

# INTRODUCTION

SHORTLY AFTER HIS INTERVIEW RAN in the April 2018 issue of *Florida Trend*, Greg Asbed sent me an email.

Greg, who cofounded the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and helped create the Fair Food Program, is not a person who craves attention. It's true he's a MacArthur genius grant winner, but he's not the sort to revel in limelight. He just wants to help farmworkers. In fact, the only reason I suspect he agreed to talk to me for two hours back in December 2017 and answer more than fifty questions was the possibility that the interview might draw attention to his work and, in the process, convince Floridians to care a little more about how their produce gets from field to table.

After reading his own words—accompanied by a glaring-into-the-camera portrait photographed by Brian Tietz—Greg worried that the interview made him look like a “self-focused man who jumps from topic to topic, mainly about himself, without too much rhyme or reason.”

He's right that the interviews flit on topics like a butterfly looking for nectar, jumping from family to work, joys to worries, failures to triumphs, and dislikes to desires, with a whole bunch of Florida insight mixed in.

Amid the avalanche of quotes, for example, you'll learn what happens when Burt Reynolds goes to Costco and Chris Evert goes to Publix.

You'll learn what it was like for prominent artist James Rosenquist to work in rural Aripeka. You'll hear Carl Hiaasen talk about Florida's challenges and Steve Spurrier make a case for paying college athletes.

From Mel Tillis, you'll learn what it was like to grow up a stutterer in Pahokee, and from Shaquille O'Neal, you'll discover why he never complains.

During his interview, Apollo 14 astronaut Edgar Mitchell talked about the likelihood that space aliens have visited Earth. Fight doctor Ferdie Pacheco explained why he never flossed his teeth, and botanical gardens founder Don Goodman revealed what it was like to lose an arm to an alligator's jaws. And, from *A Land Remembered* author Patrick Smith, you'll hear about the time he researched a novel by posing as a migrant worker in a labor camp near Homestead.

There's way more. You'll see.

A few days after his email, Greg contacted me again, noting that, with time, he was starting to feel slightly better about the interview.

"It's an interesting form," he said, "like you're dropping in from time to time on a conversation while wandering through a party."

I hadn't thought of it that way before, but it's true. It's the accumulation of thoughts, feelings, and opinions that tell the story.

For someone as altruistic and unassuming as Greg, the process was a bit of a grind to endure, but hopefully, at least, it'll be a good read for you.