

CENTER FOR FLORIDA HISTORY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: DOYLE E. CARLTON, JR.
INTERVIEWER: JAMES M. DENHAM
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M=JAMES M. DENHAM (Mike)
D=DOYLE E. CARLTON, JR.

M: You told us last week that you did not finish at the University of Florida that World War II broke out in the middle of your time at the University of Florida, that you went into the service and came down with hay fever to the extent that you had to withdraw from the army. Then after you came back you went into the cattle business with your wife Mildred. And you lived in, take it from there.

D: We lived about 4 miles west of Wauchula in Hardee County. I remember in 1950 George Smathers ran for United States Senator against Senator Claude Pepper. I had nothing against Senator Pepper but George played basketball at the University of Florida and he graduated the year before I attended the University of Florida. Then I played basketball there and he and I became great friends.

So the first political speech I remember making I was speaking in support of George Smathers of Arcadia. They had about a thousand people out there on the courthouse yard, and a young lady from Lakeland came down to speak for Senator Pepper. She spoke, and then I spoke, and then she had a rebuttal. About three days before the speech, we were marking and branding some calves and a calf jumped and kicked me in the mouth and I had to have three stitches taken in my lower lip. I had it bandaged. I knew I was in cow country down in Arcadia so I began my talk by telling them what had happened to me, because I was going to talk as plainly as I could because I wanted to tell them a few things that I wanted them to understand. So then she had a rebuttal. I will never forget, she gets up and says, "Well, I suppose you all would have been a lot nicer to me if I had been a kicked in the face by a cow." And some old cracker way back in the back hollered and said, "I wish to hell you hadda been!" She came down from the platform and headed back to Lakeland. So that was in 1950. I ran for State Senator in 1952. I have some good memories of people I met.

M: I am going to ask you about a lot of those people. Back to that day in Arcadia, was that the largest crowd you ever spoke to?

D: Yessir.

M: Would you say that was your first political event of your life as far as active participant other than just watching other people?

D: Yes.

M: Do you remember what you said that day about Senator Smathers and why you were supporting him?

D: I suggested that he was a man who would listen, a man who was interested in serving not himself but the public, and that I told them how I became acquainted with him, a man of good character. This was the message that I presented.

M: That was a famous, memorable election, an election that was pretty nasty. It was an election that was extensively covered nationally. Claude Pepper had been in the senate for about 15 years by that time. He was a major national figure. And he had a challenger who was very dynamic, very young. Were you able to speak anywhere else for George Smathers?

D: No, that was it.

M: Were you part of a campaign team? Was there any significant campaign organization that you were a part? How did it come that you spoke for him?

D: They knew that I was supporting George, and of course I wanted to help any way that I could, so some of the folks in DeSoto County asked me to come.

M: Did he make any appearances in DeSoto?

D: I don't recall that he did.

M: Up until that time, did you have any interaction with Senator Pepper?

D: Nothing negative.

M: Did you ever meet Senator Pepper?

D: I met him later, but my only purpose was the fact that I had become acquainted with George and he and I were good friends, and I knew that he was a good person. I had nothing against Senator Pepper; I was just supporting my good friend.

M: So within two years after that you were thinking about running yourself for something. What was the first thing that you ever ran for?

D: I ran for the State Senate.

M: Did you ever run for local or county office before that?

D: No. There were four counties – Highlands, Hardee, DeSoto, and Glades. So I campaigned in all four of those counties. I learned a lesson from a little lady from Lake Placid who worked in a grocery store. Her name was Amy Collier and she told me "This will be the last time I see you til the next election and you will be just like all the other politicians." I said, "Give me your name again." She said, "Amy Collier." I walked outside and wrote down her name *Amy Collier, Grocery Store*, and when I went through Lake Placid grocery store, drug store, filling station, I would write people's names down. I went to the motel that night with my wife, and we went over all those names and where I had met the people, and in ten days I went back to Lake Placid and I called people by

their names. I went to see Amy Collier and I said, "Amy, I thought I'd better come back over and check with you." She said, "Mr. Carlton, I can't believe you've done that. I sure will vote for you." Well, she taught me a lesson. Make yourself available and accessible. And ten days after the election when I was elected, I went back to see her and I would listen, and I made a point to see her at least once a year and the other people in the community. So she taught me a good lesson.

M: Can you walk me through your thought process. How was it that you first made the decision and then what was the process like as far as letting people know. Were people urging you to run for example?

D: Not really, because I was young and I thought well, I'm going to run and serve and vote on issues the way I think I should vote, and I will make myself accessible to the people and so I ran. I had two opponents from Highlands County. One of them had been the mayor over there and his name was Jim Mitchell. And they were good people. He used the same kind of language in most of his speeches. We made about 16 talks in a few counties.

M: Together. Like old style debates? I would like for you to reflect on that a bit.

D: I remember his saying "My name is James D. 'Jim' Mitchell. My friends call me Jim. I want you to call me Jim because I want to be your friend, too." And he commenced every speech with that line. Then the last speech that we made, we made at Lorita.

Sometimes he would speak first and sometimes I would speak first. But down at Lorita I spoke first. I began by saying "My name is Doyle Carlton, Junior. My friends call me Doyle Junior. I want you to call me Doyle Junior because I want to be your friend, too." I took the first three or four minutes of his speech and repeated it, and I will never forget when it was over he walked up to me and he was irritated and said, "Why did you do that to me?" I said, "Jim, it was such a good speech I just couldn't help but want to make it!" I remember that so well, I was just a 29-year-old young fellow.

M: Was there any particular reason why you wanted to run for the senate rather than the house, or was did that just look like the place that would be the easiest to get into?

D: Yes, I just felt like that was where I wanted to start.

M: What was your first session in the legislature like when you went up to Tallahassee? Were there any surprises? What did you expect? What are your memories of your first session?

D: I remember the first session I made it a point to listen and to evaluate and then to vote the way my heart told me I should vote. Can you believe, a country boy from here, I was chosen as the outstanding freshman senator! Then in 1955 came the first session on reapportionment. The constitution said there shall be 38 senatorial districts in Florida as near equal in population as is practical. No county shall be divided into more than one district. Which meant all of the multiple county districts would be as near equal in population as was possible.

There was an old gentleman judge from Jefferson County up near Tallahassee, an area of about ten thousand people - Judge [Scott Dilworth] Clarke. Some of the Pork

Choppers said well if we add new counties to the judge's district, he might not be elected. But we know he can keep getting him re-elected if stays right here. Well, that's not what the constitution said. It took on the color of a big county-little county fight, which it really was not exactly that, but by the time the press got through with it was big county-little county. I got many calls from home here wanting to know why I had deserted the little counties. So I said to get your Lions and Kiwanis Clubs in the community together and when the session is over I'll come tell you.

I will never forget, they got about 100 people together, and I told them I said the constitution says there shall be 38 senatorial districts as near equal as practical, no county shall be divided, and I said the first day of that session I walked down to the front of that senate and raised my hand and swore that I support the constitution of the state of Florida. I said I have done that because I thought that was what you wanted me to do. I said if some of you didn't want me to, I am going to run again and give you the chance to run against me. Then I ran again and did not have opposition.

M: Let's go into the Pork Choppers a little bit. They were pretty much in command, in control wouldn't you say.

D: Yes.

M: And those were the old plantation Florida districts. You said, Jefferson County and the panhandle, where the population used to be in the state, but by the 1940s and 1950s the population had really moved south so that required redistricting. I am not sure that I understand the dynamics of that specific incident that you are talking about. It seems to me that with the growth, for example in your district, that the districts would be smaller? Would that be correct, that when redistricting occurred there would be less territory for senatorial district in this area? Is that correct?

D: It could have been a possibility.

M: Was there a lot of momentum or determination among the northern pork choppers to obstruct redistricting and prevent any kind of change in the status quo up there?

D: Yes, they wanted to leave it like it was.

M: Who were some of the leaders in the senate at that time that were the most powerful?

D: Charley Johns.

M: And the governor was Fuller Warren, correct?

D: I believe he was.

M: Fuller Warren was from Calhoun County originally. Did you have any interaction with him? Was he governor when you were in the senate?

D: I was just trying to remember. I need to give a little study and a little thought to that. It seems to me that Fuller Warren was not the governor then.

M: Fuller Warren I believe was elected in 1948.

D: I believe Dan McCarty was governor, so he was governor when I was in the senate.

M: And Dan McCarty was from Tallahassee, correct?

D: No, he was from down

M: Oh, yes, around Melbourne and Cocoa Beach, Daytona Beach?

D: Right, yes.

M: Do you remember working with him at all?

D: Yes, and I was always impressed with him.

M: He died in office, correct, he died really soon.

D: Yes, and then Charley Johns became governor.

M: Because he was President of the Senate?

D: Yes.

M: You would have been certainly associated with Charlie Johns. What was your opinion of him?

D: Charlie was a man who was going to do what he thought was right. I didn't always agree with him, but I respected him as an individual. In fact, I jokingly told many people in the senate that he had just as much right to be wrong, as I had to be right.

M: He was from Union County or Alachua County?

D: I don't recall exactly where he was from.

M: And of course he became governor, and with a good deal of time left on McCarty's term. Would you say that he wanted to become governor, or used the office to build a record to run for governor, would you say that was the case?

D: I wouldn't say that he was using it for himself. I think he had his own program. Now am I right, did Leroy Collins run against him?

M: Yes. Now, Charley Johns headed a famous committee, the Johns committee. Do you recall working with that, and what was your opinion of the Johns committee when it was functioning? Do you remember that committee?

D: I don't recall the details of that committee.

M: It was a committee that was anti-Civil Rights; they thought that the universities were going radical. It was kind of like the McCarthy hearings in the state of Florida. Another thing as I have read about it, there were hearings and people were interrogated and

some were harassed. Another thing that was going on about that time were the Kefauver Hearings, which took place in Tampa and also in Miami, which were run by Senator Estes Kefauver. Do you have any memory of that?

D: I don't have any clear memories of that.

M: They had hearings about organized crime, police corruption, county sheriff corruption and so forth in Miami, Fort Lauderdale, and also Tampa. You don't have any memories of that?

D: No.

M: So in the U. S. Senate at that time in Florida was represented by your friend Mr. Smathers and Spessard Holland, correct? Being so close geographically to Bartow, do you remember any interactions with Senator Holland?

D: Senator Holland was the Chairman of the Agricultural Committee of the United States Senate. And in 1957, Clarence Campbell who was our state veterinarian, came to me as Chairman of the Livestock Committee in the Florida Senate, and wanted to eradicate the screw worms in one county. So I asked him what about the whole state? And I said what would it cost? So we figured it was going to cost about five million dollars for the whole state. Senator Holland was Chairman of the Livestock Committee in the United States Senate, or the Agricultural Committee, and we called and asked him if they would provide half of the money if we provided half of it. And with his strong leadership, the two-and-a-half million dollars became available. So several of us put our names on the bill in the senate, and we introduced the bill of two-and-a-half million dollars in the state senate in 1957 to eradicate the screwworm.

The screwworm, you know, a fly will lay eggs on any bloody spot on an animal and those eggs would hatch into maggots and then the maggots would destroy that animal if you didn't correct it. So it was so vital, not only to the livestock industry but to the wildlife industry. Most of the new-born calves and other animals had bloody navels and if they were a little bloody, or had openings in their skin from wounds, well--the screw worms would get there and kill the calf. We fortunately were able to get the two and a half million dollars from the state and establish fly factory over at the old Sebring Airport, and they manufactured these flies and sterilized them and dropped them all over the state. They would breed and they were not fertile, so when the eggs would come that were not fertile, after two years the screw worms had been eradicated in Florida. I thought about how Senator Holland had made that contribution by making that money available, and when I went back to the legislature in 1959 there were no screwworms in Florida.

M: Your family has been involved in cattle for many, many generations before that?

D: Yes.

M: Were screwworms something that had been a plague before that, or did it just kind of emerge or arrive all of a sudden?

D: Before the screwworm was the fever tick. These were ticks that would get on these animals and calves, back in the 1930s, and the dipping law was passed which said that all livestock in Florida would be dipped once every two weeks for two years to eradicate

the tick. And this was really the birth of the cattle industry, because people had to either buy land or lease land, and they had to fence it. Before then, they only gathered the cattle about two or three times a year, and there was a lot of open range and different ownerships, and cattle would run together. So people either had to buy land or lease land and fence it, and this was really the beginning of the cattle business.

M: In a big systematic way.

D: Oh yes. They brought in some Brahma bulls and bred them on the old scrub cows, and after several years of that they crossbred with the Herefords and the Angus to produce better beef cattle. So I think that that compulsory dipping really was the birth of the maturing of the cattle industry in Florida.

M: So did the screwworm exist before, or was it something that just popped up? All of a sudden all these cattle were dying?

D: It came along afterward the fever tick had been eliminated.

M: Does anybody know where that screwworm came from?

D: There's some history on it but I'm not familiar with it.

M: Did you ever have any interaction in a personal way with Senator Holland? Did you ever get to meet him?

D: Yes, I met him.

M: Since you were so close to Bartow, I would imagine that you did.

D: Of course, I was quite young then, and he had been governor before. He was an honorable gentleman and a tremendous public servant.

M: You were in the Florida Senate. You never served in the House. What committees were you on? I guess there was the Agriculture Committee.

D: Yes. One time I was Chairman of the Agricultural Committee, the Livestock Committee. I served on numerous committees.

M: So back then, sessions lasted, were they biannual or annual?

D: Biannual – every other year.

M: And how long did a session last?

D: Well, it lasted 60 days unless it had to go into Special Session.

M: Did you live in an apartment in Tallahassee, or how did that work? Did you have a house up there?

D: I rented a little old apartment up there.

M: Did you move your family up there?

D: No I didn't.

M: That would have been 1953. You would have been married how many years?

D: I got married in 1943 or 1944. I had little ones.

M: So let's go through them. Who were your kids? How old were they when you first entered the senate?

D: Oh, they were quite young. We were married in 1943 and our first child came in 1944, second one in 1947, and last one in 1950.

M: And their names?

D: Susan was my oldest daughter. Then Doyle III was my son. Then Jane was my youngest daughter. They were three years apart. My wife Mildred and I were visiting with my mother, and we didn't know exactly what we were going to name my boy, and my mother was so funny, because she said, "I wish you'd not name him anything but Doyle." And later Mildred told me "You know your mother never has spoken to us like that before, but she really meant that." So we went ahead and named him Doyle III. And he has just done so well. He helps to coach the football team here. He is strong in the church.

M: I think your mother and your father were still living in Tampa at that time? Was your mom living in Tampa still?

D: Yes.

M: Was your father still alive when you ran for the Senate?

D: Yes.

M: Did he campaign for you?

D: Not really.

M: Did he give you any advice?

D: Oh, he would always give me advice – "Don't forget to listen."

M: So you were on the Agriculture Committee in 1953, 1955, and 1957, in 1959.

D: And I ran for governor in 1960.

M: Throughout almost the decade in the senate, who were your closest colleagues in the Senate that you worked with on a daily basis on a professional and a personal level?

D: One person who sat next to me in the Senate was Dempsey Barron. He was his own man. One time an issue came up, and he and I usually were together about 90% of

the time, and this time I took one position and he gets up and takes the other, and he said, "Usually I agree with Senator Carlton, but this time I don't and this is why ..." and so forth. He couldn't have been any nicer than he was. So when he sat down, I got back up and said, "I just have to tell the Senate, Senator Barron and members of the Senate, that he's got just as much right to be wrong as I have to be right." That brought the house down. But he and I became such good friends.

M: He was still in office when I was in college up at FSU and he was quite a strong force. Was his personality very strong? Plus he had a real mean streak.

D: Well, he was gutsy. Another thing in the Senate, we all had differences of opinion. And I made up my mind early that I was going to like the Senator whether I agreed with what he said or not. And so many times there might be four or five of us eating together, and there was some on one team and some on the other. But I always made a point to know how to rationalize and discuss with the senators, but then I would take the stand that I thought I needed to take on issues.

M: And he became leader of the Senate later on and almost became like a dictator? Would that be fair to say?

D: Oh, he was powerful.

M: So were there any other figures like Dempsey Barron that you remember vividly as far as who you worked with in the Senate?

D: Well, you know, when I was in the Senate early, you know who was in there? Leroy Collins. Leroy was always a real gentleman. He sat on the other side of the Senate from me. And he didn't get up all the time to say a whole lot, but when he did he always dealt very sincerely with the issues. He didn't get involved in personality differences. I was really impressed with his character quality.

M: I want to get into that, particularly that election when he ran against Mr. Johns. That would have been in 1956, correct; two years after the Brown Decision which was the Supreme Court decision which outlawed separate but equal schools, and two years later nowhere was there any desegregation effort. There was kind of a lull and people were just letting it sink in. What was it like in that campaign? Was the segregation issue brought up, and how did that play in the state of Florida?

D: I remember very vividly when I ran for governor that issue.

M: That issue was still a major issue?

D: Yes, and Farris Bryant defeated me in the run-off. And Farris made a good governor. He had been the Speaker of the House of Representatives and he was a good man. But when he and I had a television discussion, television was not very active in that day, but they asked us the question at that time if the schools in Florida are integrated, will you withdraw your children from the public schools and send them to a private school? I told them that I would work to build a strong public school system and I would want my children to be a part of it, and no I would not withdraw them.

Well, his answer was just the opposite. He said he would withdraw them from the public schools and put them in private schools. So I had some of my friends tell me, "I knew that if you answered the question the way you did you weren't going to get elected." My oldest daughter told her mother that she was sure glad her daddy answered the question the way he did. The one thing about Farris, after he was elected he enforced the law. When the federal edict came down to integrate the schools, he gave good leadership to the state of Florida and administered the law in a very honorable way. I always respected him for that.

M: The complication seems to me was what laws were then enforced, do you enforce your state law, or your local law, or your county law or are you going to enforce the federal law. And of course that's where the conflict, I would imagine, came. Let's go back to Governor Collins. I was looking through the film archives in Tallahassee one day, and they had the first televised debate of Governor Leroy Collins and Charley Johns down in Miami. This was in 1956. It was very interesting to see that today, between both Collins and Johns. Some of these issues came up in the debate. How were things here in Hardee County? Did Johns or Collins take Hardee County?

D: I don't recall exactly, but Johns was strong here. But Collins ran well.

M: What did you think of Collins as a governor? Once he became governor, were you impressed with him? Did you think he did a good job?

D: I was very much impressed with him. I thought he did a statesman-like job. His wife Mary Call, was just a teen-ager when my daddy was governor. I remember talking to her about 15 years ago, and she told me "Doyle, your mother was always my role model." And when your Daddy was governor, the gates of the mansion were open and doors were open and neighbors were welcome, and it wasn't one of these "This is the Governor's Mansion" – so this was her approach. And when Mary Call Collins came, it felt like she was family.

M: Did you ever associate with her or were you able to be friendly with her during your Senate career or when Governor Collins was governor do you remember going to the mansion?

D: I remember visiting her then.

M: They say that it was a step down for Governor Collins to move across the street, to move out of "The Grove" across the street and into the governor's mansion. Would that be a fair assessment? Well, it certainly didn't take a whole lot of distance to move. So your assessment is very positive of Governor Collins?

D: Yes.

M: In 1960, I imagine you were being encouraged by people to run for governor. Can you go through your thought processes in how you decided to take that on and decide to run for governor?

D: Having served in the Senate for eight years, I looked on it as an opportunity to be of service. I always looked at public life that way. I wasn't elected to be served; but I was elected to serve. My daddy was such a good example. He and my mother were great

inspirations to me. I remember when I was a ten year old boy living in Tallahassee when Daddy was governor, I'd go down to the Capitol and one time I went down there to get a dime from him because I wanted to buy a candy bar and a cold drink. You could get them for a nickel apiece then. So when I went into his office, he was in a cabinet meeting. The door to the cabinet meeting was cracked open, so I paraded outside that room for a little bit, and my daddy laughed and motioned me in. I walked into the cabinet meeting, asked him for the dime, he gave me the dime, patted me on the back, and I left. I probably wasn't in there a full minute. And I have thought so many times how he could have said, "Son, don't ever interrupt me when I'm on the state's business." But he was my daddy and I was his son, and he was so gracious. I will always remember that. He was a man of quiet courage and would always do what he thought was the best for the state of Florida.

M: When did you first get the idea that you wanted to seek the governor's mansion?

D: After serving in the senate, I thought well, I know enough about the state of Florida now that I think I could make a contribution, and so I looked at it as an opportunity to serve. Of course, there were six of us running.

M: All in the primary?

D: Yes. Then they had the run-off, and I was defeated by Farris Bryant in the run-off.

M: Who were the other candidates?

D: I don't recall specifically. There's a list of them.

M: Were there any groups or organizations that came to you and encouraged you to run as far as you remember, as far as people that you had worked with, maybe the cattle industry or leaders in the cattle industry, maybe the phosphate industry, other people who came to you and said, Mr. Carlton we think you would make a good governor?

D: I don't recall that. I really don't. I felt like in my heart that I should run and wanted to run.

M: Looking back on that race, where would you say your greatest strength was in terms of support?

D: What concerned me a lot, some of the smaller counties in the state did not support me because of the old reapportionment issue. And as I told you earlier about the reapportionment issue, I was following what the Constitution of the State of Florida said you should do. I got a lot of votes from Dade County, but some of the smaller counties misunderstood my voting on the reapportionment issue. But as I said earlier, Farris was a brilliant person and not only was a good candidate and a great campaigner, but he made a good governor for Florida.

M: Now 1960 was a lot different. 1960 was the same year John Kennedy was elected President, and John Kennedy was friends with Smathers. Mr. Smathers was in the Senate with Kennedy, they were kind of buddies I have read. Was there any involvement at all in the national from the senate into the governor's race? Did Senator Smathers, for example, do anything for you?

D: Not really, because I knew that he and Farris were good friends. In fact, he and I were good friends. So I never did ask him. But one thing, his daddy Judge Smathers, was for me.

M: He probably pulled a lot of clout and was probably pretty influential down in Miami?

D: Yes.

M: Do you remember any special interests, Like Mr. Ball for instance? By that time, Ed Ball was the Dupont St. Joe Paper Company interest, the railroad and the bank. Do you have any inclination who Ed Ball was for? Did he have any influence in the election?

D: I don't recall that vividly at this time.

M: Because throughout his business career he had a lot of influence in politics, in the legislature and also in who ran for various positions. So you lost. Can you attribute that loss to the statement that you made about schools? Do you think that would be a fair analysis? Did that damage you?

D: I think this; I was defeated by a very capable man. He made a good governor and he had a good record in the legislature. So I don't have any excuses other than I am very complimentary to him, and the fact that the people in Florida picked who they thought was the best man. And I don't know that I disagree with them.