. You're wasting your money if you do. I can remember him teaching customers that bought tomato plants that were long and lanky to trench them in so all of this will get roots. I remember him teaching that. He even taught customers that you can take cuttings off tomatoes and make other tomato plants, and would sell them the white powder that you use for the rooting systems.

- I: So even though that would bring him maybe less business, he still had the interests of his customers in mind.
- N: He did not mind. I can remember a sign he had though in the greenhouse: *Credit makes enemies, let's be friends*. I'm sure that there were times that rather than give credit, he would just give them the stuff. Other things, people would come in with plants. "What's on my plant? What kind of bug is this?" Being a horticulturist, he could recognize it. He would wash the aphids off with soapy water: "No, you don't need chemicals to get rid of that. Just take a little soft rag". He taught a lot of people how to care for their plants. People would come in, I remember, with parlor ivy and say, "What's happened to it?" He would say, "Well, did the furnace kick on?", because the temperature could take parlor ivy out. My dad was real free with his information which probably helped the business, too, because people were comfortable with him.
- I: One thing I forgot to ask is where he went to school for his horticulture degree?
- N: University of Illinois.
- I: At Urbana-Champaign?
- N: Yes.
- I: What is your earliest memory of the greenhouse, Gloria? Do you remember how old you were when you first recall something. Rather than something that someone told you about, but when did you first remember.
- N: A memory? As a little kid, playing in there. When mom and dad were over there working we would play, and it was a great place to play hide and seek, you know, because we had the benches. When they built the benches they built them far enough apart that early in the spring when you were needing all the space you could put flats between the benches. You would have a row of flats and benches. That would open up as the walkway later on. But we could run under them. Playing is what I remember in there the most. Probably five and six years old, I can remember playing in there with my brothers and getting into trouble from my grandmother and running with the dog and that kind of stuff.
- I: So the dog was allowed in the greenhouse, too?
- N: It was my grandparents' dog. And that was before you had any type of way of telling that the phone was ringing if you were further away than the house. So the dog would lay at the back room and when the phone would ring he would start barking and walking around the greenhouse to tell them that the phone was ringing. Snowball was part of the team that kept the greenhouse going. We played with Snowball a lot, and he was fun with us kids.
- I: That's an interesting way to have an answering service.

N: Yes, Snowball was our answering service. But he would. If they were out working in the back house, he would go out there and stand at the door and bark and bark and bark. They knew the only time Snowball ever barked was when somebody needed to come up to the shed by the house. Either the phone was ringing or someone had come in. He would never bark at the person coming in. He would go out and get somebody and bark at them. They would know that if Snowball did then you had to come in and see what was going on. He was a good old dog.

I: What hours was the greenhouse open. Were you open evenings and weekends?

N: No. We were open just 8-5.

I: Normal business hours?

N: And we were open on Saturday and we were open on Sunday afternoons. Never on Sunday mornings, because we went to church. Sunday afternoons just during the busy season. And with grandma and grandpa living right there, it was almost like you were open 24 hours a day, because if somebody came after hours grandpa or grandma would go out and see what they wanted. Hours were more established when it was just us kids and nobody lived there at the house than before. But even at that, we never put a lock on the door. We would sometimes come in and somebody would leave us a note: "I picked up four tomato plants and I know this is what I paid for them last week", and have the money laying on the table for us. To say there were set hours, I don't think there were ever set hours, but we tried to. Dad would go from 8 to 5 or 5:30 during the busy seasons, and on Saturdays and Sunday afternoons, but never did we shut and lock the doors. I don't think there was a lock on any of the greenhouse doors.

I: Well, you mentioned that every kid in the neighborhood probably worked for the greenhouse at one time or another, are there a few memorable employees that you could tell me about?

N: (laughter) I remember Jerry Bauchman who lived behind the greenhouse, because he worked there as a kid helping just haul stuff around. As an adult he became unemployed, and my dad hired him back at Christmas time to do deliveries. Then I can remember John Christie, Herb Snodgrass, and somebody else who worked during their teen years. I was just enough younger than them that I bugged them. I can remember them all being there. People that worked there when I worked there, those guys still come back when we would make wreaths and say, "Let me just make 10 wreaths for you today", or "Let me do this for you today". Those kids all still come back, and like the camaraderie that happened there.

I can remember one year dad hired a bunch of kids and this was at wreath time. I know he didn't hire these kids during the summer time, but he hired them during wreath time, I guess because we could handle the spring and summer with all of us. This one young man - everything was always on an honor system with my dad - and he said to my dad, "I made this amount of wreaths", and my dad knew there was no way that he could have made that amount of wreaths, so the intelligent man that he was, he said, "I will tell you what, if you

can make that same amount of wreaths tonight in the same length of time, I will pay you double for what you did last night and for tonight's wreaths. But if you cannot, I am paying you tonight for tonight's wreaths and I will pay you the same amount of wreaths for the night before". That's how he dealt with us. Everything was on the honor system. When we did the greenhouse that's the exact same way we did it. If you went in and said, "I worked eight hours today", nobody said, "I saw you leave at two". It was always on an honor system. I think that's because of the way dad did it when we were kids. It was just always that way. When you know the work has to be done, you just go in and do it.

I: Everybody pitches in.

N: He did hire a lot of neighborhood kids. When my dad was a teenager, a lot of his friends worked there. So what my grandfather did, there's a carport there – and it was kind of like my grandmother's front porch is what it was; she had her swing out there... My dad and grandpa purchased a ping pong table. Grandpa knew how important recreation was for these kids, so he would have a ping pong table, basketball hoop. Not only did they work, but they would also go out and play ping pong for awhile and basketball. Kids liked working there for that reason. Both of my grandparents, you could talk to them all day long, and they would never, ever get tired of listening. I think that was one of the reasons why so many kids liked to work there. It wasn't for the money (laughter) – they did it all by piece work. So if you planted 100 tomato plants, you know, so much per tomato plant. Now they never went back and counted to be sure you put 100 in. But because of the way they were treated, I'm sure that's why they treated grandpa and grandma and dad with the same respect. It was a good environment.

I: What would you say is the largest number of employees you had at any one time at the peak time maybe during wreath making?

N: During the wreath making? There was six of us kids, two of the Browns [Miles & Kenny] (calculating) . . . probably 15.

I: And then you mentioned during the spring and other times of the year you usually didn't have other employees?

N: You know, I'm not going to say we didn't. They didn't sell or anything like that. They would come in in the early spring and do the transplanting and getting the greenhouse ready. The primary persons that sold was grandma and grandpa, mom, dad, and then when I got older, I helped with retail. I think I was the only person that helped with retail until my dad passed away, and then my brothers were forced into it.

I: Did you sell seeds also, or just plants?

N: We had the racks like you see at the grocery store of seeds. They sold seeds. We had the onion sets and the loose pole beans, and loose bush beans, and stuff like that you would buy by the pound.

I: Did you sell potatoes?

N: Yes, potatoes.

I: Did you do strawberry plants?

N: No. He had strawberry plants one year, and he decided that was too big of a mess. I can remember that. He goes, "This isn't going to happen again!" (laughter) You know how they spread. And he was like, "I don't want this!" We didn't do strawberry plants but one year.

I: Were there any other things like that that you remember that were tried and then decided not to continue after that?

N: Not really, because like I said, he kind of stuck with the same things. I can remember we had one area in the old, old - the very first part of the greenhouse was obviously where you walked in - and at the end of one of the benches he would put what he called his fun plants. And he might have the sensitive plants where when you touched them they closed up for kids. Do you remember - what were they called - when people planted plants in bottles - what were those called? Terrariums? Do you remember when they became really, really popular? Well, we had another whole bench where people could get plants that you could put in terrariums. So we kind of catered to that kind of stuff, but the rest of the greenhouse was all your stuff that everybody liked a lot of. Dusty Millers. I remember one time - it's called a cigar plant because it looked like a little orange cigar on the end of the plant. And I can remember the first year he brought those in. That's just the name that we gave them; I don't even know what they're really called. Everybody liked them, and so the next year we started having groups of cigar plants so that people could have those. But as far as your vegetable stuff, not a whole lot. He stayed with the garden stuff. Oh, and he had bulk sweet corn seed that you could buy, and the mice liked that (laughter).

I: Did you have a cat to help with that?

N: We had lots of cats. Lots of cats that kept the mice down. One year, as my grandmother got older, we had it seemed like a lot of mice. My dad found out my grandmother was feeding the cats gravy for breakfast, and my dad said, "You can't do that! You cannot do that! You've got to stop doing that, because they really need to help us with the mice in the greenhouse!" There was four or five cats that were around the greenhouse.

I: Were they your cats or just neighborhood cats who knew that was where to find the mice?

N: Well, no. They were grandma and grandpa's cats. They stayed there. They didn't venture very much further, especially when somebody was giving them hot gravy for breakfast. We had cats. We grew up with all kinds of cats around us.

I: So you had the dog for the answering machine, the cats for the mice, were there any other creatures that were involved?

N: Just kids (laughter).

I: None invited?

N: No. Other than the occasional bird that came in through the vents. We had garden snakes out in the garden but I never saw any in the greenhouse that I can think of, and I don't like snakes so I would have seen them. Grasshoppers.

I: Were they a problem in the greenhouse?

N: They were a problem, and dad was forever killing the grasshoppers. Now you don't see them like we did then. You had your natural insects that came around those plants. Once a year he would have to bomb the greenhouse, and we knew not to go near the greenhouse when he had to bomb it.

I: What time of year was that? Do you remember?

N: Early spring. Early spring, because he didn't want to send out the plants with anything on them. So he would set out and bomb the greenhouse and get rid of bugs. Then he also had time between that and the time of selling them. No unusual plants for around here. He was more of a - what people need. If you want something fancy, go to Lindley's over on Sixth Street. They carried the peace plants and all of that stuff. He was more for what you need.

I: Well I'm going to go ahead and turn off the tape recorder now, and then we'll continue our conversation next week.

Session 2

I: This is Monica Kroft with Gloria Snodgrass continuing our conversation about the history of South's Greenhouse in Springfield IL. This is the second of two sessions at Gloria's home in March of 2012. Gloria, I have several follow-up questions from our first discussion. First, you mentioned that your dad obtained his horticulture degree after returning home from the service, and I am wondering if you know what branch of the military he was in and what years he served.

N: He was in the army, and he was in France during the war. My brother was born in 1951, so it had to be in the mid 1940's.

I: You also talked about how you and your siblings decided about who would assume responsibility for managing the greenhouse after your dad passed away. Can you kind of bring me up to date from that point to the present?

N: At that time my brother Jim became the manager and we had both the greenhouse and the wholesale business that we did at Christmas time. And we kept the greenhouse portion of it open for five more years, so we actually closed it in 1991 or '92, somewhere in that area. But we did keep the wholesale business going. He continued to manage it until

(calculating)...he managed the wholesale business for about four or five more years. Then he became a pastor and moved to Ohio, and so then we had to decide what we were going to do. So I took over the overseeing manager, and what we did at the holiday time was I did all of the pre-ordering and all of the letters that went out to our customers saying yes, we're here, this is what our order sheet is and all of that, and then each one of us would take a week of actually doing the physical management at the greenhouse.

We took the weeks that were our strengths, like John always took the first week because he was a real good person to lay out the organization of where the greens went and stack them. And then Bill always followed him because it wasn't a real busy week but it was just starting to get everything going and he was probably our fastest wreath maker. So it was good to have him working the second week there full time because that put a lot of wreaths on the ground. And Then Jim would come home and he would actually manage for three or four weeks, depending upon what he could do. Then after he would leave, then I would manage one week, and at that point I'm starting to tie up all of the loose ends and starting to get bills back out so that was a great week for me to be the manager. And then there was always that last week that was half days, and my older brother Chuck would manage because he never wanted to manage, so that stretched him so he was okay with half days. And then when we lost him, Bill and I would split that last half week. A lot of times we would just forward the phone to our house so we didn't have to be in there.

I: So your brothers who lived elsewhere out of Springfield then they traveled home during that time?

N: The one, Jim, did. He would travel home. Tom came home one year and made wreaths with us, and the reason that he did that was he had a young man in his youth group that was struggling with some issues and Tom just wanted to get him away and so he said, "I think being around you guys at the greenhouse would really do him a lot of good". So he came in one year and made wreaths, but after he did his internship he became a pastor and never really came back to the greenhouse much. They all liked it at Thanksgiving when they came over and made wreaths. Every kid had a wreath for his teacher and all of that. But he never came back home and really, really worked after that.

I: So about what date did you start with the wreath making process and what date did you end?

N: Wreath making usually started right around the 5th of November and then probably our busiest, busiest week was the week of Thanksgiving and the week after, because that's when 90% of the people do their decorating. We had our last minute stuff right around December 12, and then we were done except for the Catholic churches that decorated on Christmas Eve. They placed their order and we would pull it out and hold it back so we would have it for them so they could put their stuff on Christmas Eve for their services.

I: So how did that work for Thanksgiving, then if you were all busy making wreaths?

N: We would all work Wednesday night obviously. And on Thanksgiving morning we would all work in the morning and then break at noon and have Thanksgiving dinner together with

our families over at my mom's house that was across the street, and I never went back in the afternoon, but my brothers all came back in the afternoon and for the first hour after we had dinner the kids would make wreaths for their teachers or family members or neighbors or somebody they wanted to give a wreath to for a Christmas gift they would all work with the kids to do that. They would tell me that morning how many bows I had to have tied for their wreaths to take home. Then after the kids were all done, then they would go back to make wreaths and they'd listen to a football game on the radio and make wreaths until early evening. They never worked late that night, then we'd start back up the next morning early. The next morning a lot, a lot of stuff went out the next day. So that kind of dictated how hard we worked on Thanksgiving, too.

I: So was that the main exposure that the younger generation had to the wreath making?

N: The majority of them. I mean, they would come in and visit us in the evening and talk. But they all loved to come over there on Thanksgiving. They'd gather at the greenhouse before they went over to mom's. They'd all gather there and chatter and then they'd all laugh because they'd all go play in the dumpster where we threw the evergreen branches in. We liked for them to play in the dumpster because they would jump on it and pack it down tight, but I said, "Please don't go and tell anybody that for Thanksgiving you played in a dumpster". In fact, the last two, three years ago they all wanted their pictures taken in the dumpster because they knew it was coming down to an end and they wanted that memory. So the older kids, we have got them all sitting in the dumpster and some of them were holding their babies sitting in the dumpster. They all loved playing in that dumpster, so then they would play around the greenhouse. Now earlier we flocked Christmas trees, so they knew there was one big house if you stirred up any dust it would ruin the trees that were flocked out there so that's why they all went outside and played because they didn't want to get in trouble for anything that they were doing.

But they did love coming over and making their [wreaths]. But I would say everybody in my family, all of my siblings' children, know how to make wreaths just because they made them. We would coach them, but we would not do it for them. They had to do their own clipping and make their own bundles and some of them came out a little lopsided, but we didn't . . . They never showed interest in really doing it. We were lucky that Rita, a sister-in-law, and Annie, a sister-in-law, and Rich came in and helped us when we really got pushing. If we really needed help they'd come over and help.

I: So when did finally things close down for good, then?

N: The greenhouse, like I said, closed down about 1991. The final Christmas season was 2010 and I'm still closing the books out now. We're going to take everything down, get rid of the buildings and everything. There's no need of them standing there anymore.

I: So if someone from the next generation had been interested, do you think that would have extended the family business, or probably not?

N: I don't really know how to answer that one, because they would have had to show a lot of interest. They all said they wanted to do it, but they really didn't want to do it. I think they just liked the thought of doing it. Actually we had a good time in there. My brothers and I, we had a great time in there working, but you know it was one of those jobs that you had that love-hate relationship with. There was no stress in it other than getting enough wreaths on the ground. The stress came in the beginning when you were ordering the greens. When I put out that order I would pray, "Oh God, please help me order the right things and not too much so that we lose a lot of money!" That's where the stress came. And then when we were making the wreaths, I mean my goodness, it smelled like Christmas in there. People would just come in and just stand and smell it. When that first semi opens up in that cold air and that fresh, fresh evergreen smell hits you in the face, that's what we worked in. I think it made people in a good mood to come in there.

I: Well, and you mentioned last time we talked that some of the former employees came back because they enjoyed that camaraderie.

N: They did, yeah.

I: So, can you walk me through a day or an evening when you would all get together for wreath making? What did that look like?

N: Well, there's two different times. One when we were in the shed that was behind my grandmother's house. And that's when we were younger. And that shed was real, real small and we had just as many machines in that shed and we had no places to put our bales, so we would put the bale on the middle table and everybody would work out of the same bale so that meant that the bale would last probably about five minutes and then we were putting another bale back up. The memories I have of that is my grandmother burning popcorn and bringing it out to us to eat (laughter). Golly, I can't even remember what year it was, but it was after we'd closed the greenhouse. We chose to take down that shed, well we didn't choose to, we were forced to take down that shed by my cousin that lived with my grandmother. And you know, there again, every time we got thrown something at us it came out better than we ever thought it would. So we moved out to another shed and we worked one fall and we put in a floor that gave so we weren't standing on hard cement anymore and it was a lot bigger. And so at that point everybody would had their own bales and their own benches so we could do a lot more.

Everybody had their own style. I had Bill, one brother, that might clip for maybe the first two hours he was there, do nothing but clip up his greens, then the last hour make his wreaths. I had myself, because of the size wreaths I made, I was constantly clipping something. I might clip up enough to do maybe a half a dozen clamps in my ring. So we all had our different styles and we all knew how many we had to get out. We knew that Bill could make 30 or 40 in an evening, we knew that John could make a dozen and however many I made depended on what was needed for the next day, because mine were all the special order bigger wreaths. And if I didn't have very many, then I would drop down and help somebody else with sizes that they had. We all had our own special size that we made. So I never made, unless Jim was behind, I very rarely made an 18 or I very rarely made a 24.

I'd go down to a 30 or a 36 but even at that the 36's I could do, but a 30 was difficult. You would think it's all the same and it really is all the same, but it's just different. And for my brothers to go up and make one my size, I could tell you exactly who made what wreath when it hit the ground by the way the greens were in it.

You would get there and you'd clip for a while. We might go over to mom's and eat supper and then everybody'd come back in and then we would all make wreaths and listen to a basketball game or listen to some talk show or turn off the radio and just talk. In later years we tried to be sure and wind down by about 10 o'clock and that meant getting your wreaths out, cleaning up your messes, getting it all down to the dumpster so that the next night you didn't have that big mess facing you, tally up your wreaths and put them on the board that was in the – close it up and everybody would go home and the person who was managing would be back the next morning at about 8 o'clock and start the whole day. And that's what you'd do all day long. You would clip, clamp and clip and clamp and take them out. Other than the person who was managing that would wait on customers. There would be some times where there would be three or four customers, and that manager would get the order ready and I might go fill the order, something like that. But in the evenings it was just making wreaths.

An interesting thing, Fifth Street Flower Shop once a season would bring dinner to us. They would order pizzas and send them out to us. We would reciprocate when it was Valentine's Day. That's their busy time; we would buy pizzas and take them up there for them. We got to be good friends with a lot of the florists. They were more than just customers. That's what I said when we closed the business and I sent the letter out: "This is hard to do", because some of these people had been buying from when my dad had it in the 70's – that was hard - even before the 70's and the 60's.

- I: You talked about several different kinds of wreaths. What were the largest and smallest sizes that you did?
- N: The very smallest was a 14" wreath. That was on an 8-inch ring, and then when you got finished it was 14 inches. The very, very largest one I made was 10 feet for Humana Hospital and when they hung it on that big outside wall, it was just lost. That was still small. And we struggled because they wanted us to make it and I didn't know how we were going to get it out of the greenhouse once it was made. Luckily there was some give to the ring so that you could push it down and we got it out, but it took all of us. It was very, very heavy and it took all of us to get it out. That was the biggest, but the average sizes started with 14, 18, and 24, which were the main two sizes that the public bought. 24's and 30's went to a lot of businesses. Your 36's were more for business decorations. Some people put them on their houses. And then 48's obviously 4-foot, 5-foot and 6-foot – every once in a while there would be a call for an 8-foot but not too often. Six-foot was the biggest that we liked to do.
- I: Did you have most people pre-order, or you mentioned you were waiting on customers, too. Did a lot of people just stop in to order?

N: Probably about 30% of it was pre-order. And then we did a lot of fundraisers for scouts, churches, Relay for Life. I'm trying to think of what all the fundraisers were that we worked on. Those you never knew what you were going to have coming at you. We did some retail. We tried to stay out of the retail because we really didn't have time to wait on each person, but then our wholesale customers, I mean, a lot of them would only be able to take a half dozen or a dozen wreaths at a time, and so they would return and return and return. We would make them fresh for them, so if they called on Tuesday and they'd want them for Thursday, then there would be 12 or whatever they asked for fresh wreaths on the ground for them.

I: So that would be like the florist that you mentioned?

N: Mhmm. It's interesting that we did a lot with the florists in Springfield, but we did more with the florists surrounding Springfield.

I: What are some of the town that you . . . ?

N: Jacksonville, Taylorville. At one time we went all the way down into the St. Louis area and all the way up to Joliet. The last year that we were in business, two businesses out of Joliet had contacted us. We've had our greens go in to Chicago, which I never understood because there's big companies in Chicago. Frank Farms in Athens bought wreaths from us and shipped them all over the United States. Jacksonville was one of our big client areas. It was just unusual how the surrounding area really came to us a lot; a lot. I mean Springfield did. I'm not going to say our florists in Springfield didn't support us. It seems that there were more landscapers and that in the surrounding area that did decorating for people than they did here in Springfield is what I think happened.

I: Well, I'd like you to think back to your early elementary and high school years, that would be during the 60's and 70's, right? How would you describe the role of the greenhouse in your family life?

N: Well, it probably was the center of our life, because with Dad being self-employed, I mean, it was not like if he didn't go to work it didn't matter. So, as far as that goes, my dad's the primary [wage earner]. The fact that it was across the street made it very, very handy. He didn't have to go very far to go to work. And we kids didn't have to go very far to find our dad, which that made that part nice. And with the grandparents living right there. You know, we spent a lot of time in the greenhouse. It was our playground sometimes when we were younger so our parents knew where we were. During the busy seasons, now not when we were small, during the selling season we were not in the greenhouse because we would have been underfoot except we all had jobs to do, and then when our job was done you went back home. It was long days, I can remember that. During the planting season, when we came home from school, for example, my dad had set that I had to do ten flats of marigolds every night. Well ten flats of marigolds meant – there were six boxes in each flat, so I had to do 60 boxes of marigolds and there was 12 plants in each. So you would have to go get your dirt, you would come in and you'd fill your boxes and then you'd plant then and then you would put them where dad wanted them and he would water them for us. So each one of us kids

had to do so much in the evening time. Now he paid us all for it. So we did get a reward for our effort.

You know, and with my mom being over at the greenhouse working, that changed a lot of dynamics of your mom not being at home. But yet it wasn't like she was at an office working where we didn't have access to her. So it was almost like my mom wasn't working but yet she was working. If we needed her we could get to her. As we grew older my youngest brother was ten years younger than me, sometimes my job was – I never had to cook dinner, but I had to make sure everybody ate and clean up after dinner. The boys had other things that they had to do. The greenhouse probably was the center of our universe more than we knew at the time. We always looked at it as a built-in job and we didn't ever have to go out and try to find work. Even in high school if you had something you had to do after school, you didn't have to say, "No, I can't because I have to work", because my mom and dad would say, "Fine, but do know that you have to get all of this done by the end of the week so just figure out, you know, what you're going to do, how you're going to get it done if you're planning on working on Saturday, or if you're planning on . . .", you know. It did control a lot, especially in the spring, of our hours. But I don't remember it being horrible, and I think it's because like I said we had access to grandparents and parents. We didn't feel like we were key children coming home after school. We checked in at the greenhouse, went home and changed clothes and was back at the greenhouse.

I: Do you remember how much you got paid?

N: No, but I can remember this much. It was all piece work; it was all piece work, and we continued piece work until we closed the greenhouse, because people work at different speeds. But it was all piece work, and I can remember my dad reminded me of Bill Cosby. He would say, "Okay you made 20 dollars this week", and he paid us in cash. He would say, "Now give me back 10 of it", and we would have to put it in our bank. And then of the other ten, he'd say, two dollars of that goes to the church and then we would have an envelope that we would put our tithe and offering in, and he was teaching us about money. And then the other money, he never said what we had to do with it, but if there was something you were wanting you knew you were saving that money. And then he had a neat little bank for each one of us that when you put money in and pulled the lever it would tell you how much money was in it. We were always competing to see who had the most money in their bank. So it was probably a motivator to work even more. Sometimes, like one year, I know when ten-speed bikes became real, real popular I wanted a new bike. So my dad said, "Okay, you transplant all" – and I know it was marigolds – "you transplant all of the marigolds and I'll get you that bike". So I knew that when I got done doing all those marigolds that I could go out and get my bike. So I don't really know how much he paid me that time because I didn't get paid anything but the bike. But it was all piece work. You got paid by the box, I think it might have been a dime a box, so each tray was 60 cents or something like that. We weren't getting rich, that's for sure! (laughter)

I: Well, what skills do you think you might have developed, if any, from your experience growing up working at the greenhouse that you might not have developed otherwise?

N: I think working as a family unit, you know, tolerating each other. Because what we did in the greenhouse was not anything special. People with special needs could do many of things that we did. I think you learn patience, because some of the plants we would plant would be, what's that? (gesturing), a half-inch you would put in the ground. I think we learned to appreciate the growth of stuff. But skill wise, I mean, shoveling dirt (laughter), leveling stuff out.

I: Well, I was just wondering about planning and things like that, since you mentioned you had a certain amount you had to complete each week.

N: I never thought of that as a skill that we had to learn, because it was just expected that we do it. So I guess that was, though. We learned to meet expectations that other people put on us. It was never so much that you couldn't do it, though. But I tell you, we did learn that if you didn't get done what you needed to get done, you certainly didn't do what you wanted to do. Well, I'm sorry, Saturday morning came and no, you were not going over to that friends' house, you still have to finish that job. That was hard. I think we learned to care for stuff. I think being self-employed made that a big difference. Because when you broke it and it was gone, it was out of your pocket. Some insurance company didn't pay for it. We learned teamwork. One of our jobs every other summer was to take out every piece of glass in the greenhouse, wash it, and put it back in.

I: How many pieces do you think there were?

N: I have not a clue, but it took us a long, long time. But we did team work. My dad would go up and he would take out, I don't remember if he took out the little nails. Then I had one brother that would bring the glass down and then there was two of us and we used vinegar water and newspapers and we would wash it all and then it would dry, and then one brother would take it back and then they'd put it back in and tack it all back up, my dad would. So that was a job in the summertime that we would do, or in the early fall a lot of times, in the early, early fall. I remember grandma being out there just because she lived a lot longer than my grandpa. But I can remember my grandpa being out there with us doing it. He'd be the one up on the ladder and we were taking the glass to him.

I: So how big were the panes of glass?

N: Help me guess, I think probably about that wide and that long? (gesturing) So what would you say, 12 inches?

I: Or 18 maybe?

N: And maybe 22.

I: So were they pretty heavy, then?

N: Yes, they were a special glass that greenhouses have, so they weren't like a pane of glass that you put in a window. This is sad, when it came time to close down the greenhouse, we

had all this glass and we couldn't recycle it because it was too thick so we had to just throw it away. We found another greenhouse that wanted it and we found some people who were doing hot houses and so we just gave them however much glass they wanted, but we couldn't recycle it because of the type of glass it was.

- I: Well let's talk about communication within your family. How do you think that was affected between you and your siblings and your parents and grandparents by working so closely together?
- N: With my parents, they used every opportunity they could (laughter). Another job that we had was in the fall my dad raised chrysanthemums. And so at the dinner table - and he rotated us - we would find out who was going over to the greenhouse to help him cover the chrysanthemums. And I can remember the whole time you were covering those chrysanthemums my dad was talking about something to you, you know, trying to teach you something. And with my grandparents being that close, the wisdom that they shared. I worked across the bench from my grandmother potting petunias. We did that every year for probably 15 years. She never lost an opportunity to talk about the old days; to talk about saving money, preparing for the future. She shared Christ with me during that time. Anything I wanted to talk about, she was a good listener. I think that's the other thing about working there with my parents. They heard what we were saying. When you were working across from somebody, you're still working, so they were never too busy to listen to what you were saying. I think it really did help with communication in my family. Especially my dad, because he was over there all the time and you'd be working across the bench from him or we'd go over there in the spring when he was sowing the seeds and just sit and talk to him, just because it was quiet place to be.

Then when we kids took it over, obviously there was a lot of talk going on between us about what are we going to do with the business. I think it helped that we made the decision as a unit, and we knew it was ours. When you know something's yours you put more into it than what you would if it was somebody else's, I think. And then working in there at night I've never laughed so hard in my whole life, especially when we would get tired (laughter). You'd be tired and just start laughing. One night we worked all night long to fill an order and it just got to be hilarious. "How many more wreaths do I have to make?" And we'd stop and look at the board and see how many more we had to go. We talked a lot. We went down memory lane practically every year.

The kids that would come in that had worked in there before, they would go down memory lane with us and so that was fun. I think that's part of the reason our own children liked to come in there was because they liked to hear stories about what had happened. They liked to hear stories about their grandpa, when he was working in the greenhouse with us and when he was making wreaths - although he never made wreaths - but when he ran the evergreen part of it. Now my children, when Eric was a baby, I was still planting across from my grandmother and we'd have him in his infant seat and we would just move the infant seat down. He was three or four months old, and he would sit in his infant seat all day long and smell the smells of the greenhouse and take his naps there and do everything, and we'd just keep working in the greenhouse.

I: Well, that's one thing I wanted to ask you about was how your responsibilities changed over the years, like when you were away at college and came home, and when you got married.

N: When I was away at college I wasn't involved in it at all. I didn't do anything. At Thanksgiving time I might have made a few wreaths but not a lot because there were six machines, and usually Dad had six machines going, and so some of the neighborhood kids might have had my machine. Then when I came home from school, I graduated in December, but I did my student teaching here in Springfield, so I did make wreaths that year. Rich and I were married at that time, so he'd come down and clip for me and we would make wreaths in the evening. Then after that, one year teachers went on strike in Springfield and I didn't want to cross the picket lines, so I did a three-month job and then I worked at the greenhouse full time. At that point I helped my dad a lot with sales and everything else, helped him get everything ready. And then I made a certain amount of wreaths every day so that I wasn't there in the evening. Somebody else had my machine in the evenings. After that I was working full-time so it was just evening and Saturday and Sunday afternoons that we would work.

But my children were in the greenhouse a lot, because when we first got married we lived behind the greenhouse so they would come over there and play. And then Eric is probably the only child, that's my oldest son, he's the only child that ever made wreaths which was the next generation. He probably worked with us three or four years. He never got much speed so he didn't like it. But he would come over there and they would play around. In the springtime, Eric had jobs now that I'm thinking about it. He had to fill the flats with dirt and stuff like that – because he was just a little tyke – he was probably ten when we finally closed the greenhouse, so I never got him into planting like that, but he would help shovel dirt and do things like that with the boys, because after school he would go to my mom's so then he would go to the greenhouse and mess around, so they got him doing some stuff. So my family was probably more involved than the others. Being the age they were, it probably became more of an involvement in the evergreen than it did the greenhouse. But us as kids, Rich was a very supportive husband. He'd come down and help my dad. He'd help him fix stuff and build stuff. He wasn't too nutty about the sales part of it, so he kind of stayed away from that. But he worked in the greenhouse.

Annie, Bill's wife, came over and planted in the springtime. I don't remember Chuck's wife Rita coming in and planting, but she probably did and it could have been when I wasn't there or something like that, because I can't imagine that she stayed away from it. Nobody could really stay away from it; you kind of got sucked into it if you married into the family. It did affect the dynamics of my family, my immediate family, because when the children were little, that's when I was selling, so on Saturday and Sunday afternoon I would be over at the greenhouse helping them sell, so it did affect the dynamics of what went on in my family. I have never asked them how that affected them. I don't think they harbor any hard feelings towards the greenhouse, because they all still wish it was there.

- I: You told me last time, too, that your grandfather was really concerned about providing recreational opportunities for the kids who worked for him: a ping pong table and basketball hoop and other things. Tell me a little bit more about that.
- N: Well being that was long before I was born, I'm telling you hearsay.
- I: I'm sorry, I meant your father. How did he carry that on?
- N: The hearsay was my grandfather decided that kids needed something to do beside work and to keep them out of trouble. And he put a ping pong table out in the carport and they would play ping pong for hours and hours and hours. And then as we were growing up, when I was really, really young, our back yard, any plant that didn't get sold got planted in our back yard. Can you imagine? (laughter) It was beautiful. We had rows and rows! My dad would till the back yard and Memorial Day weekend we would plant and plant. There were two reasons for it. One, he loved plants. He hated to see them die. The second was sometimes he would take stock plants out of some of that, so he used our back yard to feed the greenhouse for the next year, so he would plant the marigolds that he wanted out to keep the colors in our back yard. Then as we got older and my brothers got into sports, then we quit planting all of the plants in the back yard and my dad made it a baseball diamond for the boys.
- I: Right in your back yard?
- N: Right in our back yard. He was working across the street, but he knew where all the kids were. You could go to our house any time and every kid in the neighborhood was there. They also poured a cement slab and put a basketball court back there for them. But Dad, because he was self employed and because he had his mom and dad right there working with him, he could leave every day at 3:30, 4:00, and he went over to Iles School and he started a flag football league. And some of the kids that worked in the greenhouse came out of the flag football league. That was in the fall. Then in the springtime, more in the summer, I mean, because he really couldn't leave in May much, but he started a little league, Ty Cobb little league up in the Withrow School area, which was a very depressed economically area. We had, I want to say, four major league teams and four minor league teams, so there were a lot of kids that were involved in that. That became a big part of what went on at the greenhouse, too, because sometimes kids would come over to the greenhouse and gather there and he would take them all over for baseball. I think because of the way my dad grew up, with my grandfather understanding that kids needed something to do and some place to be and somebody that cared about them, I think that that fell over into what my dad did. He didn't do it in the same manner. Grandpa brought the kids to the greenhouse, but dad went to where the kids were and touched a lot of people's lives.

One time John was walking home from school, and this had to be in the late '70's when there was a lot of racial issues on the southeast side of town, and he knew he was in trouble when this gang of kids come walking up to him. And he thought, "I'm in trouble!" because we walked back and forth to Southeast; it was a half mile down the road. One of the kids said, "Hey, are you Bob South's son?" when he recognized him. John said, "Yeah, that's my dad". He said to the other kids, "Leave him alone", he said, "His dad has done a lot for all of

us, leave him alone”. John said he was never so proud to be my dad’s son in my whole life (laughter).

Dad touched a lot of kids’ lives through being there for them, buying them tennis shoes when they didn’t have any shoes to play baseball and buying them their gloves and their bats and their balls. And the greenhouse afforded him that opportunity because he was self-employed and could leave when he needed to leave. And my mom and grandpa and grandma would just keep the greenhouse going. And I think my grandpa instilled that in my dad how important it was to be part of something for somebody.

I: Were there a lot of racial tensions in your neighborhood?

I: Not in my neighborhood, no, not in my neighborhood, but there were in the 1970’s. We weren’t allowed to be prejudiced, you know. We had a lot of African-Americans that were our customers. In fact, they were probably the people who bought most of the vegetables. And my dad taught us, he said, “Nobody is better than anybody else”. He said, “You know, the old black man that’s coming in giving you his last quarter to buy those plants is no different than the rich doctor’s wife who comes in here and buys all the flowers”. He said, “They’re all the same”. If you want to talk about a skill that we were taught, we were taught people skills and that everybody is the same. It didn’t matter whether you were rich, poor, or had a lot of influence or not. So I think that was a big skill we were taught. And that was probably something my dad talked to us about when we were working beside him. It seems to me that was important to him, so I can’t imagine him ignoring it.

I: Well, and I was going to ask, too, about how you felt the greenhouse, if at all, affected your relationships with your neighbors and with the community.

N: With our neighbors it didn’t. You know, the greenhouse was there and they all built their houses around it.

I: So it was there first?

N: There were a few houses, but they all knew it was there when they built their houses. I think if it would have been a year-round type thing, all that heavy traffic year-round, it would probably have irritated people. But they also knew that my dad was putting in a huge, huge, huge garden that they could come over. So my dad reciprocated in a way of thanking them for tolerating the inconvenience that the month of May caused them. In fact, I remember more of the neighbors coming over and sitting and talking to my grandpa and my dad. They would just come and sit in the greenhouse and talk to all the customers that would come through. A bunch of retired men, and they were all good friends. I can’t tell you I saw any of them working. I did see a lot of them sitting there and watching us work and giving us advice. I don’t think it affected the neighborhood in a negative way. I don’t think so.

I: It sounds like it was almost kind of a neighborhood gathering place for children and for adults.

N: It was. The men would come and sit in the greenhouse and talk, and off season when we weren't planting we used to play hide-and-peek in the greenhouse. I doubt if you have ever played water tag, where you have glasses of water? And when you saw somebody you threw your glass of water? It was a game we made up, but the greenhouse had plenty of hiding places where you could do this kind of stuff and lots of hoses and spigots where you could get the water. You know, and buckets, oh my goodness! We played a lot of games in there. So we had a lot of fun in the buildings themselves. One time at the end of the season dad let the neighborhood boys take one of the Modines and put rabbit hutches in there.

I: What is a Modine?

N: A Quonset hut type of thing, but it's just plastic on it, and you can take that [off]. The frame stays there year round, but you just stretch the plastic over it.

I: Kind of a hoop style thing?

N: Yes. He let the boys build rabbit cages and raise rabbits in there. But he also told them that come springtime, it was going to be used back for our plants, but needless to say the rabbits were a short-lived venture for the boys. It was probably about eight boys that did that. The Modine just sat there empty, so he just let them build their cages and take care of their rabbits and do whatever they wanted to do with their rabbits. But then as far as the community goes, I think because of the freedom it allowed my dad to be in the community, I think that made a big, big difference. He touched a lot of kids' lives that didn't have a dad. And I think the freedom that being self-employed allowed him to do that, so it was a good thing for the community – whether providing a good product or providing people to do things.

I: Do you remember any particular words of advice that he gave you, he or your grandmother as you were out working in the greenhouse? Anything that really has stuck with you over the years?

N: My grandma was a good story teller, and she one time told me a story about being in the Depression and they weren't doing very well at the greenhouse. She said nobody had money to do anything. My grandfather kept saying, "Don't worry, don't worry". And that Sunday at church they had a missionary at church, and my dad was a baby. My grandmother had, I think, two dollars, and they didn't know, were they going to sell any more this week, and she needed groceries, and my grandfather told her to put that in the offering. And she said, "I looked at Charlie and I said, 'no'", and he said, "Just put it in the offering". And she said, "The next day we had the biggest selling day that we had had in a long, long time." So just lessons like that made my faith stronger, made me realize how much God cares. And I think those were the type of lessons my grandmother taught us. I can't remember any particular conversation with my dad that I can pull out, or any words of wisdom. He taught more by how he acted than what he said to us in most cases. When he was talking to us he might have been correcting something that we had done that week, and you could have done this this way and it might have come out better, or something. My dad was a real soft-spoken man. I probably saw him mad twice in my whole life (laughter). So, you know, it was just

your usual fatherly advice that he was giving. And grandma, I think she was determined that she was going to teach us something even though she only had a fourth-grade education, she was going to share what she knew and how hard life was and try to make you think about making it better.

I: Life lessons?

N: Life lessons is probably what we got told. Not any particular one. I can just remember always being spoken to; included in conversations. And I think that was important when we were kids. If you were mad, you knew you could go over there and somebody would listen to you rant and rave. They might not pay any attention, but you at least thought they were listening to you. I think that that was important to us as kids to have that avenue.

I: You mentioned that one of the things that your kids enjoyed, and maybe your nieces and nephews, about wreath making time was stories. Is there a particular story that you know of that they especially enjoyed?

N: (Laughter). I don't know. You'd have to ask them. Eric liked hearing about how, when he was a baby, I'd put him in the middle of my wreaths and work around him and talk to him, you know. I don't know. I don't know, they just enjoyed laughing at [us]. Because we'd tell them about us being kids having to make wreaths and all of that. They enjoyed us laughing because we'd say, "Gosh, if we made 20 wreaths on a Saturday we thought we'd put in a full day's work!" and how it had changed over the years. They liked hearing stories about their grandparents and great grandparents and just how grandma would burn the popcorn.

I: Did she make it on the stove? Is that why it burned?

N: Or she would do things like make a chocolate cake and drive us all nuts because you're out there and that smell is coming out to the greenhouse. And when it'd come out of the oven, she would say, "It's out of the oven", and she wouldn't even frost it. We would just go in and eat it as it was. They liked hearing stories about us waiting on the different customers and how funny they were. I told you the story about the gentleman I couldn't understand when he was saying pole beans and my dad laughing at me. They just liked hearing those types of funny things that went on. Like I can remember telling Sarah one time when I was – I had Eric, so I was an adult, and I went out to pull some cabbage patches for one of our customers and I tripped and I landed in mud so I came back and I was covered, I mean dad had just watered so the ground was wet, and the customer looked at me: "Where did you go to get these plants?" and I said, "I tripped over the hose out there". I went down, and went down hard.

They liked hearing stories. The neighborhood ladies that liked to eat greens would come over. They couldn't believe they would go up on our dirt supply and dig up the dandelion greens and cook them. I don't know what they thought, but they loved to hear those kinds of stories. They were funny, when they would stand there. Then they'd egg us on, "Well what happened next, well what happened next?" I think they just liked hearing us talk about it.

I: A great time to pass on family history.

N: Yeah, and they'd come over and listen to the basketball games with us, you know. I can remember one game where Illinois was playing Ohio State and I think they could have heard us cheering about two blocks over, because my son came in and a couple of neighborhood kids came in and we were all cheering for Illinois. They were laughing; they were laughing at those things. And they have their own stories they tell about playing in the dumpster. Sarah and Amy.

I: Sarah is your daughter?

N: Right. They got sticks out of the dumpster and they got straw and they got a plastic bag and they made baby dolls and they pretended they were pioneer girls and this was how they made dolls and how they lived. So they have their own fun stories that they've made. In fact, I probably still have that doll somewhere around here. They stuffed the plastic bag that they had for the head with straw and tied it on with wire from one of the wreath bales. They made clothes out of plastic. Those two will talk about that doll to this day, and they're almost 30 years old. But they made their own memories of hide-and-seek in the evergreens and hide-and-seek in the greenhouse just like we did as kids. Because when we would plant you would sometimes block a bench with putting your boxes on them that we planted, and so then they were like tunnels running underneath it. So they have their own stories: "Do you remember that time you scared me and I raised up and knocked over those six boxes and my dad got really mad" - and stuff like that - "because he had to replant them all?" I'm sorry that the younger kids in our family don't have all the same memories as the older ones, but you can't give it forever. In fact, when we said we were closing it, Eric said, "But Amelia has never jumped in the dumpster!"

I: And Amelia is Eric's daughter?

N: Amelia is my granddaughter. And I said, "You know what Eric, I don't think I'm going to keep this going until she is old enough to jump in the dumpster". And they have those thoughts and those times that they played and hauled stuff in for us, and they would do stuff like sweep out the shed and get paid a quarter. I know my kids, well I'm sure Robbie and Christine did, too, would stack pots in the springtime.

I: And those are Bill's children?

N: Chuck's children. Stack pots and put them away for us and they'd get paid a little bit for doing stuff like that. They were sorry to see it go, I think for what they learned about their family through it. Just through the stories. Now we weren't as patient as my dad to sit and listen to them (laughter). One year my brother was homeschooling his daughter, the one from Ohio, and she came home with him and I homeschooled her there in the greenhouse. We would go over her lessons and she would read out loud to me. So we even taught school in there.

I: Well if your kids had an opportunity to start a family business, what advice would you give them, since they're just starting out with their family?

N: It's harder work than it sounds like. It really is. You are married to it. If you don't do it, it doesn't get done. So really, I'd advise them to really, really think hard about it, because being self-employed is a lot more difficult than working for somebody else. There's no paid holidays. There's no paid vacations. If it doesn't go, it's yours that failed, not somebody else's. To be honest with you, I'd probably tell them, don't do it, even though, you know, I loved it. I guess it would all depend on what kind of business they were trying to start, too. It's harder work. You're the chief cook and bottle washer, you know. You have to be able to do it all, because some days you **do** it all. I don't know if I'd push them that direction.

I: So looking back, do you think the benefits outweighed the difficulties for you and your siblings growing up?

N: Yes, because we didn't know any different. We didn't know any different. As far as we knew, everybody was self-employed when we were kids, because my grandparents were. My other grandparents were farmers. My dad and mom were self-employed. I won't say that, because that's not right. During tax season, my dad did taxes, but my dad never packed a briefcase or a lunch and left and went. If something was needed at school, my dad could leave and come help us. Or if something was needed, my mom could leave and come help us. It was like we had a lot of benefits with them being self-employed. And when you're a child you don't realize how hard it is, how you have to plan and save and work. You don't realize that, it's just fun. It wasn't until we got managing it did we realize all of the ins and outs of the whole thing. It was what I knew. I didn't know any different. I did **not** know what most people knew: that moms went to work, dads went to work, and they weren't there when you came home from school. My parents were always there. Probably kept us out of a lot of trouble. So I didn't know the same thing that all the other kids knew. It was our way of life.

I: Well what else would you like to tell me about South's Greenhouse that I might not have asked about? What would be important for someone to know as they're looking back over the history of it and what it meant to your family and the community?

N: Well, what it meant to our family was a lot. It meant a lot of love, it meant a lot of working together. It meant a lot of time spent together. We all worked at it, even as adults with our own families, we were all there. So it afforded us a lot of time together, which I think has kept us closer as a family. I think it also afforded us something to be very proud of. It was well received in the community. It was known for having a good product, be it the greenhouse or be it the evergreen part of it. It taught us honesty. It taught us, like I shared earlier, to respect everybody, no matter where they were in life. And it taught us to work hard. And we saw it in our grandparents and we saw it in our parents. I think that that made a big difference in our lives is where we go with it.

But what would I want people to remember about the greenhouse? I don't know. I know when I run into an old customer - and the greenhouse has been closed for 25 years - "Oh, I

miss the greenhouse”. You know what? One thing I think people found in the greenhouse was nobody rushed them through anything. I don’t care if we had 50 customers that were in there, if you wanted to walk that greenhouse aaaaall day long and pick up ever plant, my dad would just say, “Let me know when you’re done, here’s your corner”. (laughter) I think people felt welcome. I don’t think they ever felt that they couldn’t come in there. They also knew that my dad cared and my grandparents cared about their customers. Enough that they even remembered your name from one year to the next.

When my father passed away, his visitation lasted two hours longer because people would walk through, ”I was just a customer at the greenhouse and your dad just sold me plants”. “Your dad helped my son”. “Your dad . . .” – and you’re just like, “Wow! How many people’s lives were touched by that place of business!” “Your dad just listened to me”. I can’t say that I listened to people (laughter). They kept us running when we were over there.

The fact that it was a family business I think made a big, big difference. It started with a little bit of nothing. They never went into debt for any of it. My dad never went into debt. If they had the money to build that house then they would build that house, but they never went into debt for any of it. They would save until they could do it. That made a big, big difference when it was handed down to us. We did not have debt. We probably couldn’t have made a go of it with what little we knew if it had had a big debt attached to it. No, he never borrowed money. They bought the six lots as they could afford them, built the greenhouse as they could afford it. Started out with one, then they added another one on. That started with a little furnace and then added the bigger furnace.

I: What fed the furnace? Was it coal?

N: Coal, when it was back in the early days. I cannot tell you when it got transferred over to gas, because I don’t remember shoveling. I can remember being told, we can’t play in there because there’s coal in there. The furnace was sunk down in this one room and so then they’d dump the coal in the other end and they would shovel it in. So my grandfather would do the shoveling at night and stoke it up real, real good before he would go to bed. I could remember as a kid there being coal there. I cannot tell you when it changed over to gas, it just happened one year (laughter) and there was no more coal. We weren’t involved in that because of the seriousness of that job. For a long, long time one of the old coal furnaces was still down there, in fact it’s probably there, just covered over with dirt. It was coal and then it got changed over to gas. When we tore down part of it, we just had electric heat out where we were because it was just a short period of time that we worked. So we didn’t bother with moving all the pipes and all of that out to there, because where we ended up finally working was not the main part of the greenhouse, so there were not heat pipes going out there or anything like that. It was where we would put plants when it got warmer. And in the fall, most of those were where the benches of mums were. When it got cold there was nothing out there until us in later years (laughter).

I: You have mentioned a lot about your dad. What was it like for your mom when you finally closed the greenhouse and the wreathing part as well. Was she kind of relieved, or did she kind of miss that?

N: I think she misses it. What I think she misses most is all of us kids being around. I don't think she misses the work one bit (laughter). I cannot remember her reaction when we closed the [South's] Greenhouse greenhouse, because she was taking care of her mother who was in her 90's at the time, but I can say this. My mom went to work for Buckley's to continue planting and she planted for another greenhouse, a wholesale business that was out on the west side of town, for probably ten years. And they loved having her there because they didn't have to tell her what to do because they knew she knew how to do it all.

One thing that we did do when we were kids is we filled pots out at the cemetery for people that lived out of state and they would send the check and dad knew where all of their grave sites were and we would take plants out there and we would fill pots, and we would fill pots for Memorial Day that people could come into the greenhouse and just buy a pot to take out to the cemetery. Mom continued doing that because she had a wonderful eye on how to put plants together in a mixed pot like that. She could make beautiful pots, and so they always wanted to have her in the springtime to put their cemetery pots together.

But I know when we closed the greenhouse, when I knew it was out last season I didn't tell her and I asked my brothers not to tell her. I said, "We're not going to tell her 'til it's over". But physically she knew she couldn't do it, but I think she just liked being over there with her children. Well you saw her reaction when I told her we were going to take down the houses. My mom is a person that likes to hold onto stuff, and that's going to be hard for her to see empty fields across the street from her when at one time it was covered with greenhouses and flowers, and at Christmastime evergreens and everything. But she'll adjust to it, but she doesn't give it up easy. When I finally told her, well I don't think I was the person that told her that we were closing the greenhouse. I think Jim told her that when he accepted the pastoral position we were going to close the greenhouse. I don't think I was even there, but I know she was upset for awhile. I think when she knew that we were keeping the evergreen part of it open that that helped. She is, what, 84 years old. It's harder and harder for her to come over there and work, but she liked to. I think just knowing that your kids were coming home and living with you for two and three weeks, she liked that, because she would always say when it was over, "Oh, the house is too quiet. I miss having you guys running in and out of the house". It's going to be hard for her when the buildings are gone because that will just be a final thing that's done.

I: Do you have a planned date when you will be doing that?

N: The ground will be leveled by June 30th.

I: Of this year?

N: Yes, because I've reported that to the state that way (laughter), so I have to have it all out of there and be done. I've told them that we will have our buildings out of there by June 30 [2012].

That's another thing, it's not in the best neighborhood, but we were never bothered. Never, ever were we bothered. People knew it and knew it was there. And you know we weren't stupid and kept a lot of cash or anything around there, but we always had our prayer before the season started and asked God to protect us and take care of us and thanked him when the season was over. We were truly blessed by what God gave us, and he did give it to us, we didn't do anything to deserve it. And I think that that helped, the fact that we knew it was a gift to us made it even more precious to us, more precious to us than it is anybody else in the whole city of Springfield.

The family business and the time we spent together - the time - that was the most precious thing. And we still get together, you know. In fact, it was really odd this year not to spend six weeks with my brother, in fact on Thanksgiving Day to be home that morning and preparing the meal here at the house and taking it to my mom's, I said this is strange. Sarah said, "This is what we do every Thanksgiving, mom". I said, "No, this isn't what I do, this is what you do". I said, "I'm gone at this point". She goes, "Yeah, that's right, but we're glad you're home". I said, "Yeah, but it's going to take some getting used to". I couldn't go to the greenhouse on Thanksgiving Day. I just stayed away from it. Sarah said, "Well why don't you just order a dozen bales and have them there so everybody can come in and make their wreaths for their teachers and that". I said, "If I'm going to do that (laughter), that means cleaning up the whole greenhouse and getting it ready to go", and I said, "I don't want to do that". I said, "We're done, we're closed and we're just saying goodbye to it all". I can't tell you I didn't cry when I made that decision. When I sent an email out to my brothers, and I told them how I appreciated working with them all those years. You know, I couldn't have asked for a better group of people to work with, even though we were siblings and there were times that you just grumbled at each other. It was still good working together.

- I: Well, I really appreciate your taking time, Gloria, to tell me about what it was like growing up in a family business and about South's Greenhouse.
- N: Well, thank you. Thank you for asking, Monica. It brought back a lot of memories, it really did.

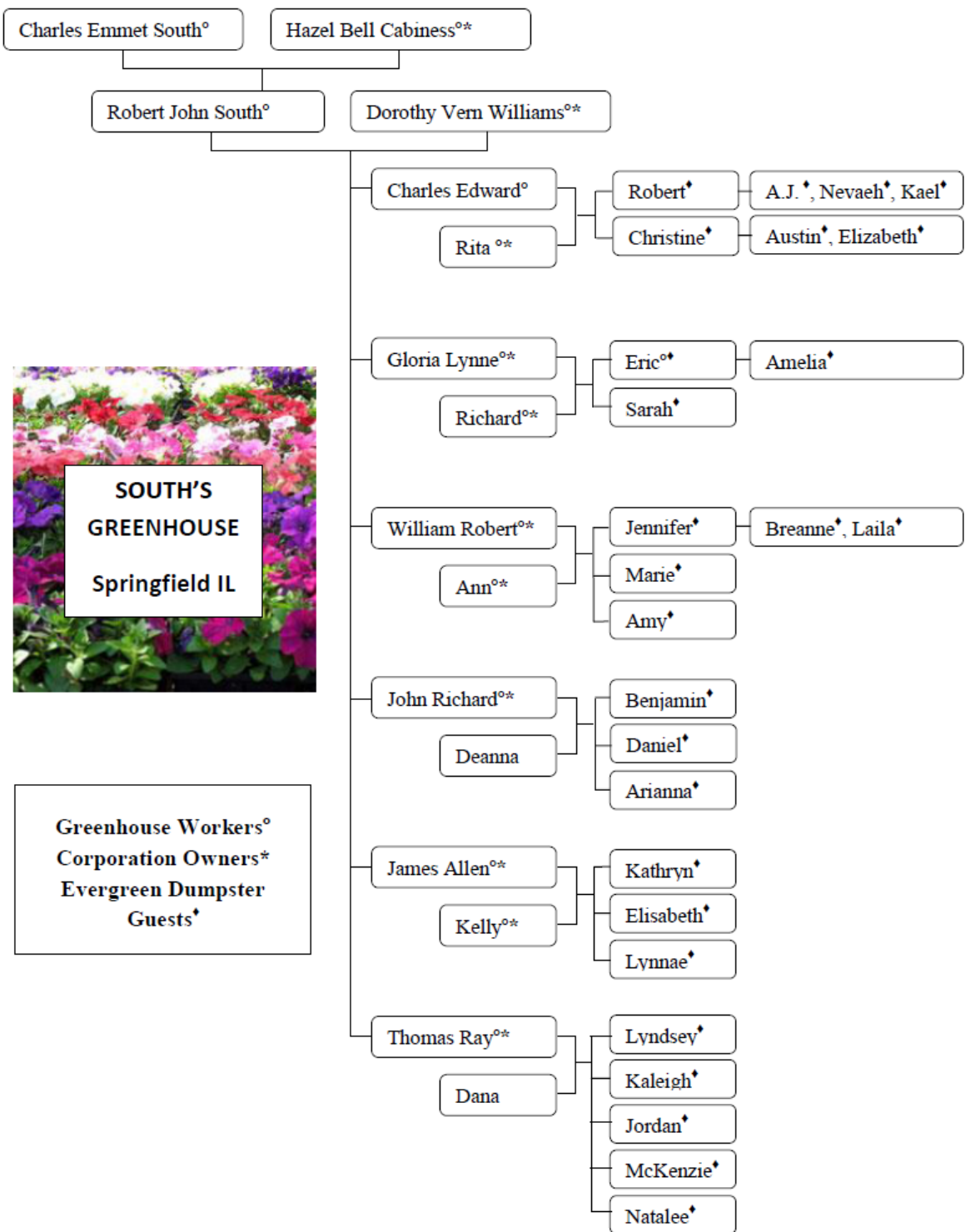
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Appendix I

South's Greenhouse Family Tree



Greenhouse Workers[◦]
Corporation Owners^{*}
Evergreen Dumpster
Guests[†]</sup>

Appendix II

South's Greenhouse Timeline

- 1922-23 South's Greenhouse opens, Charles & Hazel South, Owners, 1936 S. 19th St., Springfield IL
- 1924 Son, Robert (Bob) South, is born
- 1947 Robert South marries Dorothy Williams; she assists with greenhouse business
- 1960 Robert & Dorothy's children begin helping at the greenhouse from an early age
 - Charles (Chuck) Edward born December 2, 1951
 - Gloria Lynne born June 25, 1953
 - William (Bill) Robert born November 9, 1956
 - John Richard born August 27, 1958
 - James (Jim) Allen born July 9, 1960
 - Thomas (Tom) Ray born June 29, 1963
- 1964 Wholesale flocking & wreath business begins.
- 1967 Charles Emmet South dies.
- 1985 Robert South dies.
- 1985 Robert & Dorothy's children incorporate South's Greenhouse.
- 1985 Siblings elect Jim to manage the greenhouse.
- 1991 Greenhouse closes; wholesale wreath business remains open
- 1997 Jim moves to Ohio; Gloria assumes responsibility as overseer/manager. Siblings share management responsibilities.
- 2000 Hazel South dies.
- 2008 Charles (Chuck) South dies.
- 2010 Wholesale wreath business final season.
- 2012 Remaining greenhouse buildings to be razed.

Appendix III

Businesses & Individuals* Mentioned in Oral History

Businesses

Ball Horticultural Company, headquarters currently located at 622 Town Road, West Chicago, Illinois.

Buckley's Greenhouse, currently located at 3735 Chatham Rd., Springfield Illinois.

Burt's Greenhouse, formerly located at 2241 E. Cedar Street, Springfield Illinois.

Factor's Greenhouse, formerly located at 1614 South Grand Ave., E., Springfield Illinois.

Fifth Street Flower Shop, currently located at 739 S. Fifth Street, Springfield Illinois.

Frank Farms, currently located at 16717 Illinois 29, Athens Illinois.

Humana Hospital (later known as Doctors Hospital), formerly located at 5230 S. Sixth Street Road., Springfield Illinois.

Lindley Floral, formerly located at 92 E. Hazel Dell, Springfield, Illinois.

Sutill's Gardens, currently located at 2201 Groth Street, Springfield Illinois.

Individuals

Bauchman, Jerry: neighbor and employee

Brown, Kenny: employee

Brown, Miles: employee

Christie, John: employee

Snodgrass, Herb: employee

South, Louie: brother of Charles Emmet South; co-owner, Factor's Greenhouse

Taft, Don: regular customer

Taft, Wayne: regular customer

**Not included in South's Greenhouse Family Tree*