

CENTER FOR FLORIDA HISTORY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: HOMER HOOKS
INTERVIEWER: JAMES M. DENHAM
PLACE: LAKELAND, FLORIDA
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M= JAMES M. DENHAM (Mike)
H= HOMER HOOKS

M: Today we are interviewing Mr. Homer Hooks and we are going to talk today about the legacy of Lawton Chiles and hopefully follow this up with future discussions of Mr. Hooks' business career and career in politics. Good morning Mr. Hooks.

H: Good morning, Mike.

M: As I mentioned, we, really, in the future want to talk about your service in World War II and also your business career, but today we would like to focus on your memories of Lawton Chiles. Even so, can you tell us a little bit about where you were born as well as giving us a brief biographical sketch?

H: Yes, Mike. I was born in Columbia, South Carolina, on January 10, 1921. My family moved to Lake County actually in Florida when I was a child. I was 4 or 5 years old, I guess. We lived in Clermont in south Lake County. My grandfather was a pioneer. He platted the town of Clermont. The rest of the family also lived north of Clermont in the Leesburg area, but we considered ourselves pioneer Florida residents. Those were the days in 1926, '27 and '28 days and so forth. I grew up in Clermont - grammar school and high school and then immediately went to the University of Florida in 1939 and graduated in 1943, as some people have said, when the earth's crust was still cooling, so long ago. I had a very happy time at the university. I majored in journalism, made Phi Beta Kappa, Florida Blue Key and so forth. I was very active in campus politics and journalism on *The Alligator* at Florida. Then, immediately upon graduation, and we were the first class thus affected, we were not commissioned in the Army or the Navy, as the case may be, on graduation. We had to go to officer candidates' school -the Benning School for boys - Ft. Benning, Georgia. I graduated a 13 week program there as a second lieutenant in the infantry and was immediately assigned to the 102nd Infantry Division which was activated in Camp Swift, Texas. So, some of us, and this is an interesting side bar - a lawyer in Ocala named Al Cone, a very close friend of mine to this day, were assigned to the same division, the 102nd, the same infantry regiment, 406th, the same battalion, the 1st battalion, the same company C- Company. He had one rifle platoon and I had another rifle platoon in that same company, C- Company, and we went all the way through World War II together in Germany.

M: Now Cone is a famous Florida name. Is he kin to Governor Cone, Fred Cone?

H: Distantly yes, he is a cousin.

M: And Billy Cone in the 19th century, the cattleman?

H: I don't remember him; Fred Cone in Gainesville.

M: Well, you wouldn't have remembered him. He was in the 1860s.

H: Well, I'm glad I don't remember him. Anyway, Al is a special person and when we get into my military memories, we can talk further about him, but he saved my life literally on one occasion and I saved his. So, we came out even on that. He is retired now. After the war, I stayed on another year in Europe in the Army of Occupation in Bavaria and then came back and tried to get my career in journalism launched. I appeared before, had an interview before Jimmy Clendenon, who was at that time the state editor of the *Tampa Tribune*, and Jimmy knew of my career at Florida with *The Alligator* and so forth. So, he gave me a job as a green reporter on the *Tampa Tribune*. This was, I think, 1945 or something like that, and I stayed there about a year and then he moved me over to Lakeland to cover the citrus industry, and I began to look around and I saw that all of my bosses at the *Tribune* were young, professional journalists and that my future probably lay elsewhere, and so I gradually went into the citrus industry as head of trade associations like The Canner's League of Florida and, ultimately, the Florida Citrus Commission.

M: Did you know Leland Hawes there?

H: Yes, I did.

M: You were a little before him.

H: I have been in touch with Leland since then. He writes his great articles..

M: Leland is a great friend of mine.

H: And Bennett DeLoach, who is also a native of Lakeland and a good friend, Jock Murray, and Ed Lambright, and all those old names - Pete Norton, Newton and so forth. Anyway, those were the *Tribune* days and then the citrus business and, as I said, I worked for several companies in the business and then wound up as Executive Director of the Department of Citrus here in Lakeland, which in effect managed the advertising and research programs for the entire industry and we collected tax on the growers. In about 1965, I think it was, Chesterfield Smith and Burke Kibler came to see me. I had known them both for many years, of course, and they said they were forming a new trade association in the phosphate industry - The Florida Phosphate Council - and they asked me to head it up. I said I was very happy at the Citrus Commission. I was dealing with a popular product and why would I leave that to go with one of the world's great polluters - the phosphate industry. They said to think about it - it would be a challenge to you, and we would find out what kind of abilities you have. Well, I decided they had a point. Here was an industry that was badly maligned all over the state as a raper of the land and poisoner of the water and air, paid no taxes and really had a terrible public image, but when I began to look at that, most of that was totally untrue and unfounded. The fact is, the phosphate industry was mining an essential ingredient in fertilizers without which we would not survive. We have to have that ingredient along with nitrogen and other ingredients in our fertilizers, so I took the job and became President of The Florida Phosphate Council and retired in 1986 from that and formed my own company, The Hooks Group Consulting and Communications, and such as that. I have lived here in Lakeland through those years and had an interesting career - careers I should say - more than one.

M: I guess now we probably ought to move into Lawton Chiles. Can you remember the first time that you met Lawton Chiles and what you thought of him at the time? Was there anything special that you remember about that first meeting?

H: I don't recall a specific incident, Mike, when I first met Lawton. Actually, I was, this must have been about 1957 or 1958, and I believe his first race for the legislature was, if I am not mistaken, in 1959, well, 1958 was when he ran and 1959 when he took office. He ran against Roy Searles, who was a well-established legislator here in Lakeland and Polk County, and I observed that Lawton was a bright young attorney, very ambitious, had a wonderful wife in Rhea, who was a right hand woman in all of his races. I was impressed by his personality and his relations to people. He seemed to be consumed with finding out what makes people tick. He had the common touch, to use an old cliché and there was nothing cynical about that, I mean he didn't use it in terms of advancing himself. He used it in the terms of his own interests. He was interested in people. Yes, I remember supporting Lawton in his first race against Roy Searles and on from there, as you know.

M: We can go back to Searles a little bit. First of all, did you work with him - you were in the reserves, is that correct after World War II and Korea?

H: Yes, I was in the reserves.

M: Here in Polk County?

H: In Lakeland. It is no credit to the Army that they did not deliver. Yes, I went into the reserves and we organized a strategic intelligence unit in the reserves and they said that if you are ever recalled, and we have no plans to recall you to active duty, you would go in as a full colonel and be in charge of this intelligence team which would do things like research on the economy of Sweden and other very interesting projects like that. So, we did. We organized our unit and met regularly over at the air base in Bartow and, frankly, we had a lot of fun together, but then in 1951, I suddenly got a notice from Uncle Sam, "Greetings, you are hereby recalled into active duty in the intelligence realm for the Korean War. Report to the Pentagon." So, I reported to the Pentagon, and this is a slight diversion from the history of Chiles, but I reported to the Pentagon as a captain in intelligence, not as a colonel, and served as a briefing officer for a year and a half. This was, Mike, a very interesting job. Every morning early I would go to the intelligence office in the Pentagon and get a telecom message from Tokyo on what happened in Korea the day before. This was top secret. I would plot this on my little portable map - where the lines were, what the enemy action was, what our response was, etc., and then I would take that personally to the Secretary of Defense and give him a thorough briefing from my own notes and my own map. The Secretary of the Defense and the ambassadors of the countries..

M: At that time, it was Secretary of Defense James Forrestal would that be right?

H: You got me, Mike. I don't remember. I believe it was Marshall. Yeah, it was General Marshall in those days and then Mark Clark was there and many others, but the point was that it was pretty high cotton, as we say, for a captain in the infantry to be briefing these ambassadors, general, and secretaries, etc. I appeared on national television on the old Dumont Network, which no longer exists. Maybe I helped put them out of business. Anyway, I appeared on the Dumont Network with briefings on the situation in Korea which were not classified, of course. Anyway, I stayed there for a year and a half and they wanted me to stay

in the regular Army and offered all kinds of enticements - go to language school at Monterey and so forth, but I didn't go for it. So, I got out of the Army and went to Lake Wales as a marketing manager for what was then Florida Citrus Cannery Cooperative, later became Donald Duck and later became Citrus World. I believe that is the current name, and then my career in citrus proceeded from there. I came back to Lakeland, and this ties in with Lawton now, in 1957, as Executive Director of the Citrus Commission or Department of Citrus and met Lawton, who then began his political career against Roy Searles.

M: Do you remember Roy Searles - what kind of fellow he was? What kind of personality? What kind of work he did with the citrus, phosphate and cattle folks around here and how was he liked?

H: He was a good a man and an effective legislator. He sort of typified the old school, the pork chop school of politics. He was not widely known, but he ran a good race based on following basic ethics and ground rule principles of lower taxes and services to the people. I don't recall his name on any particular great piece of legislation, but think for his time and his place in history, he did a good job. Lawton captured the imagination of the typical bright, young newcomer who was willing to take on new challenges. The world was changing, of course, as it does constantly and he was able to capitalize on that and he won. I don't recall if I had the vote here, but he did defeat Roy Searles rather handily.

M: Now, would you call that an upset?

H: Yeah, to the extent that Searles was an established politician who had been in office quite a long time. According to my notes, Mike Chiles got 13,900 votes and Searles got 11,959; roughly a 2,000 margin. He was exactly overwhelmed and he fought a good hard race, but Chiles captured the imagination of the young people, the Jaycees, young lawyers and young professionals who were looking for change.

M: The so-called leaders in the county would have been the phosphate, the citrus, the cattle and they all had leaders, I am sure, in groups, and wouldn't they have been reluctant to lose Roy Searles?

H: I agree. I think in most cases the leadership of those industries were attuned to Searles and supported him, but they could not control everybody who worked for them, nobody ever has, and Chiles worked hard. He went door-to-door and I think he limited contributions to \$10.00 or some other ridiculous figure. He had the knack for communicating with people at the common man level so to speak.

M: So, would it be fair to say that you could see those traits in him from the beginning?

H: From the very beginning, yes. One of the great things about Lawton was his ability to relate to the common man.

M: Do you remember any of the issues or concerns at that time that would have been policy issues that Chiles would have spoken to or was it just that he was a young fellow, determined, enthusiastic and just wanted to work for everybody? Do you remember any issues in 1958 that would have cut certain ways?

H: I remember that even in those days, the very earliest days, his concerns for education and

child health were coming more into focus. Those had not been addressed before. Chiles did that and these grew as one of his main tenets through all of his years of service, and I guess that is 40 years in legislative service in Tallahassee and Washington. Child welfare was always at the top of his list and he was showing signs of that in those days.

M: That is interesting. When Lawton was elected to the Florida House in 1958, that was the age of the climax, I guess you would say, of the pork chop gang in the Florida Legislature. Do you remember those years? That would have been early on in your career in politics. Would you like to comment on how the legislature worked back then?

H: The legislature worked very efficiently back then because there were few disputes about who was in charge. The pork chop gang has been popularly maligned. I have been one of those who said not so fast. They did some good things for Florida. They built the economy of Florida. They began to recognize the need for growth all over the state, but what they did not recognize and did not comprehend until it was too late was that they were losing control because of one man, one vote. It soon became necessary to recognize that folks in Miami were no longer going to be happy with being dominated by folks from Chipley for instance, and that became apparent in those days and became crystal clear just a few years later. My old boss, Jimmy Clendenon at the *Tribune* coined the phrase the "pork chop gang," and it kind of identified those who most of us would say today were dragging their feet in governments, but the legislature ran effectively because there were two or three people in charge and nobody disputed that. The interesting sidebar there was that this was the very earliest division in the legislature between Republicans and Democrats. In those days, the Democratic party had two wings - the conservative Democrats, which were essentially the "pork chop gang", and the moderate or liberal Democrats typified by people from the big cities, Miami particularly. So, the conservative Democrats could see that they had nowhere to go and so they began to crystallize around the remnants of the Republican party and driven to that more by some of the excesses of liberal Democrats of Congress - the days of Hubert Humphrey and Ted Kennedy's earliest days - some of those who drove conservative Democrats away and so the Republican party began to flower as early as the late '50s and early '60s.

M: And race, of course, has to be thrown in there too.

H: Yes, very much a part of this.

M: Obviously, 1958 was four years after the Brown decision and for years really nothing happened in terms of the Brown decision and the mandate to desegregate. Were those kinds of things even on the radar screen in 1958?

H: Just barely. I would say that the Brown decision began to focus peoples' minds and attention. The politicians cynically took it as there are some votes out here that we can exploit and get, so to the extent that the Brown decision affected Florida politics and most other politics is true. That is the turning point when we began to see the emergence of the new Republican Party who abhorred the excesses of the racial situation.

M: Now, that was the time that Leroy Collins was Governor. It was a very progressive time. So, Lawton Chiles was really on the cusp, I guess you would say, of a time when the legislature was turning to be far more right.

H: Chiles, in some respects, was almost a clone of Collins. They were so much alike in so

many ways that it was a natural progression in leadership in the state and I think both benefited from it.

M: Do you have any personal knowledge of their collaboration? He would have been young, young at that time compared to Collins. Do you have any personal knowledge of his interaction with him?

H: I have no specifics, Mike, except to the extent that Chiles supported most and maybe all of the Collins program in the legislature because he truly believed in the same things that Collins did in terms of racial equality, opportunities for the poor, education and child care.

M: At that time, in 1958, you would have been just about to take the job in Lake Wales.

H: As a matter of fact, I was in Lake Wales from 1952 to 1956 and left there in 1957 to come to Lakeland to take over the Citrus Commission.

M: Okay, so you would have, obviously, worked a lot with Mr. Chiles in terms of your interest groups.

H: Yes.

M: Can you go through a little bit about what it was like back then to lobby? You have a career in lobbying that probably goes 40 years. How was lobbying different back then compared to the '80s and even today?

H: Mike, that is an excellent question and I could probably take the rest of your day answering it, but I won't. I'll be brief.

M: Please, please feel free to elaborate because I can't think of very many other people who would have any better insights on that subject.

H: Well, it is easy to dismiss lobbying in those days as a wild house party of beaus and broads and bribes, the three B's, but it is largely exaggerated and overstated. There were good people in the legislature who approached their jobs honestly. The big difference, in my opinion, is the professional staff that is available and it became apparent soon after that that people who are trained and educated to know government and how it operates began to be hired by legislators and depended on a great deal by legislators and so the emergence of a professional staff in the offices of the legislators was perhaps the most significant development of those days. Old fashioned lobbying existed then and still does despite all the rules, registration and accountability of the money spent and all of those things, but in my opinion, and I have stated this many times, that lobbying is nothing more than human relations. It is getting to know your subject, what you are lobbying for. You have to know it backwards and forwards. It is getting to know the elected legislator and perhaps equally important, you have to know his staff, because these are people who are trained to cut you apart if you cannot make your case effectively. So, the old days of telling the legislator how to vote are long gone.

M: Even by then?

H: Well, I wouldn't say it was gone, but drifting. It was changing. Legislators who came to Tallahassee just to have a good time began to fade and we lobbyist knew who they were and

we didn't spend much time with them. There were many instances where lobbyists could not approach people like Leroy Collins or Lawton Chiles unless they had a case that they could defend effectively because these were men of towering intellect and integrity and they could not be bought by any amount of money or favors or whatever. So, the rest of the legislators began to see that this was the way to go and they hired people on their staffs who could function as good as them and at times even better.

M: Could you comment on the group that Lawton Chiles might have been affiliated with, the kind of legislators that would have been known at that time to be in that young progressive kind of phase.

H: There are two that come to mind immediately. One was his close personal friend, Wilbur Boyd, of Bradenton.

M: The late.

H: Yes, the late Wilbur Boyd.

M: That was another person, Wilbur was another person that I just missed.

H: Well, you missed him that way and we miss him in all ways because he was right there with Lawton on every piece of progressive legislation that Lawton advanced - Wilbur was right there with him. Another was Ed Price, whom I think you have already talked with. Bill Gunter from Orlando was another young senator who was in that same mode of progressivism.

M: Do you know where Bill Gunter is today?

H: No, I do not.

M: I want to see if I can find him.

H: I have not heard of him in some time.

M: He has kind of dropped out of sight.

H: At one time he was one of the three or four leaders in the state literally. I know he ran for the United States Senate unsuccessfully.

M: When I was looking at Lawton Chiles' papers at the University of Florida - he has about a thousand boxes of senatorial papers, and they have only cataloged one out of a thousand, and that happened to be the 1970 race. I read the letters between he and Bill Gunter. They were kind of bantering back and forth about who would run, but that is a whole other issue, but it was very interesting, and they were very close and obviously Orange County and Polk County were very close. I think at one time there was a running joke that Bill Gunter was the Lawton Chiles of Orange County and Lawton Chiles was the Bill Gunter of Polk County.

H: That is not a bad analogy.

M: Well, this is about your memories and not my thoughts.

H: I don't think that, sounds like it fits right in.

M: So, would you say that even though things were changing, there were still some abuses at that time when it came to lobbying - gifts, junkets, booze and broads - that kind of thing. Were women involved much at all in government back then? In the staff?

H: You mean elected?

M: No, obviously not elected, but as staff?

H: Yes, they were beginning to be more and more important. Here I have to toss some plaudits to my old rivals at Florida State University. I am a Gator, as you know, but they began to furnish a lot of professionals, young professionals to the legislature to work in either the legislators' offices or in the agency offices. They were very able and effective young people. So, to answer the question, yes, there was change taking place gradually, and in some cases more rapidly, in turning to a more professional legislature.

I have a comment here that I lifted from somebody's notes about Lawton's comment on politics, specifically the Democratic Party. Here I am quoting, he said,

"The Democratic party has grown apathetic and disorganized. We just haven't had a Democratic party in Florida. We have a few counties that have a good Democratic organization. We have a number of counties that have social organizations or debate societies or something as a place where you can stir up some controversy, but they don't go out and deliver the votes. They don't knock on doors. They don't produce votes. What we've got to do is produce that."

I think that is kind of interesting. I wish I had the date that he said that, but his comment was to the effect that the reason the Republicans were becoming more important was that the Democrats had become smug and complacent.

M: Complacent, sure. That sounds like.

H: They had been in charge for so long.

M: That sounds like the '70s or '80s range.

H: Yeah, because he was of the old school that you knocked on doors and you talked to people and you listened to them and he deplored the fact that this was no longer the case.

M: Now, you commented on and everyone comments on Rhea Chiles' involvement in his career and in his first run for office. Do you remember any specific incidents that you can recall in that regard that she was out in front with in those early years?

H: I don't recall any specifics except that at every rally I attended she was there and this was not true of most candidates. In those days the ladies showed up some times and smiled and looked with awestruck eyes at their husbands like somebody said Nancy Reagan used to. Rhea was an active politician. She knew people. She knew how to call them up and get votes. She was not above going house to house. She was a right hand supporter.

M: Do you remember.. He was in the House, of course, from 1959 to 1966 and then in the Senate from 1966 to 1970. Do you remember any specific legislation that sticks out in your memory that he was involved in or major bills that he would have pushed for very successfully?

H: He actively supported us at the Department of Citrus in those days. It was kind of a novel thing to collect taxes from growers. In fact, I see the headlines - when Yogi Berra said it was déjà vu all over again because the whole concept of generic advertising is being questioned now and it was then, whether it was effective to say buy Florida orange juice when nothing on the can says that. So, anyway, Lawton was very effective, and those were the days when we were fighting Tang. Do you remember when the astronauts were taking Tang on board and this wonderful product which was fake orange juice, as we called it, and Lawton picked up on that and supported us actively in our efforts to clarify the rules on advertising and so forth so that we would be protected. I remember we came up with the phrase, "Get the real thing in Florida orange juice," and he supported that all the way.

M: Now, the member of Congress from this district at that time was James Haley. Do you remember if he and Lawton had any substantial interaction?
He was from Sarasota.

H: I don't remember. Haley had a good career, a distinguished career with Lawton in Congress, but I don't recall any specific interaction between the two of them.

M: Okay. We have already gone over some of Lawton's colleagues. Do you know whether he was friendly or involved personally or professionally with Governor Askew?

H: No, but there again.

M: They would have been contemporaries.

H: Like with Leroy Collins, you could almost cast them in the same mold. Askew was a young, progressive state senator from Pensacola. Lawton was a young progressive state senator from Lakeland. They were very much alike in terms of political philosophy, and they worked together.

M: Can you comment on the power which Ed Ball exerted in Florida politics in those years, say from '58 to '70?

H: I have a personal anecdote about Ed Ball which you may or may not want to use. There was a vacancy in the United States Senate. I can't remember the year; maybe it was when Senator Holland retired. Some of my friends, and I was a so-called war hero, had been in battle and had all these experiences, and they asked me if I would be interested in running for the United States Senate. I was highly flattered. They said they could get me the money. I had high state visibility which they could exploit. They wanted me to think about it. So, I made a few inquiries. One of my friends said that the first thing I needed to do was go see Ed Ball, because he pretty much pulls the strings in Florida politics. He said if he is for you, then you pretty much have a chance. If he is against you, you have no chance. So, I went to Jacksonville. I was on the Board of the Florida National Bank here in Lakeland at that time, so, he knew who I was. I said, "Mr. Ball, some of my friends have approached me about running for the United States Senate and I would like to get your opinion on that and, of course, if I decide to run, I would want your support." Well, he poured himself a bourbon and branch water

and tilted back in his chair and said, "Well, that is very interesting, Mr. Hooks. Let me ask you a couple of questions. He said, if you ran, who do you think would be your Democratic primary opponent?" I am a Democrat, of course, and I said, "Well, all the talk is that former Governor Collins might run for the seat." He tilted his head back in the seat and said, "Well, in that case, Mr. Hooks, I would certainly favor you," and then he said, "Now, let's go a step further. Who do you think would oppose you in the general election in November?" I said, "Very frankly, Mr. Ball, the conversation I hear is that Congressman Ed Gurney of Winter Park might be the Republican candidate." He said, "Well in that case, Mr. Hooks, I am afraid that I would have to support Mr. Gurney." I said, "Thank you, Mr. Ball." I left his office and that was the end of the story; end of my campaign for Senate of the United States.

M: That would have been '68.

H: I think it was.

M: When Gurney beat Governor Collins.

H: Right. As it came to pass, both of my predictions came true. Governor Collins did run and Mr. Gurney did run.

M: I remember him vividly growing up in Orlando, Ed Gurney that is, and not necessarily very favorably. Well, that is a great story. You obviously had a pretty good feel for the power that Ed Ball exerted over the legislature.

H: I did after that day.

M: Yeah, even then.

H: He was a towering figure.

M: Is it really true that he and about a dozen of the "pork choppers" got together before every session and decided - met at Nuttall's Rise in Leon County on the Aucilla River and decided basically what roads were going to get built, what hospitals would get funded and what other issues were going to be settled on?

H: No comment.

M: No comment - okay.

H: I really don't have any personal knowledge of that.

M: Have you seen the new book on Ed Ball and Claude Pepper - kind of a Claude Pepper and Ed Ball juxtaposition? It is quite an interesting book about two good people to juxtapose against each other. Do you have any memory of Claude Pepper?

H: Yes, I remember Claude Pepper for one specific attribute that he had that I envied and I have seen it in nobody else. A reporter with a tape recorder such as you have could come and say Senator, I need 12½ minutes comment on such and such a piece of legislation, civil rights legislation.

M: 12½.

H: Yeah, 12½ minutes, that is all I've got. He could sit there and extemporaneously, because he didn't know his subject, and speak for 12 minutes and 30 seconds and then..

M: Did a great job every time.

H: Did a great job every time. It is a trivial kind of description for such an intellect, but it illustrates his total command of his presence, his time available. He spoke in paragraphs. You could parse every comment he made because it was grammatically perfect. He was an extraordinarily effective speaker. He had that Alabama drawl but a very progressive mind which many people deplored, but he was, in my opinion, one of the great senators from Florida and one of the few persons to go from the Senate to the House of Representatives.

M: Right, and you weren't in Florida in that big election he lost in 1950.

H: No, I wasn't. I was in the Pentagon.

M: So, you weren't here in the state to experience that event.

H: Thank goodness.

M: Well, we are about to get into the time frame of Lawton Chiles's 1970 race. When did you first get an inkling that Spessard Holland was not going to run again in 1970? We haven't mentioned him at all yet. Can you reflect a little bit on your memory of Spessard Holland?

H: He is one of my heroes. I named my second son for him, David Holland Hooks. I will never forget, I wrote him a letter. I had known him from his practice in Bartow. I told him I had done that. In the mail a couple of days later my son, who was then about six days old, got a letter addressed to Mr. David Holland Hooks.

M: Good grief.

H: That is pretty good politics. He followed that up immediately. Spessard Holland is really one of the towering figures in Florida politics. Politics is a much ill used word for him. He was a statesman of the finest caliber. I remember he pushed the anti-poll tax through Congress for which I admired him tremendously. He had a classic command of the people. He advanced the cause of common people all of the time and in all ways. Even Republican Senators and Republican Presidents admired him. I have heard him described in many ways as one of the great leaders of the south. I do not recall, Mike, the specific time when he declined to run again. I don't know what brought that on. I recall that once I was master of ceremonies at the Florida Blue Key Banquet in Gainesville, and this must have been earlier on during one of his reelection periods, because I highlighted my function as Master of Ceremonies by nominating Spessard Holland to run for reelection, which nobody had done publicly before. The crowd arose en masse and gave him a rousing round of applause, and I, of course, credit for knowing in advance that he was going to run, but I didn't. He was a great man and, of course, founded the law firm of Holland and Knight, which is one of the largest in the world.

M: Can you remember his wife, Mrs. Holland, what she was like?

H: Not very well.

M: Was she involved in his campaigns or anything like that?

H: I don't recall that she was specifically. She was very popular and a beautiful lady. His brother, Frank Holland, was very active in agriculture in those days. He never took advantage of his brother's position and was a leader in his own right. He had an attractive family and was just a natural to go places. He was a great state senator and, of course, a great governor and then on to the United States Senate. Interestingly, his career kind of tracked the same as Lawton's through the legislature except that Lawton did it the other way around from the United States Senate to Governor of Florida.

M: Would it be fair to say that Lawton considered him kind of the model?

H: I think so.

M: Can I ask you to speculate, I am asking you to speculate about Lawton's thinking here, about his decision to run for the senate and trying to balance Senator Holland's wishes. How would that have had to happen for him?

H: Well, I think you are right in your premise. I think that Lawton considered himself cast in the same mold politically as Spessard Holland. I think he felt that if he could get elected to the U. S. Senate that he could carry on and extend the Holland legacy of attention to the little man, attention to education and attention to health for infants and children, which Holland had always advanced. Again, just as Lawton's decision to run against Roy Searles, without casting any parallels between Searles and Holland, I think Lawton felt that he could move the ball on down the field effectively if he could be elected, and he did.

M: Can you remember back in 1970 who some of the other people were when it became clear that Senator Holland was not going to run again, who some of the other major contenders may have been?

H: Well, of course, in '70, Farris Bryant was retiring as Governor so he got in the race. Al Hastings and Fred Schultz, who had been Speaker of the House, got in the race. The first primary was very active in 1970 because there were Chiles, Bryant, Gerald Davis, Al Hastings and Fred Schultz. That was a total of five people in that race for Senate. Bryant actually came out ahead in the first primary but as so often happens, in the second primary Chiles was able to amass most of the votes from the other three and so he won the election in 1970. Burke Kibler had a large family and he had contacts all over the state which were useful to Lawton. Over all the years, he was right there with him. I recall rallies in Munn Park in downtown Lakeland, and Burke was always there to introduce him and squire him around. Yes, those were active days in 1970. It was no foregone conclusion that Chiles would win. Sooner or later you are going to want me to comment on the walk.

M: Yep, but let's hold that back a bit.

H: Whenever you are ready, let me know.

M: Try to remember, I am not sure how active you were in this campaign, maybe you did not support him or maybe you did, I am not sure; but do you remember who his closest advisors

were here in Lakeland?

H: Kibler, Kibler had to be the closest that I know of. J. Hardin Peterson was a very, very close advisor and personal friend, Judge Carr, former federal judge.

M: Bill Carr, his law partner?

H: Yes.

M: Now is he still alive?

H: He has passed away.

M: His other partner was Ellsworth. Is that correct?

H: Yeah, I believe so.

M: Has he passed away?

H: No, I think he is around.

M: Is it Bill Ellsworth?

H: Yes, I think he is mostly into real estate now, but you better check that because I wouldn't want to misspeak.

M: Now, about staff. Would he have used his state senate staff? Did he have much of a staff to coordinate things back in the state?

H: Primarily Charles Canady. I don't recall whether Charles served him in the state senate or not, but he certainly did in Washington. Jack Pridgen is the other person who comes to mind who was very, very close to Lawton. He fielded all of the public communications, questions, publicity, public relations, etc.

M: Now, is Mr. Pridgen a native of Lakeland?

H: I think so. I haven't seen or heard from him in years. I don't know where he is or what he is doing, but I do recall that in those days Jack Pridgen was the man to see if you couldn't get to Canady. I would say Canady was the closest and Jack was next. There were others. Incidentally, in those campaigns, my sons were very active. My son, David Holland, is the same age as Bud Chiles, Lawton's oldest son. They traveled together, put up signs and distributed literature.

M: So, he would be a good person to talk to probably.

H: Yes, he would. He lives in Clearwater. I can give you his address and phone number later. My oldest son, Hollis Hooks, lives here in Lakeland and is with Smith Barney, and was also active in the campaigns. He recalled one incident, and we will leap forward to the walk for just a second, when Lawton got into Lakeland, he came down to the yacht club to take a swim and my son, Hollis, was a lifeguard and he, of course, knew Lawton very well. They got to talking

and Hollis was always puzzled. He had great curiosity about things. He wanted to know what the value was and the rationale was of the Electoral College. As you know as a historian, a lot of people ask that question.

M: Yes, why do it?

H: Gore won the most votes but Bush is President. Anyway, Hollis remembers that Lawton, whose feet were sore, bloody and tired, but he sat down and talked to this young man, my son, for a long time and explained the rationale of the Electoral College. Hollis said he would never forget that because here was this candidate for the United States Senate who's taking the time, although he's tired, worn out and wants to rest, he's taking time to explain the Electoral College to an interested young man.

M: Well, that's kind of connected to his role as a professor at Florida Southern College too, I guess. He was doing a little bit of teaching there.

H: Y' know, that's a role that I never knew.

M: He and Elsworth taught Business Law at Florida Southern early on. They were right out of school themselves, I think.

H: They were probably instructors at that point.

M: Was Chesterfield Smith involved in the campaign in its early stages, or in later stages? And what did Chesterfield think about Lawton running for the Senate?

H: I don't recall any personal comment he made, certainly not in my presence, but it was well known that he supported Lawton all out, Lawton being, in effect, a hometown boy, and his thinking was very close to Chesterfield's. I think, but I'm not quite sure without knowing the facts, that Chesterfield supported him wholeheartedly.

M: Did Mr. Holland have much of a role in the campaign? Did he formally endorse Mr. Chiles or was he silent on the issue?

H: I don't have any comment on that. I would surmise he did, but I have no proof.

M: I have a question here on the 1968 teachers' strike, which would have been two years before the campaign. 1968, 1969, and 1970 were probably some of the most tumultuous years in American history, nationally and also at the state level. 1968 was the very, very divisive senatorial race between Governor Collins and Gurney. The 1968 Democratic Convention blew sky high, the Viet Nam War was at its height, Chicago; did Lawton address any of those kinds of things?

H: In 1968, he would have been in the Florida Senate. I don't remember that he did. I would be surprised if he did not. He was outspoken on issues of that kind and knowing his political philosophy, I'm sure that he was on the side of keeping the schools open. I don't have any specific memories of his comments on that, but it would be totally out of character if he did not.

M: Of course, Claude Kirk was Governor at that time.

H: Yes, and at that time also, I remember that Lawton and Wilbur Boyd were preoccupied with the state road system. Do you remember Hayden Burns?

M: Yes, I'd really like for you to reflect on that if you could, or [give us] your memory on that.

H: Well, I don't have much memory except to say that Hayden Burns was pushing his road plan, which Chiles and Boyd actively opposed, and they went to the mat. I mean, it was a dog-eat-dog controversy. I think Chiles and Boyd won out.

M: That is something I want to follow up with Ed Price because he was involved in that, too.

H: Yes, you should because he was right in the middle of that. Has Hayden Burns passed away?

M: Oh yes, and Farris Bryant, too, last year. Okay, let's see. In 1970, Reuben Askew also was running for governor. Both were coming in out of the state legislature and both ran their own campaigns obviously. Did they really collaborate at all that you recall?

H: I think they were both so busy with their own campaigns they didn't have much time, except in political philosophy. As I said earlier, they were cast in the same mold in their concepts of elected office.

M: I guess now we can talk about the walk a little bit. What did you think the first time you heard that he was going to do this?

H: It was the craziest thing I'd ever heard! And I wasn't alone. Good friends of his, like his law partner, Julian McClarkson, and his law partner, Bill Henry, and I, and I'm pretty sure Burke felt this way but you'd need to get that from him directly, we counseled Lawton that this was a total waste of time, that it would produce zero votes if any, or fewer than zero, that he could spend his time more effectively in going to the cities and going some house-to-house and door-to-door of course, but what good would it be to walk from Clewiston to Bonifay Springs and see eight people, to put it in stark terms. Of course he overruled us, wisely, and continued with the walk. I don't know if I discussed this with you; I contacted the Lawton Chiles Foundation in Tallahassee, and they downloaded to me on the computer Lawton's journal on the walk. It's a fascinating document, many, many pages. Apparently, every night before he went to bed in the camper, which followed him, he would dictate or write his impressions of that day. I've read it through carefully. I've got it and I'm going to give it to you and you can keep it for whatever purposes.

M: I've read snippets of it but I haven't ever seen the whole thing. Wonderful! You could just give me the website and I could certainly do that if you'd like to keep that.

H: Okay. It's at the Lawton Chiles Foundation in Tallahassee. I don't have the website right in front of me, but I'll get it for you. There are several things about the walk that I think are worth commenting on, amusing incidents and very serious incidents as well. One of the most amusing was that the very first day, out of Century, Florida, which is very close to the Alabama line, he saw a lineman working on a telephone pole so his very first comment was, "I'm Lawton Chiles. I'm running for the United States Senate and I'd appreciate your help". The guy mumbled something and Lawton went on with his spiel, y'know, and the lineman kept waving at him and Lawton said, "What is it?" and the lineman said, "Well, I think I'd better tell ya, I'm a

native and a voting resident of Alabama.” Well, Lawton didn’t bat an eye and he said, “Well you’ve got friends. You’re working in Florida right now. Just pass the word.” And he did. I thought that was interesting. He ran into one of his stops at a livestock auction. He didn’t know anything, or much, about livestock, but he found out that they had real problems in the pricing situation. And the wheat farmers got only 2 1/2 cents out of a loaf of bread, that the cost of fertilizer and help and tractors and interest on their loans took away the rest of their money. They begged him and implored him to do something to help them out. He made note of that and remembered that. I made a note here that; at that point, Lawton was more interested in walking than running. He was running for Senate, but he was walking to educate himself, and he did. It was told that the way to defeat a charging dog was to empty his pant pockets out and point his finger right at the dog and that the dog would immediately stop the attack. Lawton says he tried that in DeFuniak Springs when a dog charged him. He took his pants pockets out and pointed right at the dog, and the dog kept coming, so he abandoned that plan right away and got back in his camper ‘til somebody took the dog away. There were delays in construction of I-10; you remember the interstate highway that runs from Lake City westward. He got on that when he got into the senate. He commented near the end of the walk, and I’m leaping ahead but I want to make a point here, of what he’d learned from the walk.

“Yes”, he says, “I do feel great and have a confidence that I didn’t have before I started this effort. The contact with people has really been valuable. I truly feel like I know much better now what people are thinking. I have learned so much from the walk that I can better represent them in Tallahassee and in Washington. For example, I have learned an awful lot about farm matters, soybeans, livestock, cotton, corn, peanuts, and shade tobacco. I’ve learned more about parity prices and marketing aids, and I know the effects of the high interest rate on farmers and businessmen. I understand the need for industry to locate in North Florida, and I saw the housing need and the growing concern about our over-centralization of our government and the inability to reach public officials anymore was made crystal clear”. And this is an important part, “I’ve learned something about listening. I know now that no matter how much money you can spend on television, and even if you reach a million people at once that way, you can only listen to one person at a time. So I’m more satisfied, happy, and confident with what I’m doing, knowing that when I complete my walk from one end of Florida to the other, I’ll better understand the State and the people and be better able to serve as United States Senator. I believe the people will know this too.”

I think that a pretty profound summary. And he said this toward the end of the walk when somebody asked him, “Well really, what has it meant? What has it done?” And he summarized it in that way, that it taught him to listen. This kind of characterized his effect in politics through the years.

M: Do you think the walk had an impact on other politicians? It was a success and everybody tries to model success.

H: Well, nobody emulated the walk, for instance, 1,000 miles, and he estimated he talked to 4,000 people. But what happened after that was that people began to see the value of one-to-one appeals and relationships. I’ve noticed even in the local races here in Lakeland, we see more candidates one-on-one coming to the house, leaving a brochure, speaking to the Rotary Club. This doesn’t mean there’s less television, because in fact there’s more, as you know, particularly in the big races, but I think there’s more realization that the voters want to be heard. They don’t want to be classified. They don’t want to be taken as a statistic or as a focus group. They want to have their say heard.

M: Do you think Bob Graham and his workdays is kind of an element of that?

H: I think that's exactly on the point, and the congressman who scheduled regular meetings in their district when the congress was not in session. I can remember now that Charles Canady said, "I'll be at the Elks Hall at 10 o'clock Wednesday morning. If you have any questions you want to talk to me about, I'll be there". I went to a function Senator Bill Nelson put on a year or so ago in Bartow. There was no big deal made about it, but the hall was full. There must have been 200 people there with 200 questions. They wanted to know about Afghanistan and Iraq and they wanted to know about Osama bin Laden and all of that, so this gave Bill a chance to really relate to people's concerns one-on-one. So the answer to your question is, yes. Lawton's walk had a profound effect on politics.

M: Do you have specific memories of going to a place where he would come in to Clewiston or Bonita Springs or somewhere like that, or even Lakeland? Do have any personal memories?

H: I remember when he was in Lakeland. Of course, I didn't participate in the walk but others did. And incidentally, Lonnie Brown is mentioned and I don't know if you've interviewed Lonnie. I'm sure he has some personal memories because he walked with Lawton a good part of his walk. I remember when he was in Lakeland and he was footsore and weary, but he was home and this meant a lot to him, coming back to his roots and talking to his friends and neighbors.

M: Okay, now that he's elected to the Senate, do you remember visiting him in Washington?

H: Two or three times, yes. We didn't have any particular legislation in those days specifically involving our industries, but he was always there, always willing to listen. We never had any problems seeing him. I remember we were there and I saw him socially a few times. I think the State Chamber of Commerce put on Florida Night or something at the Mayflower Hotel when all the senators and representatives came. I remember two or three of those events when I saw Lawton and Rhea. He was a very, very able representative of the people there.

M: Is it true the Canady stayed here in Lakeland while he was in the Senate? Do you remember if that was the case or not?

H: No, I don't remember.

M: Do you remember any of his major staff people up in Washington other than Canady?

H: Well, again Jack Pridgen was with him.

M: They probably would have changed over time, I'll bet.

H: Yes. I don't recall any others.

M: Do you know or can you speculate on who would have been his closest senatorial colleagues, the people that he would have enjoyed working with the best, or the most?

H: Sam Nunn certainly comes to mind, the Senator from Georgia. They were very much alike in their moderate conservative approach to government. I recall a remark by Senator, is it, Pete Domenici? They worked close together on the Budget Committee.

M: He's a Republican, of course.

H: He's a Republican. And Lawton, who was chairman of the committee, was a Democrat. But Senator Domenici had some wonderful things to say about the cooperation that he got from Lawton in those days. I'd say Sam Nunn was probably the closest friend he had.

M: Jack Levine, in my discussions with him, calls Lawton a "raging nonpartisan". What would you say about that? That's probably not exactly the phrase, but it's probably a close paraphrase.

H: Well, let me give you a quote from Wilbur Boyd. Wilbur Boyd is a close friend and colleague in the State Senate, and he said, "I don't think Lawton was a party guy, really, more a popular sort of man who appealed to both sides of the spectrum." Now this was a person who probably knew him best in the Senate.

M: Where did that snippet come from? Is that just from your memory?

H: No. I read the file on his funeral and there was a lot of recapping there, and I think that's where I picked that up.

M: That's a great loss, not being able to interview him, it really is. While we're on that subject, he was a major colleague of Lawton's in kind of the famous "hunting expeditions", turkey hunting. Can you remember that group and who would've been in that group?

H: Well, Burke was one of them, and I'm sure he's confirmed that to you. I'm not a turkey hunter so I wasn't involved, but I know Wilbur and Burke Kibler, I don't know if Price was in that group or not, there were two or three others whose names don't come to mind immediately.

M: Mallory Horne?

H: Very likely Mallory, yeah. And I'm trying to say Whit Palmer in Ocala, possibly.

M: Buddy McKay?

H: I don't know that. Maybe. You ought to interview Buddy, by the way.

M: Yes. I have already made contact and we're in conversation but we actually haven't gotten it set up, and Whit Palmer too.

H: [Buddy]'s on another level. Yeah, I see Whit. Whit and Burke are very close.

M: Well, if you could put in a good word for me next time you see him, I'd appreciate it. Did Lawton ever solicit your advice or opinions on issues during the senate years? Did he ever call you and say, "Now Homer, what do you think about this?"

H: I remember some occasion and I'm trying to recall now, something, the GATT, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trades, there was some issue on the admission of citrus to foreign countries and whether or not we'd have to lift the tariff. This is very dim in my memory, but I remember he did ask my opinion on some obscure phrase in the GATT agreement. And for

whatever it's worth, I told him what I thought. This was a real mess. I don't know how much you know [about it]. It was very complicated and involves tariffs and trade agreements and breaking down the walls of tariffs which impede trade really but at the same time you've got to protect your home industry. You can't wipe out the people whose livelihood depends on the tariff to keep the cheap foreign competition out. So there are two sides to those issues and Lawton was kind of caught in the middle of something and he called me about it.

M: Again, and a lot of this is speculation on your part, but what do you think he liked best about being a senator?

H: I think he saw himself as participating in the molding of public policy at the highest level. I can answer that with a quote that I remember very distinctly why he didn't like it. He said, "In the Senate, you have no follow-through to make sure things are done", and this is why he ultimately ran for Governor of Florida, because governors are the ultimate decision makers about what happens. In the Senate, you're just one of 100. He was very frustrated and this is why he left the Senate. I'm leaping ahead, I know. But anyway, he was reluctant to run for Governor, but he thought that he hadn't completed his mission, if you will, in politics because he saw the missed opportunity. Maybe "missed" is the wrong word, too strong. But in the United States Senate, he contributed to the public good by making public policy, but he couldn't follow through in the execution. Conversely, in Tallahassee, he could. With the help of the legislature he could get things done and then follow through to their execution and a good example of that, of course, is health policy for children and babies. Mallory Horne one time had advised him to quit acting like a senator and act like a governor, "which you are", pound the desk and tell these guys what they've got to do and then get it done. And he took that advice.

M: That also was coming at the time when the emphasis was going back to the states. The Reagan Revolution had created this national agenda and the momentum was towards giving power back to the states, and all of that.

H: Yeah, take it away from Washington. And he believed that, of course it can be excessive, you can just abandon the Federal Government and turn back everything to the states and not provide any funds for them to do what Federal Government wants to do. That's an ongoing and classic argument between the states and the Federal Government. Sure, we'll do these programs. Who's gonna pay for them?

M: Right. Can you remember any of his re-election campaigns? 1976, 1982, any anecdotes or memories of those campaigns that you can remember?

H: In looking at my notes here, of course he beat Bill Cramer in 1970, a Republican. I think Bill was in Congress at that time. And then John Grady in 1976, he handily won that.

M: Gosh, that's a real blank in my memory.

H: I don't remember much about it really. And Chiles won by 800,000 votes, so that was a sweep. Then in 1982, he beat Van Poole, who was a former State Senator, and I knew him well, by about 600,000 votes. And then in 1990, he beat Bill Nelson in the Primary and then beat Bob Martinez, who was running for re-election, I guess, as a Republican Governor, and then beat Jeb Bush in 1994. I don't recall any specifics of those campaigns except that he didn't walk again. He'd done that. But he had widespread newspaper support in those times. The press loved his style; his "he-coon" remarks and his "aw shucks" kind of personality had

caught on despite the sophistication of modern times and television commercials. Chiles' campaigns were uniformly interesting, well documented, very forceful and compelling.

M: What do you think his Senate legacy would be if you had to assess his contributions to the United States Senate and to the Florida Senate?

H: Someone said, and I'm quoting and I don't know who said this, "His legacy is a living one. It is seen in the face of every child who has healthcare. It lives in the home that is better off today for his service. It is felt in the hearts of the people he touched and who touched him during a lifetime of service". He and Rhea created the Lawton and Rhea Chiles Center for Healthy Mothers and Babies at the University of South Florida, which my wife and I have had the honor to contribute to. And I'd say his legacy is, as expressed by this unknown commentator that's in the face of every child who is healthier today.

M: In his later years in the senate, as the election of 1988 was coming around, he obviously decided to retire from the senate. He retired as a leading member, I think the ranking Democratic member of the Budget Committee, which is a very powerful position. Did he ever confide in you any reasons for his retirement, or any kind of frustrations with the budget process?

H: I think that's the word, Mike, and he's on record as having said that he was frustrated in the senate despite the fact that he enjoyed his service immensely. He didn't feel like it was complete because of the inherent and constitutional inability of Congress, including the Senate and the House, to follow through on the execution of policy. He felt that this resides, and properly so, in the governors of the states.

M: Did he ever comment on the skyrocketing deficit problem?

H: Not to my knowledge.

M: At that time, that was the major question, as it is today.

H: Oh, it was out of sight and I don't think I ever heard him comment specifically on that. But on more than one occasion, I could hear and sense, and feel more than hearing the words, his frustrations in serving in the Senate.

M: Did he ever express any opinions to you of Ronald Reagan and what he thought of President Reagan?

H: Not to me personally, no.

M: I guess now we probably should move right into his decision to run for Governor. Can you remember the first time that you heard he was going to run, and did it surprise you?

H: It did. As you know, he had retired and was hunting turkeys, and enjoying life. I think Burke called me and said that Lawton's back in it and he's going to run for Governor. Of course, we all liked Bill Nelson a lot and some of us had committed to Bill Nelson. Of course when Lawton decided to run, that changed the picture totally. There was some, I think it's frank to say, some resentment in the Party that, y'know he was supposed to be out of the picture and this was Bill's turn now, and to have Chiles come in at this late date and announce his running dismayed

some people, probably infuriated some people. But his reputation and his integrity towered over all of that and he was successful in the race.

M: Do you remember questions about his health? There were already rumors about his mental state, even in the Senate in the later years. There are two years, of course, between that time and his run for Governor. Do you remember whether that came up in the campaign or even among insiders in the Democratic Party about whether that would be a hindrance or an issue?

H: It appeared in the press a few times.

M: Was there any information about him receiving treatment?

H: None other than what was in the papers. I think, I wouldn't put it as gossip, but it was the kind of thing that people spoke about quietly, particularly his supporters, and they just wanted it to go away.

M: Obviously, this is a personal decision to run, but who do you think would have been kind of egging him on to run? Do you think there were any interests at that time, either locally or statewide, that would have said, "Now Lawton, this is your duty to run. We really need to win this because it's important for us to take this election?"

H: That's an interesting question, Mike. I don't have the answer to that, but I would say this, that it would be unlike Lawton to be pressured by a group or told that he had to after all look at his long years of service to the state. He was tired. He wanted to rest. It might have been Rhea who persuaded him. That's pure speculation.

M: Well, speculation's okay.

H: I can't identify any group who would be presumptuous enough to go to Lawton and say, "Now you've gotta get in this race no matter how you feel", y'know, "We want you. We demand that you run". He wouldn't react well to that kind of thing. So it had to be a very personal decision and I don't have any evidence who approached him on that.

M: Were you involved in the campaign in 1990 to any extent?

H: Not to any great extent.

M: Can you evaluate his first term? How did he adjust to statewide office again? Did he come back to Lakeland much?

H: No, he sold his house right across from the Yacht Club. But he still reflected on Lakeland as his hometown and we liked that. I think in his term, both terms as Governor, he began to build his legacy of childcare in a big way. Jack Levine could probably speak on that better than anybody, but it soon evolved that he cared so deeply about the infant mortality rate, for instance, which declined precipitously during his term of office, a great tribute to him and to Rhea, that this became the landmark of both terms very early on, again, something that he could not accomplish in Washington. That is not the kind of issue that Federal Congress can address effectively. It is the kind of issue that a governor can take on, and he did. He served as governor, supposedly a tired old man, but it turned out to be some of the most productive and vigorous years of his public service.

M: He would have obviously had to assemble a new staff. Were there any holdovers from the Senate that joined him or, in your memory, was his staff pretty much all fresh and new?

H: Frankly, I don't remember who came back with him if any of them did.

M: Was Dexter Douglas involved at that point, that early?

H: I know Dexter was a close personal friend and advisor and later became his attorney, as Jay Peterson did.

M: And Dan Stengel?

H: I don't know him. But I think Dexter certainly was in the picture.

M: At that time, the Democratic Party was really losing ground and had been losing ground a lot.

H: That may have been when he made that statement about 'there is no organized political party'.

M: Things were really, really turning against the Democrats by that time and obviously the first Bush Whitehouse was very aggressive, and obviously young Jeb was already moving forward. Can you comment on the 1994 campaign between [Lawton] and Bush, and the pressure that that exerted?

H: Well, I think there was a great deal of pressure. The Big Tobacco thing was beginning to move. I think that was in his second term, but he could see it coming and, in a curious way, this tied in with all of his previous positions on health because it wasn't just an attack on the Big Tobacco companies as big corporations. It was because, in his opinion and many others, they were killing people.

M: Public health.

H: Yeah, public health was an issue, and the state was spending taxpayers' money to rehabilitate the health of people who were being damaged by the Big Tobacco companies. This was his rationale. Now you're asking if that took place in 1994? I don't remember the dates, or when this began to happen, but I know that on the advice of Mallory Horne and others, he took on the tobacco case and I think [this was] the first state in the union to sue.

M: So Mallory Horne was instrumental in encouraging Lawton to do that?

H: Yeah. I have my notes and Mallory Horne told him to "get tough" with the legislature in the anti-tobacco legislation. This was in his second term. So he took Mallory's advice. He did get tough. He won some big judgments and the face of the whole tobacco advertising effort changed, largely because of Lawton.

M: You obviously remember the 1994 election and debate, and the "h-coon" phrase. What came into your mind when you heard that for the first time?

H: I said, "He's won".

M: I think that was in Orlando, wasn't it? I remember listening on the radio.

H: That's right. Ninety-percent of the people listening had no idea what it meant, and the way he said it was that there's a wise old man speaking now and you'd better listen, "the hecoon walks after the light of day". And I could see Jeb rolled his eyes like, "What the hell is he talkin' about?" and most people did. But I commented to my wife that he just won the election, that it would be close, and it was, but it was less than 100,000 votes over Jeb Bush. But he won it because people instinctively felt that the State was in good hands with Lawton Chiles.

M: This tape is an hour and a half and I think we're nearing the end, so I want to make sure I get the last couple of questions here. Can you comment anything about that second term that you can think of that also kind of summarizes what you consider Lawton Chiles' legacy would be for future generations?

H: Well, I think his second term was a well-deserved finale to his whole career. Obviously he had no idea that he was going to pass away in office, but if you had to write a script for the life of Lawton Chiles, I can think of no better ending than to have him literally die with his boots on while he was preoccupied with healthcare for children, infants, mothers. He had just defeated the Big Tobacco companies in a case for public health. He deplored the absence of unity in the Democratic Party. He felt that they had a story to tell that they were simply not telling, and that they had therefore bequeathed a lot of public support to the Republican Party. Everything that he did during his career kind of pointed to those closing months of his second term as Governor, when he was in a position to mold public policy, dominate the legislature to do what it ought to do, and then to execute the policy with the full support of the people. I can think of no better summary of that than again to refer to his notes at the end of the walk. He said, "What has the walk accomplished?" and this applies as well to his whole career.

"Unquestionably, it has given me exposure I could never have had otherwise. It helped me prove my concern about overspending in political campaigns and I have to admit that I may never be as healthy physically again unless I decide to go another thousand miles another day. I'm delighted I've been able to meet and talk with over 40,000 people all over the state. I have a firsthand knowledge of the problems of our state, better than anyone else in the race. Now I'm looking forward to the rest of the campaign, and I'm counting on all the friends I've made to go to work these last few days before the election on September 8. Wow. Can it really be over?"

This is an obituary for Lawton Chiles as well. It'll never be over. He never walked again. He never ran again. But in the hearts and minds of millions of Floridians, some of whom never saw him but they were all touched by him in one way or another. And his legacy lives on.

M: Well, that's a great summary and I really appreciate your spending these minutes with me today.

H: Well, it's been my pleasure, Mike, because there was no one I admired more than Lawton Chiles as a friend and representative and senator and Governor, and it's a great pleasure to be able to record some of these memories, albeit fragmentary.

M: I really appreciate your preparation. I've never done an interview with somebody that was so well prepared.

H: It was really a pleasure, a work of love because it recalls so many things that were jumbled up in my head, like my son's recollections of putting up posters.

M: There's no reason why we can't do this again if you think of other things about Lawton Chiles. We don't have to schedule it right this moment, but I really would, at your convenience, like to come back and probe some of your earlier experiences and some of your earlier life, particularly Clermont.

H: While my short-term memory is still active.

M: Clermont is a great story, and your memory of Clermont.

H: Oh, I have so many memories of growing up there.

M: So you were born in Columbia?

H: Columbia, South Carolina.

M: I was living in South Carolina during Lawton Chiles' 1990 race.

H: Were you in school there?

M: No, I was teaching at Limestone College, which is a little tiny place up in the upstate, Gaffney, South Carolina.

H: I know Gaffney, yeah.

M: It's in Gaffney. I was there three years and I really learned a lot about South Carolina.

H: It's a fine state.

M: Last week I was on a boat on the way out to Fort Sumter and thinking this is a really interesting state.

H: I came very close to going to the University of South Carolina for college instead of Florida.

M: While I was there, I got a chance to go to the University of South Carolina to do a summer at the Institute for Southern Studies, which is an institute that they put together there at the University of South Carolina to study southern culture.

H: No better place to do it.

M: And it was there that I was able to re-write a lot of my doctoral dissertations for publication.

H: I was going to ask you, what was your subject?

M: I went to Florida State, so I hope you won't hold that against me.

H: I'm glad you said that last! That would have colored the interview! I'm kidding, of course.

M: On the other hand, nobody has been friendlier to me in mentoring to me than Sam Proctor at University of Florida. Nobody has been more kind to me over the years, and I consider him kind of a model, too, for me.

H: Oh, I love Sam! He is a great man.