

## CENTER FOR FLORIDA HISTORY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

**INTERVIEW WITH:** DOYLE CARLTON, JR.  
**INTERVIEWER:** JAMES M. DENHAM  
**PLACE:** WAUCHULA, FLORIDA  
**DATE:** OCTOBER 15, 2002

**M= James M. Denham (Mike)**  
**D= Doyle Carlton, Jr.**

M: I am here with Mr. Doyle Carlton in his office in Wauchula, Florida, on October 15, 2002. My name is James Denham and I am representing the Center for Florida History at Florida Southern College. Mr. Carlton, I am really glad that you are with me today and I am looking forward to our interview. Can you tell me where you were born and what year you were born?

D: I was born in Tampa, Florida, on July 4, 1922.

M: Where did you go to school?

D: I went to school in Tampa, to Gorrie Grammer School. But then my dad was elected governor in 1929 and I went to the Demonstration School in Tallahassee. When his term expired, we moved back to Tampa. I went one year to Gorrie, to Woodrow Wilson Junior High School, and graduated from Plant High School in Tampa.

M: When you were growing up in Tampa, before your father became governor, what were your first memories as a child growing up in Tampa?

D: I have nothing but fond memories. People were very neighborly in those days.

M: Where did you live in Tampa?

D: I lived at 617 Horatio Street in Hyde Park, cattycorner across from Gorrie School, so I didn't have far to go to school.

M: Was that named for John Gory, the Ice Maker Man?

D: That's right. And then about four blocks from there was Woodrow Wilson Junior High School, so I walked to school there. Then Plant High School was a long way. I bought a 1928 Chevrolet for \$25 and I would take boys to school and I got 25-cents apiece for it for a week. I had about five boys that I picked up.

M: When you were little, who were the oldest people you remember growing up as a boy? I guess your neighbors, and some of your relatives?

D: I remember of course my father and his brother, Dr. Leland Carlton. He was an outstanding physician and surgeon. He lived in Tampa also. I remember my uncle Sewell. Can you believe that in my daddy's family, the first child was a girl, and then there were nine boys?

M: So you would have had a lot of aunts and uncles. And you remember them.

D: I really do. I would come down from Tampa in the summer, and I would cowboy with my uncles. I learned how to ride a horse, and we would go out for hours upon hours in then Hardee County. In those early days, there was open range. Then in the early 30s, they passed the Dipping Law to eradicate the ticks. The ticks were quite a problem to cows. Then they would have to gather the cattle once every two weeks for two years and dip them. This process went on for two years, and I really think this was the birth of the cattle industry because people either had to buy land or lease land and they worked the cattle regularly. We had in those days the old Spanish gray cow and I remember some of the first bulls that were bought then, some of the Brahma bulls that were bred on those old scrub cows, and those calves were real outstanding.

M: So you would have worked with your uncle. Were there any really old people that you remember here in Wauchula, or in Tampa? Like for example, there would have been in the 1920s, the late 20s, probably a few Civil War veterans.

D: Well, I remember here in Wauchula, my grandmother Carlton, she lived to be 94 years old, and when I was a youngster I would come down and spend a lot of the week-ends there.

M: Did she live here in Wauchula?

D: Yes, she lived in Wauchula. They first lived about 4 miles west of Wauchula. That's where they settled and that's where my dad was born, and then after many years, he was able to buy a place in town. I remember coming down and staying with my grandmother. She was such a lovely lady. Her name was Martha.

M: Do you remember your grandfather?

D: I remember him vaguely, but he died about 1928 and I was just about a 5 year old boy then.

M: So your grandmother lived way up until your adulthood.

D: That's right. I have nothing but real good memories of her.

M: Do you remember ever meeting any Civil War veterans, or hearing any Civil War veterans talk?

D: No, I don't.

M: The Spanish American War would have been about 25 years before you were born. I would imagine that you probably heard some Spanish American War veterans?

D: I heard of some of them, but I am not real knowledgeable about that.

M: No old-timers that you remember that were involved in that?

D: No.

M: So you went back and forth for quite awhile between Tampa and Wauchula growing up? You would come here (Wauchula) in the summer and you would go to school in Tampa during the school year? You would have had the advantage of living in a town or a city, and in the country too. Do you remember any black people that you were fond of or that you knew, either in Tampa or Wauchula during those early days? Perhaps that worked for your father?

D: Not vividly. There was a gentleman, and I forget his name, who drove for my father when he was governor. He was a fine gentleman, very courteous, very polite. I don't recall his name.

M: How did your father and your mother meet?

D: You know where they met? At Stetson University. My daddy went to Stetson. My mother told me later that he got two jobs working up there to help pay his way through school.

M: Can you tell us a little about your mother? Where was she from?

D: Originally they came from out in the Midwest, from the Arkansas area. She was a very lovely lady, a firm disciplinarian. I remember Mary Call Collins, Leroy Collins' widow, and some years ago Mary Call was just a teen-ager when Daddy was governor, she lived within a block of the mansion and I remember her telling me that my mother was her role model. And the nice thing about it was that when Daddy was governor the yard gates to the mansion were open. We were neighbors. It wasn't "this is the governor's mansion and I don't have time for you." Everything was wide open and we were neighborly. My mother and dad taught me that.

M: I know the geography there, and I know where Mary Call Collins' house is, right there, and I can imagine how that would have been.

D: Can you believe that my dad loved to ride horses? I have a silver cup in Cracker Country now where he won a cowboy horseracing contest at the Florida Fair in 1928. I have that cup. So, when we moved to Tallahassee he built a small stable out in the back of the mansion and he got a horse up there, and I had a little ol' pony named Pandora, and I talked him one time into letting me ride her to school at the Florida State College, two miles. There was an old gentleman named Pasco Love who ran the dairy at the college at that time, they had their own dairy and did their own milking. He let me keep the pony down there and I walked up to school which was about a quarter of a mile. Of course, I had ridden with my daddy so much that he knew that I knew my way around. About half the roads in Tallahassee then were clay. Those were some days.

M: Where did your mother grow up? Did she grow up in Florida or the Midwest and then moved down to Stetson?

D: She grew up in Florida.

M: What was her maiden name?

D: Nell Ray. I will never forget when I was about a 9 year old boy, I had come to Wauchula in the summer to cow hunt and I learned how to talk cowboy talk, and I knew that "GD" was bad and I would not say that, but all the cowboys were using the expression for "by God I'll show you" or "by God that's a good bull" and that was not supposed to be ugly, just to emphasize. So I will never forget, my mother was cooking in the kitchen and my sister was 2 years older than I (who unfortunately is dead now - I have one living sister, Martha Ward now, and I talk to her about every couple of weeks on the phone) but my sister and I got into a fuss there in the kitchen and I told her, well by God I'll show you, and my mother pulled my belt off and wore me out and told me "I don't ever want to hear you use that kind of language again. You understand?" And I said, "Yes m'am" because I knew she'd get me again. And I will never forget, she was so sweet and lovely and she told me about two years before she died, she said, "Doyle, I am awfully worried that I might have punished you a little too severely when you were a youngster growing up." I said, "Mother, if you knew all the things that I did that I shouldn't have done that you didn't know catch me doing, you didn't punish me enough." She smiled and said, "Well, that makes me feel so good." We had such a wonderful relationship.

M: You had how many brothers and sisters growing up?

D: I had two sisters and that was it.

M: And what are their names?

D: Martha Ward.

M: That's her married name?

D: That's right. And Mary Ott, she married a dentist in Tallahassee, Pete Ott. She lived in Tallahassee. But Mary has been dead several years now.

M: It's obvious that your uncles and your father were great impacts on your life, and you admired them greatly. Were there any other people that lived in your community, or maybe even state leaders or people that you knew, who you admired very much, ministers, teachers that you can remember who you admired and influenced you in your life?

D: I remember, at Plant High School, the lady who was the assistant principal, her name was Gladys Anthony. She was a lovely lady but a strong disciplinarian. Mr. Peters was our principal. I remember them so well because if you misbehaved or thought you were going to get by with anything, you had the wrong thought because they would get you. I remember those days so well.

M: You were small before your father was elected governor. He practiced law, of course. What firm was he with, or was he on his own?

D: Mabry, Reaves, Carlton & White.

M: Did he establish with that firm right after he got out of law school?

D: Yes, he went with that firm right after he got out of law school and became a part of it, and then after his session as governor he came back and re-established himself.

M: Who would you say were some of his closest friends and business associates that he worked with at that time, before and after he was governor?

D: After he was governor, the dipping law was passed. Most people didn't have any land. The land was owned by the timber companies and non-resident companies. Daddy needed to borrow \$5,000. This was right after he was governor. He went to several banks in Tampa and couldn't borrow the money. So he came to Wauchula, and Mr. J. Edgar Crews at the Wauchula State Bank loaned him \$5,000. He started buying some of that land for \$2.00 an acre. I will always remember Daddy being so gracious to Mr. Crews for making that money available. Of course, Daddy, you know, paid it back.

M: Well, that was a tough time to borrow money.

D: Oh, it really was a tough time.

M: When he was practicing law in Tampa before he became governor, what kind of law clients would he have had, cattlemen or businessmen?

D: I think he had some of each.

M: So he had a general practice? Did he specialize in anything, or was it pretty general?

D: Pretty general. I will never forget, while he was governor, the racing interests from the East were influential, the pari-mutuels. Well, Daddy did not have anything in the horse racing or dog racing, he later told me, but he said that the racing interests from the North spent several hundred thousand dollars buying votes in the legislature.

M: I have here that your dad began his practice in 1912 in Tampa. When did he decide that he wanted to run for the state House, and do you know what his thinking was and who were some of his supporters for running for the state House?

D: I really don't know. That was before I was born.

M: I have here that he was elected in 1917, and in 1919 in the Senate, and so he was then in for two terms. Then it was in 1928 when he decided to run for governor. When you were growing up, he would have been out of office at that time, but did you ever hear your dad talk about Sidney Catts or anybody else? Did you ever see him? You would have been very young.

D: No, I don't recall ever having seen him. I just remember the name.

M: What about Park Trammel? Did you ever meet Park Trammel, or did your father ever talk about Park Trammel?

D: I remember the name, but I don't remember ever having met him.

M: Cary Hardee or John Martin?

D: No.

M: I would imagine that your father's campaign for governor would have been a vivid memory for you.

D: Of course, I was so young then, only about five years old.

M: So you don't remember the campaign at all, the issues or who else was running?

D: No.

M: Someone told me, just as a legendary statement or something like that, that when your father was running for governor, and I don't know whether this is true or not, that when your father was running for governor and was making a speech in Arcadia, that someone called him a Republican. Is that true?

D: I don't recall that.

M: Someone told me that at one of your dad's speeches, there was a hostile fellow and he yelled out "He's a Republican" or something like that.

D: I remember in the 1950s when I was 27 years old, George Smathers was running for the United States Senate, and George graduated from the University of Florida the year before I got up there. He played basketball at the university and I played basketball at the university. When he and I became acquainted, I remember he was running against Senator Pepper. I didn't have anything against Senator Pepper but George and I were good friends. One of the first big speeches that I ever made was at Arcadia. We were at the courthouse, and there must have been a thousand people out there on the yard. A little lady from Lakeland, I forget her name, who was down there to speak for Senator Pepper and she spoke first, and then I spoke. When I spoke, I knew I was in cow country. And I had on Levis. About three days before that we were marking a brand on some calves and a calf jumped over and kicked me in the mouth and I had to have three stitches, and I had a bandage over my bottom lip. So I told the folks that I had some things that I wanted to say that I wanted them to understand, but I said unfortunately I told them about getting kicked in the lip by a calf so I knew they would understand where I was coming from. I talked for about 4 or 5 minutes and then sat down. I will never forget, she got back up for a rebuttal and she said, "Well, I suppose you would have been a lot nicer to me if I had a been kicked in the face by a cow." And some little cracker way back there in the back hollered out, "I wished to hell you hadda been." And she hit the ground and headed back to Lakeland. That is my first big remembrance of a political campaign.

M: How bad would it have been if somebody had called your daddy a Republican back then in 1928?

D: It would have been insulting, because he didn't play the political game. He did what he thought was right. But daddy always did what he thought was the best thing, whether it was politically popular or not.

M: Do you remember what inauguration day was like in Tallahassee? Do you remember that inauguration?

D: I would have been about six years old. I remember that it was there at the old Capitol. And it was quite a program. I don't remember any of the details. There was a parade.

M: When you moved up there, did you move into the Governor's Mansion?

D: Yes.

M: Was that the same Governor's Mansion we see today?

D: It was in the same location, but I believe they have rebuilt the building. It was about a little more than a half a mile from there down to the Capitol.

M: Did you father walk to work every day or did he take the car?

D: I think he did some of both.

M: And it was the same distance for you to school?

D: No, it was a little further.

M: Are there any other stories that you remember very vividly of being the son of the governor? Governor junior?

D: I remember when I was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and I walked down to the Capitol to see my daddy, and I wanted to get a dime from him to buy a cold drink or a bar of candy, so I went into his office and they said that he was in a cabinet meeting. Well, the doors of the cabinet were cracked open so I just played around a little bit out there. My daddy laughed and stopped the cabinet meeting and motioned me in, and I asked him for the dime. He gave it to me and smiled and patted me on the back. I thought how he could have told me if he had of been arrogant, "Son, don't ever interrupt me when I'm on the state's business" and run me out of there, but he was a loving father and I'll always remember that.

M: Do you remember any of the cabinet members?

D: I remember Mr. Bob Gray.

M: R.A. Gray?

D: Yes, R.A. Gray. He was the Secretary of State. He lived not too far from the mansion. I was trying to think who was the Commissioner of Agriculture then.

M: They were elected individually like they are now?

D: Yes.

M: So you rode your horse, your pony to school one day. Did that cause quite a stir among the other students? Were they jealous?

D: Not really, because I had to leave the horse a quarter of a mile from the school. So they weren't too much aware of it, and I wasn't braggin' about it.

M: You obviously have really good memories of the time. Were there any bad memories? Were there any times that were really tough as far as what you knew about your father's difficulties? Did he bring a lot of the difficult times home sometimes? Did he talk about the guys who were giving him problems?

D: No. He was not negative at all. This is part of my philosophy, but I was taught growing up by my mother and my daddy that problems are opportunities.

M: Your father was elected in 1928. That was on the verge of some very rough times for Florida and the nation. Florida was already reeling from a hurricane, a banking crisis, and a land boom crash that was about to really bite pretty hard. Obviously, this happened even before the election and as the election was progressing. Can you reflect a little on your memories of that? Of course, you were very little. But that obviously had to affect your father.

D: One thing I remember, and I don't know that I have these figures exactly right, but I know that when he went into office, money was short and hard times had started. He cut everybody's salary and cut his own. I think he was making \$10,000 a year, and he cut it to \$7700. He wasn't going to ask anybody else to take a reduction if he did it himself. He was that kind of a person.

M: Did he travel much as governor? Did he travel around the state or did he stay in Tallahassee?

D: I'm sure he traveled some, because he always made himself available.

D: Some of the major issues of the times were the banking crisis, what were some of the banks that survived the crash and what were some of the ones that crashed the worst? Of course, I'm asking you to reflect on things about when you were really little so you might not remember vividly.

D: I really don't recall.

M: The 1928 hurricane I think it hit after the election, was there any talk at all about hurricane relief or people getting support, that kind of thing?

D: I don't recall that.

M: Another concern at the time was the Mediterranean fruit fly pest epidemic. Do you have any recollections of that at all as a person who was involved later on in growing citrus?

D: I think the state responded to it by eradicating it. I know that it was a very important issue and yet I think the general public understood that if we leave it and don't correct it, it's going to be very costly to us. My dad was involved in helping to eliminate that.

M: One of the things that you hinted on before is the pari-mutuel betting issue. When was it that your dad had to start dealing with that? Was it right off the bat?

D: I think so, in the early 30s.

M: And with revenues so short, with tax-collections so short, there must have been a compelling argument in favor of that.

D: I remember asking him about that later in life. They had offered him \$100,000. They asked him to begin with, *Governor, do you know how much money your name is worth?* and he said not real much, and they said it was worth \$100,000 if you will sign the racetrack bill. And he said, *Well, if my name is worth that much to you, it ought to be worth that much to me. So I guess maybe I'll keep it.* It took another \$100,000 or \$200,000 to pass it over the veto. And he told me later, he said, "Son, I didn't have anything against the horse racing or the dog racing, but I wasn't going to put my name on it the way that it was bought." Then he vetoed it and they spent many more dollars and passed it over the veto.

M: I don't know if I told you that when I was working on the book that I wrote on the Florida Sheriffs, I was able to read a lot of your father's papers in Tallahassee. When you do research a lot of times you find things that you end up becoming absorbed in and the original purpose for your research becomes lost. One of the things that I read about your father involved Al Capone. What was his stance on Al Capone?

D: Well, he was the one that invited Al Capone to leave the state.

M: That was in 1929?

D: Yes. And you know, he was with a gambling interest, and he was from Chicago, I think. But Daddy wasn't going to tolerate that.

M: Now, when he was governor, along with the Capone issue, did he get any pressure from religious leaders about pari-mutuel betting as well as Al Capone's presence in south Florida? Would you say that that was something that a lot of the religious leaders were up in arms about?

D: I am sure that they were. I will never forget that was during the time that the Lindberg baby was kidnapped.

M: That was in 1928 or 1929?

D: 1929 or early 30s. I will never forget, my sister who was two years older than I, mother and dad had advised each of us knowing the Capone situation to be real careful because they didn't want us to get picked up and kidnapped.

M: That was enough to make them concerned about it?

D: Yes. And I remember my sister who is two years older than I said, "Well, Mother, you don't have to worry about Doyle because if they get him after they keep him five minutes they will turn him loose!" I think about those things.

M: You lived in the Governor's Mansion until 1933, went back to Tampa. Did you move back into your old house or did you buy a new house?

D: We moved back in the old house.

M: Did you keep your house while he was Governor?

D: Yes.

M: He went back to the law firm that he was with?

D: Yes, in fact, what was so interesting, we stayed in Tallahassee six months after he came to Tampa because my older sister was going to college there and it felt like it would probably be, money wise, better to stay and let her to finish college up there. Then we all came home.

M: By that time I guess you were about 12 years old?

D: About 10 or 11.

M: Do you have any other thoughts on Tallahassee – growing up before we move on to when you moved back to Tampa? Did you go hunting, fishing, play ball, have any friends that you remember meeting up there?

D: I remember going hunting up there. I was just a kid and we played tough football in the front yard of the mansion. I will never forget the people who were maintaining the yards told Mother and Daddy to not let those kids play ball out there because it was destructive to the lawn and they didn't pay any attention and said if they want to play ball they can play ball. I remember playing touch football out there on the front yard of the mansion when I was just an 8 or 9-year-old kid.

M: Did you know Leroy Collins? I will ask you about his political career later on. But in those years, did you know Leroy Collins?

D: No, I did not know him in those years.

M: He would have lived, I guess, in the neighborhood at that point, but you didn't know him at that time?

D: No.

M: Do you remember Mrs. Call?

D: Yes, Mary Call Collins.

M: She would have been how old in relation to you?

D: She was probably 8 years old than I.

M: She was teenager by then, a debutant I guess. Was she pretty popular?

D: Yes.

M: Was she a belle?

D: Yes.

M: Do you have any memories of her mother besides what she said about your mother?

D: No.

M: So you moved back to Tampa, and you were about 12 years old. By that time, the Depression had really hit pretty hard and was really entrenched. What was it like growing up in Tampa in the Depression?

D: We really didn't know any different as a youngster growing up. I think it was very educational because it taught us to be very frugal with our money. We weren't going to just throw it away because we didn't have any excessive funds. Of course, when the good times were going on, I was not old enough then, so I didn't know any difference. But I think of those days and how thrifty and frugal we had to be because we didn't have any money to throw away.

M: Did you have any interaction at all with the Cuban folks and cigar worker folks? Or was Hyde Park kind of an encapsulated neighborhood; did you kind of stay in that neighborhood? Did you interact with the Latino cigar workers?

D: Yes, they went to school with us. There were no problems. I remember playing basketball at Plant City High School.

M: that was a big high school even back then, I bet?

D: Yes, it was. And we played against some of the Latin boys at Hillsborough. But over the years we grew to be good friends.

M: Did your father know Senator Henry Garrison Murphy of Hardee County?

D: I don't recall but I'm sure that he did.

M: have you heard of the Murphy Act, passed in 1937, I think?

D: Am I right in assuming that in that act that the state repossessed land that people had failed to pay the tax on and the private sector had the opportunity to acquire it?

M: Yes.

D: An interesting point. We have an old house at the Florida State Fair in Cracker County where old Senator Henry Murphy was born.

M: The way I have read about it is people could actually get all this land that was derelict on taxes, a lot of land, and there were county taxes, city taxes and state taxes

and people could get the land by just paying the state taxes in cash. I guess that would have had a major impact on future land holding.

Moving into the 1930 or I guess the year after that, your father decided to run for the Senate. Is that correct?

D: Yes, the U. S. State Senate. And I think one of the greatest things that ever happened to him was not getting elected because it was a special election.....

M: Yes, someone had died I think Trammel had died.

D: Who was it that preceded my daddy?

M: I think it was Claude Pepper and there probably would have been a lot of candidates in the Democratic Primary. If I am not mistaken, I think it was Claude Pepper who ended up winning that.

D: I don't recall. But I know that it was a special election and everybody assumed that Doyle Carlton was going to get it anyhow so "I won't go out and vote." And as it turned out they had so few people turn out to vote that he got beat by just a handful of votes. And yet I think what a blessing that was. And I feel the same way about when I ran for governor. Farris Bryant defeated me in 1959 – 1960 because three or four years after that I made some land deals and bought big acreage for low dollars and had I been elected governor I would never have been able to do that. I kept thinking all during that race that I kept wanting to pray that I would win but I just prayed that the Lord's will be done. As it turned out, Farris Bryant made a good governor. He enforced the law when school integration came about.

M: We are going to talk about that in the next interview, back to the 1936 campaign. You would have been old enough to know what was what.