



7-14-2015

Interview with Florinette Ford Renfrow

Florinette Ford Renfrow
SC Mother of the Year 2002

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.winthrop.edu/scmotheroftheyear>



Part of the [Oral History Commons](#), [United States History Commons](#), and the [Women's History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Renfrow, Florinette Ford, "Interview with Florinette Ford Renfrow" (2015). *South Carolina Mother of the Year Oral History Archives*. 19.
<https://digitalcommons.winthrop.edu/scmotheroftheyear/19>

This Sound is brought to you for free and open access by the South Carolina Mothers Collection at Digital Commons @ Winthrop University. It has been accepted for inclusion in South Carolina Mother of the Year Oral History Archives by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Winthrop University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@mailbox.winthrop.edu.

Winthrop University
South Carolina Mother of the Year Award Oral History Archives
Interview Transcript
Florinette Ford Renfrow
Winner of the 2002 SC Mother of the Year Award
July 14, 2015

Dr. Disney: Good morning. My name is Dr. Jennifer Leigh Disney, and I am honored to be sitting here with the South Carolina Mother of the Year from 2002, Florinette Renfrow. Thank you so much for giving us your time today.

Florinette Renfrow: It's so good to be here and to see some of you that I've seen before.

Dr. Disney: It's good to see you again, thank you so much. Let's just start very simply, why don't you tell us when and where you were born and raised.

Florinette Renfrow: I was born in a small town, Lakeview, South Carolina. It was an unusual childhood because I lived on a farm, and the farm was on Main Street in Lakeview. We had a cow, we had mule stables, we had the corn crib, we had the cotton house, two big, long grapevines, just most anything that anybody on a farm – I consider myself not a city girl, but a country girl. For 11 ½ years, we lived in the old home place. To me, that was just heaven, because everybody came and visited my grandmother, who was Aunt Nettie. She got her mail, Aunt Nettie, not Lakeview, South Carolina, not any other details. You have to have a lot more information than that today. Anyway, I just loved it, but I was the only child for 11 years, and didn't know that the Lord had a very great surprise for me about where I lived a little bit later, and where I worked at when I got older. Anyway, we moved when I was 11 ½, and I had two sisters and two brothers. One of my baby brothers was handicapped, but I was so happy to have sisters and brothers, because everybody else just about did. It was just a wonderful thing to me, and I thought if I ever have children, I couldn't possibly love them any more. Now this was when I was 12 or 13, very young. Of course I do, but I did enjoy them so much, because they filled a special place in my heart.

Dr. Disney: That's wonderful. Is there anything else you want to share with us about your family or your early childhood experiences?

Florinette Renfrow: When we moved years later, out in the country, after I was married, there was 800 in Lakeview, and they always teased us about the numbers they lost. They always teased us about leaving Lakeview, and messing up the 800.

Dr. Disney: Eight hundred was the population?

Florinette Renfrow: Right. When we moved out of Lakeview with our family later on. I'm getting a little bit ahead of myself in the story.

Dr. Disney: That's okay.

Florinette Renfrow: I always felt like I was so blessed. Aunts and uncles and cousins always came to the home place, and I enjoyed that so much.

Dr. Disney: So, you grew up in a very large family.

Florinette Renfrow: Several generations there were 11 children, a good number. My daddy's generation, they only had two children, a girl and boy.

Dr. Disney: Tell us about your education, and your young adult life.

Florinette Renfrow: I went to school in Lakeview, in my hometown. It wasn't called Kindergarten then, what I remember about it was they called it Play School. Have you ever heard my generation calling it Play School, instead of Kindergarten? I enjoyed that. Then, elementary school, had some dear teachers that I loved through the years. There's something good about small places, you get

to know people. That's a very special thing about it. Now what next?

Dr. Disney: Anything about your education, or what you remember as your dreams, goals and aspirations as a young woman.

Florinette Renfrow: Since I was an only child, mother spent a lot of hours in the kitchen with me. She taught me to cook, and I enjoyed that, maybe she wouldn't have had time had I not been the only one. That's just something that meant a lot to me. Mother stayed home most of her years as an adult, she did have some jobs later, she ended up in a bank, working at the bank in Lakeview. Daddy was a politician, and he really enjoyed – we're not enjoying politics right now, are we?

Dr. Disney: So in addition to running a farm?

Florinette Renfrow: It was a small farm.

Dr. Disney: Did your mom and dad, after you moved, did you continue to run a farm.

Florinette Renfrow: For some years. We lived in the age of more tobacco farmers than there are now, and even grew at one time Turkish tobacco, that was just some things that he did.

Dr. Disney: Your dad was a politician, and your mom spent a lot of years working in the home, and a lot of years working outside the home.

Florinette Renfrow: That's right. That's the way it was.

Dr. Disney: Tell us about how you met your husband.

Florinette Renfrow: Can I read it to you? Because I wrote it.

Dr. Disney: Tell us what you're reading from. These are your own words, right?

Florinette Renfrow: My sister did two books, and she says she's working on a third, of friends and neighbors, and their stories and how they met their husbands. I didn't get in the first book, I was slow, it took me until the second. Our big secret. We each had a picture on the pages that we went in on. This is Jimmy and Florinette Renfrow Ford Renfroe, we were married the eighth of February, 1953 in Florence, South Carolina. One day I was sitting on my porch, and porches were such an important thing when I was a child. My grandmother, and my great-aunt lived with her, and we lived with Grandmother too, and when they got through with their work, they went out on the porch and they sat. That meant the neighbors would come over and sit with us. Anyway, I was sitting out on the porch after I finished my lessons for that day, and I saw a handsome boy with blonde, curly hair pass by in a strip down. I bet you don't even know what a strip down is, do you?

Dr. Disney: A strip down?

Florinette Renfrow: A long time ago, young men would take the parts of cars, and they would make something, they could go around the farm, they could haul things. It was almost like a truck without sides. Anyway, he was driving this strip down, and I was about 13 years old at the time. Later, I found out his life story from a good friend of mine whose family had been neighbors of his family several years back. He had come to town to visit them, because they had moved to town, and were living on the next block. He was actually visiting them, we had never met at that time. His name was Jimmy Renfroe, and he was 14, and he went to school in Nichols, South Carolina, that was about 12, 13 miles from Lakeview, but would be coming to Lakeview to play baseball. After several weeks went by, I was at a ballgame, I always went with my daddy to ball games, because Mother had small children, as I have mentioned before, so she didn't always get to do these things. Who should I meet, but the boy who was in the strip down? I later learned that he had converted that car from an old family car, and he wanted to be a race driver someday. That was his ambition at that time. At the ball game, I realized he had metallic green eyes that matched the color of his family's real car that they drove to church, not a strip down, of course, on Sunday night. We were not old enough to date, we ended up at several parties together, like birthday parties, and that type of party.

Then we were old enough to date, but only if we went to Babs Training Union on Sunday night and were home by nine p.m. For years, we never got to date past nine p.m. We had actually, believe it or not, in Lakeview, 800, we had a movie theater and it changed three times a week. We both spent a lot of time there. At that time, remember, you didn't have a bad movie. They were very careful about the kind of movies, it was a lot different than today.

I soon found out that he loved animals, as I did. My first Christmas gift from him was a blonde Cocker Spaniel puppy named Dixie. You know why we like Dixie. I gave him a green Jansen sweater to match his eyes, and handkerchiefs monogrammed with an R, from a store called Razor and Claudy's in Mullins, South Carolina. Do you know where Mullins is? It's not far from where we lived at that time. Both of our families shopped there often, we also realized that both of us spent many Saturday nights eating hot dogs as a fast food place in Mullins, but we never met. Jim had an uncle that worked with the railroad, and a lot of times they would meet the train in Mullins, but all of these things were going on and I didn't even know it. He and his mother would meet the train, and speak to his uncle. Both of us had eaten so many times at Little Pee Dee Lodge. Have you ever heard of Little Pee Dee Lodge? It's a place that, at that time, usually if someone was getting married, it would be a special time for the bridesmaids or something. It was on the other side of Nichols.

His father and my mother had both been Methodists at one time, but now we were Baptists. My daddy's family were all Baptists, so when Mother came to Lakeview when they were married, she joined the Baptist church, so she would be with the family. I had a cousin who had married Jimmy's mother's sister, a distant cousin, so we knew each other as family and friends. Some qualities I especially liked about Jimmy included his good manners, his kindness to people as well as animals, we both loved animals, and his love for family. At that point in his life, he didn't drink or smoke. To me, his only fault was that he drove too fast, and we fussed about that all the time. He fussed about me wearing a kerchief.

During the ninth grade, Jimmy went to Camden Academy in Camden, South Carolina. He had a good year there, but during the year his father had cancer, so he did not get to go back the next year. Sometimes, while he was at Camden, he would thumb home. Do you know what thumbing is? You wouldn't dream of doing that anymore, but a lot of times he thumbed out of Camden Academy. It was much safer than it is now. Another thing that he would do, other times he would drive his truck that they used on the farm. He would drive his truck, and he would park in somebody's yard. He would slip off, put a pillow under his cover, and slip back to Lakeview, and then hurry back. Jim's favorite possession was a yellow Willis Jeepster that his daddy had bought, a convertible that his daddy had bought him. I always wore a scarf, as I said before, it blew my hair and I wasn't happy. We fussed about this too. That car was his greatest pride until he wrecked it. In my 14th summer, at East Cherry Grove at the time, on his birthday on July 4th, Jim gave me a ring. Of course, I hid it, I certainly didn't show it to anybody.

When we were 15, he was 16 and I was 15, we decided to go ahead and get married secretly. It's a big secret, remember. How would we do that with a nine p.m. curfew and just a few hours for a date? My father's cousin, and my cousin of course too, was a judge of probate in the next county, Dillon County. We knew we couldn't go there, because he'd tell Daddy. This is something that I hate to say, we went to Marion. I cut school, the only time I ever did it in my life, and he cut a lot. That day was the first and only day that I ever cut school, funny how I still feel guilty about it today. Next we had the idea that the only place left was Florence, and we would just see what happened there. It was about an hour away. Jim played basketball, so we had to go back for his game later in the evening. We did make it, but a patrolman stopped us, and Jim told him that his

father was sick, and he told us to go on, but to be careful and drive carefully. Probate Judge Kenneth Grimsley gave us the license. We didn't know that we'd be asked to verify the year of our birth to prove that we were old enough to get married, that was a requirement. We had to have some help with the math. Also, we didn't know that they published it in the paper. Had no idea, that's how naive we were. Kenneth Grimsley and Adelaide Clayton married us when the days were up.

On Sunday afternoon, we were married by Adelaide Clayton, with my closest friend and a good friend of Jimmy's, the two of them went with us. Only one other friend knew that we were married, and she was the girl that he visited when I saw him for the first time, and she got married the next month. We didn't know all marriages were reported in the Florence Morning News, a local newspaper, and one of the people that read it was my mom and dad's next door neighbor, and they never told on us. They were good friends, loyal friends. Soon our secret was out with several people in town seeing our news in the paper.

In those days, it was different than it is today, no married students were allowed to continue and finish high school. It was 17 years later when I went back to night school to get my high school diploma. I wanted a Lakeview High School diploma. There was another way you could go too, but they were having classes at the high school, so my brother – I'm getting ahead of myself, we had children and my brother was one of my babysitters. I thank him for that. My oldest son wanted to pay for the high school diploma, he thought that would be special, mother's getting a diploma. That made me very happy.

Dr. Disney: Wow, that's beautiful.

Florinette Renfrow: A lot of time has passed, at this point we have eight children, and we had three more later on, and I had started working at my church with the three and four year olds, like when the four year olds came back from school. I was enjoying that, I guess you could say that was my first job. I cooked at home and I would be Mother's babysitter when she had things to do. I was called, when I was working at the church – and I thoroughly enjoyed that with the children, I had one child in Kindergarten there, and the others were in school. My husband didn't want me to go to work, and I didn't want to leave my children at home. Not saying it's bad for anybody who does have the opportunity to do that, and wants to do it. While I was working at the church, I got a call from the school and they said one of our aides is not working, would you like to take her place? I was just thrilled, I was just so excited about that. Only one child was in Kindergarten, outside of the school. While I was in there, we had a Kindergarten group.

I worked there a couple of years, then I got a call. I never looked for a job, I never tried to find one, but they found me and I was delighted. I had always had this little dream in the back of my mind of having my own Kindergarten. The funniest thing about it, with prayer, it happened. There was a Kindergarten right by where I was living later on, and the teacher had to stop, she had another job. I had some experience, a couple of years, with Kindergarten age children. Then one day I thought about the job and really considered the job at school, so I worked several years there. Then, we had a book club that met in the library, and they called and asked if I would be interested in working. I was the only person, I had a helper too, but anyway, I was at that library for 30 years. Guess what?

Dr. Disney: What?

Florinette Renfrow: By our home is where we grew the corn, by the grandmother's now, we're going back to the grandmother's from where we moved to some years earlier. My aunt was the owner of the property that the library was built on, and it was in the corn field. It wasn't a corn field any more. Someone else had my cornfield at that time. So I could look, at the library, out the

window, and I could remember what a wonderful time I had as a child at my grandmother's. Then I got to see a lot of people at the library. This started the computers, I learned some things about computers there. I don't do much with them anymore, my husband is the computer man now.

Dr. Disney: What an amazing story. Is there more of the story of you and your husband, how you secretly got married, how it came out to your parents?

Florinette Renfrow: Seventeen years later, we were on the verge of a divorce, we had eight children, it was so painful.

Dr. Disney: You had eight children, 17 years later. You had eight children at that time?

Florinette Renfrow: Right.

Dr. Disney: Wow.

Florinette Renfrow: Actually, the last papers we had signed, and the Lord just helped us. My husband became a Christian, he accepted the Lord as his savior. We've just had a wonderful – we had three more children. Samantha, who used to be up this way, she married someone from Bennettsville. Then, we had two more boys. We have actually counted our grandchildren and children together most of the time, we don't separate it as far as numbers, and today we enjoy 49 grandchildren, when this book was written, and great-grandchildren. Several years ago, Jim retired after he worked for 50 years. He started with carpenters. He didn't like to farm, his family was farmers too, most of us around there were farm families.

Dr. Disney: He did carpentry?

Florinette Renfrow: Yes, and he worked there a while, then he worked – we had several mills, and he worked those places. This is what I put in the end; we are reminded of the words of the poet, by Robert Browning, “Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be, the last of life, of which the first was made. Our times are in his hand who saith, “A whole I planned, youth shows but half; Trust God, see all, be not afraid””. Retirement is wonderful, and we visit the grandchildren, and the children.

Dr. Disney: What a beautiful story, 15 and 16 running off to get married. Seventeen years later, you had a difficult moment with eight children, and you both found each other again through God, and then you had three more children. Here you are today after how many years of marriage?

Florinette Renfrow: We were married in '53.

Dr. Disney: So over 60 years of marriage, with 11 children. I think you told me 26 grandchildren, but more than that, 49 or 50 when you counted great-grandchildren.

Florinette Renfrow: That's right. My sister wrote this in the front of the book, I don't have to read that. She dedicated her book and I appreciate it so much, because I love the little –

Dr. Disney: That is beautiful. Would you mind reading that to us? Read that dedication that the whole book is about you and your husband.

Florinette Renfrow: I knew a couple who married at 15 and 16, had a solid marriage for 45 years, weathered many challenging times, had 11 children and around 50 grandchildren and great-grandchildren and enjoyed life to the fullest. The special couple is my sister, Florinette Renfrow, and her husband Jimmy Renfrow, whose story is a blessing to share. Florinette Renfrow was South Carolina's Mother of the Year in 2002, and as an older sister, she was like a mother to me and the model of love, determination and encouragement and deep faith. I dedicate this book to you, Jimmy and Florinette Renfrow, with the hope that young couples will read your story and receive the blessing of your commitment and dedication.

That was written at the beach. After Hazel, it took a year or two to build the beaches back. There was a great storm that we had in South Carolina in October one year. This was a picture of use taken down there. We've missed a few summers, but we do get together most summers, and haven't

missed one lately.

Dr. Disney: Is that picture of your family, a beach picture, the one that's down here framed? Would you mind holding that up for the camera?

Florinette Renfrow: Actually, the one we made last week is not framed yet, it takes a while because everybody wants to get one.

Dr. Disney: Hold it up high, so the camera can see. When was that taken?

Florinette Renfrow: That was taken the last day or two before we left the beach on Saturday. We had twins last year in the family.

Dr. Disney: Turn that around, show us this beautiful family tree.

Florinette Renfrow: The twins, I think she used their little toes. The smallest ones you see are probably theirs.

Dr. Disney: Those are thumbprints, fingerprints –

Florinette Renfrow: And toe prints.

Dr. Disney: Of all the grandchildren.

Florinette Renfrow: Each family will get one of those when we get them all put together.

Dr. Disney: That's amazing. First of all, congratulations on an amazing story with your husband and your children, your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren. All these things that you brought, the book from your sister, the family tree, the photograph is a true testament to the love that your family obviously shares with one another.

Florinette Renfrow: Thank you.

Dr. Disney: It's clear, as we talk, why you were selected to be a South Carolina Mother of the Year. I want to ask you a few questions about that.

Florinette Renfrow: Sure.

Dr. Disney: Let me ask you first; what does motherhood mean to you?

Florinette Renfrow: I've just always enjoyed my time. We left two girls, they knew I was coming off this morning, trying to help me get ready. They pop in like that when I need them. Two of them had children at practice over as school, and they stopped stayed with me about an hour and a half. We live close, we're about six miles from Dillon. They live in Dillon, we live in the country in a big city place called Gaddysville. It used to have one store. It has a mill pond too, I grew up in a town with a mill pond.

Dr. Disney: So motherhood means –

Florinette Renfrow: Oh, it just means, I looked at those little twins and I wanted to take them home with me. They were so special. We have a granddaughter that just loved to go on mission trips, and last week had two on mission trips in Honduras, we had another one go into Ireland. They were doing something related to witnessing. Go you there for.

Dr. Disney: You have worked inside the home raising 11 children. You have worked outside the home in several jobs that you mentioned. Your mom worked inside and outside the home, you've obviously been involved in other activities in the community; volunteerism, church. How have you been able to balance all these different activities? How have you been able to do it?

Florinette Renfrow: One thing, the children always helped me, I always could count on them, and still can. We enjoy being together. After some years, my dad was an alcoholic, but with treatment, he overcame. We were so worried because he was getting so old, and he had never accepted the Lord as savior. That's the Lord of our lives, and we wanted so much for him to believe in the Lord and Jesus Christ. He accepted the Lord. The preacher had an idea, he was so old and couldn't do it walking to the pool, but he said let's get two of the boys, one on each side. That was so special because from the time my mother came to Lakeview and changed from Methodist to

Baptist, she had been praying that my daddy would.

There's just some wonderful things that have happened in our life, the way our children went to school. If you think about it, people would say, "You can't go to school", but the Lord just had something waiting for us every time, a way. The first two boys went to military school in New York. Another one was accepted there, but he wanted to play football in Spartanburg, so Timmy went to school there. There was just a story behind each child, and how things happened that they were able to go to school. They'll tell you it's hundreds and thousands of dollars, but if children work, mine cut grass and all kinds of things like that. Beth, our photographer, went to photography school. The others, the Lord showed them a way that they could go to college. I give Him the glory, and I'm so thankful for these children. When you're Mother of the Year, you go to Florida, a good many of them went.

Dr. Disney: What did it mean to you to be named the South Carolina Mother of the Year in 2002?

Florinette Renfrow: I was just thrilled, it was almost unbelievable that it could happen. My heart still skips a beat when I think about it. Different places asked us to speak. I told one church that asked us, I said, "Listen, if you hear anything bad about us, we're trying to forget the bad things".

Dr. Disney: You had a year of service as Mother of the Year, right? You went and you made speeches. Tell us about some of that year, what that year was like.

Florinette Renfrow: Well, it was churches and different places, mostly. I worked in a crisis closet. That's something I could carry children with me too, a church's crisis closet. I thoroughly enjoyed that, collecting clothing. That was a blessing. It was sort of funny, because in our family we had always done that anyway. If someone has a baby, they bring the baby things they had, so I was used to that. It was just continuing another way that you could help each other and help people.

Dr. Disney: Did you mention Orlando? Did you go to the national convention?

Florinette Renfrow: Right, in Orlando. The children stayed somewhere else. It was nice, we enjoyed it.

Dr. Disney: And you got to go to the State House and the Governor's Mansion?

Florinette Renfrow: Oh, yes.

Dr. Disney: What was that like?

Florinette Renfrow: We had a tea, I think, at the Governor's Mansion. Several months ago we went to something, it was Right to Life, and there was a meeting there to talk about it. One of the people, one of the men that was in the other room in the place where they meet and talk about their different things and all, asked me to stand. I had no idea that he even knew anything about us, but it was sweet, it was nice.

Dr. Disney: He asked you to stand to be recognized as a Mother of the Year?

Florinette Renfrow: Right. That was a long time afterwards. The whole family was invited during the time. They enjoyed that, getting to go to the state house.

Dr. Disney: Let me ask you some more broader questions. Thinking about your daughters, and thinking about your granddaughters and great-grands, what do you think are the most important issues facing women today?

Florinette Renfrow: Oh, there's so many problems we've got in our country, it's hard to say. I think we need to be very thoughtful and really put some time into thinking what we're doing. In our part of the country sometimes, people vote if Granddaddy did it, or Uncle Somebody did it, they don't put much thought into who they vote for. They want a continuation of what's been in the past, well it's not like it was at one time in the past. Maybe we don't do enough in that area, to stand up for the things that – different people have different feelings, but we feel that if the bible says it, we believe it and we try to be true to those things, even if it's painful sometimes.

Dr. Disney: So your faith is very important to you?

Florinette Renfrow: Yes, very important. When I was younger, I got out of everything but WMU. I was in a book club at the library, I'm not saying there's anything wrong with a club like that, but I couldn't do it and the children and the babysitters, so I just did Sunday School, of course, and Sunday School class and things like that. It was the continuation of what I loved.

Dr. Disney: You've told us about lots of activities and things that you've done. Is there anything else you want to mention that we may have missed? Activities in the community, other jobs, church activities, anything else you want to share, things that you have been involved in?

Florinette Renfrow: I've been blessed. I've been on several mission trips. The first mission trip I went on, we did a lot of home missions around the county, we are a poor county. Within our churches, we joined together and had a crisis closet and things like that. One thing I enjoyed so much, I went to Africa, Zambia, soon after I was mother of the year, sometime in the next two or three years. Then the next year, Jim went back with us and he went to Africa too. We went back to the places that we visited before to see if they had done what they were supposed to, and that was such a joy.

Dr. Disney: These were mission trips through your church?

Florinette Renfrow: Right.

Dr. Disney: What church? Do you want to tell us the church?

Florinette Renfrow: It was actually through my children's church, I went with them. The first one that I went on was not that far away, in Kentucky, that was through the church. Then, the year before last, I went to South America. Two trips. I went first with my son, then my husband went too the second time. Guatemala is where we went that time. I want to go back to Africa, one more time, so bad.

Dr. Disney: That's amazing, international missions.

Florinette Renfrow: It was such a blessing to me.

Dr. Disney: Do you think women's work and women's roles as mothers are adequately recognized by society?

Florinette Renfrow: I think it depends on the area you come from. In some places they are, and in some places, they're not very.

Dr. Disney: Do you feel that your work and your role as a mother has been adequately recognized? The Mother of the Year is one way.

Florinette Renfrow: More than I ever dreamed. Not that I deserved it by any means.

Dr. Disney: When you think of your daughters and granddaughters, we talked before about balancing work outside the home, working inside the home, volunteerism, how do you think younger women today are able to balance all these things? Do you think it's easier for them, it's harder for them, than how you were able to balance coming up?

Florinette Renfrow: I had a lot of support. I had a lot of aunts and uncles and grandparents. I was born with three grandmothers. When I was very young, children would say, "We don't even have one", you know, children that you went to school with. I was blessed.

Dr. Disney: You've always had a big family support.

Florinette Renfrow: That's so important.

Dr. Disney: It looks like your family continued that tradition.

Florinette Renfrow: We get a lot of teasing about that.

Dr. Disney: Does that family support network continue?

Florinette Renfrow: Yes.

Dr. Disney: It's also historically been the case, and you mentioned this, that men have typically

brought home the bacon. Women have sometimes have needed a second salary to help make the family survive, sometimes they've been able to be stay-at-home moms, sometimes they're both working outside the home. Men, historically, have done less of that work in terms of helping the home and the family and childcare. Men of this generation, younger generations tend to be doing more of that work. Is that something that you observe with your daughters, grandchildren, great-grandsons, compared to you and your husband when you came up? How do you look at how men's roles in the family and the home have changed, if they have?

Florinette Renfrow: Let me use just a little story for an illustration. The family of the twins, these are their first children. When this grandson went to college, his mama moved up to Spartanburg too, then he married up there. She is a nurse, I don't know whether she'll ever come back and see us or not, because she's enjoying her two grandchildren so much. Our house burned at some time in the past, in the story I didn't even mention that, but my aunt and uncle were in Virginia with their daughter and her family, and they just came straight to our house coming back, before they even went home. That's just the blessings that I've received with my family.

Dr. Disney: Let me ask you this; what does feminism mean to you?

Florinette Renfrow: Isms don't mean an awful lot. I enjoy being a woman, and a country girl.

Dr. Disney: That's cool, I like that. Isms don't mean a lot to you.

Florinette Renfrow: I'm glad that I got to work those years, because I got to see a lot of people. The first years of my life, I did not work, except in the home. It was a blessing to have a job that fit in with my life, I guess you'd say.

Dr. Disney: Do you think we live in a work where women and men have equal opportunities to be who they want to be, in terms of mothers, fathers, work in the work world, work at home, stay at home? Do you think that would be a good thing if women and men had that type of equality, and do you think that we've achieved that?

Florinette Renfrow: Let me tell you a little funny story to go along with that. When our next to the last son, one of the younger children that was born later in life, our son made a statement that his wife was going to have Mother's Day every day. It caught on, it's been sort of a family joke, I guess you'd say. My husband joined the club too, so I get to choose about once every other week to go to Florence, the big city from where I live, an hour and a half or something like that. Funny things happen. We tease him about that, because I don't want him to quit, I want him to continue to have Mother's Day every day.

Dr. Disney: I love that. Your life, your family, the love of this beautiful family network is a testament to what mothers can do in families and in society to just provide that loving support, it should be Mother's Day every day, I like that.

Florinette Renfrow: It is. We just enjoy seeing them come and bringing the children. I made them a play house upstairs. We've got a village, doll houses all the way around the room. You pick your house, and your furniture's over here in a box, you can buy your furniture and pretend.

Dr. Disney: Do you have any questions for us, or anything else you'd like to share?

Florinette Renfrow: I just hope that you'll be able to continue this for other people in the future. I was so sorry when I heard that the name had been changed.

Dr. Disney: Do you mean the South Carolina Mother's Association?

Florinette Renfrow: Yes.

Dr. Disney: Well, thanks to Martha Cranford and Jilly Fishburn, I kind of got involved and connected with the South Carolina Mother's Association. As you know, the committee itself kind of chose, the national office was going in a different direction, so they chose to kind of end the statewide selection process for Mother's of the Year, but this project lives on through the archives,

the Louise Pettus Archives at Winthrop University. We've established a South Carolina Mother of the Year archive, and this oral history project is a part of that, recording the stories of the committee members and the mothers, like you, so that future generations of women can watch your stories, hear your stories, and learn wonderful lessons and wisdom about what it means to be a woman, to be a mother. To kind of share that love and that conversation across generations. I hope in some small way this project is carrying that tradition on.

Florinette Renfrow: One thing that I was going to bring in, but my husband had already gone to Walmart, I'm doing a book, not writing the book, I'm using pictures. Cousins have given me pictures and friends, sometimes just loaned. I've got, you know those things you use in offices, notebooks that you can put different pages in. One of my sons gave me enough of those to fix for all the children, so it's something I'm working on, I had one of them out in the car. It's historical things of like the cemeteries, I sent my daughter Beth, who does the photography. The book will have everything from the old family cemeteries that belonged to our family and the different churches, and something about each child. It goes back to before I was born. I was born in '37, my husband was born in '36.

Dr. Disney: I was just going to ask you that, '36 and '37. What a great contribution you can give to your family.

Florinette Renfrow: I'm just enjoying it. It started, we had a special day in 2007, it was a birthday of Lakeview. It went back to Ford's Mill, Page's Mill, then someone married and inherited the pond, and later on they decided to name it Lakeview. It's a very wonderful place, it's so wonderful to live there. Small town.

Dr. Disney: Thank you for preserving that history, your family history is part of South Carolina history, it's part of our national history.

Florinette Renfrow: I'm so excited about the loans of the different things that I needed from other people, stories. I'm enjoying that, that's my thing right now, the next few years.

Dr. Disney: That's great. That's what this is all about. I want to thank you, Florinette Renfrow, for a wonderful interview. Congratulations on being named the 2002 Mother of the Year. Thank you for sharing your life, your story and your family with us. We appreciate it.

Florinette Renfrow: I appreciate you inviting me.