

## CENTER FOR FLORIDA HISTORY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

ORAL INTERVIEW WITH: Mr. Edgar H. Price, Jr.

INTERVIEWER: James M. Denham

PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Bradenton, Florida

DATE OF INTERVIEW: June 25, 2003

M= James M. Denham ("Mike")

E= Ed Price

M: I am Mike Denham and I am here with Mr. Ed Price at his office in Bradenton, Florida and we are going to talk a little bit about his early years. This is the first day of what will probably be a series of interviews. Today is June 25, 2003 and I would like to say once again, I am with Ed Price, former legislator, business and industry leader and public official. While we are here mainly to talk about your memories of Lawton Chiles, I would like to ask you some questions about your background Mr. Price. Can you tell me where you were born and where you lived as a child?

E: I was born in Jacksonville, Florida on January 1, 1918. I lived in Jacksonville for a short period of time and we moved to a farm down in Williston, Florida. I lived there for a year and went out to Lodi California. My father was a civil engineer and we lived in Lodi for a few years, came back to Florida and lived in Lake Alfred for a little while, lived in Lakeland for a small period of time, moved to Sarasota in 1924. I lived in Sarasota off and on during my growing up years even though we moved and lived in Valley Stream, Long Island for a year. We lived in San Antonio, Texas for a year. My Dad was a promoter more than anything else and during the boom years in Sarasota, that was back in the '20s, I went to the first grade there. I was a charter member of the Out-of-Door School and later started in the first grade in public school. I went to school in New York, went to school in Texas and to kindergarten in New Orleans, lived there for awhile, but I came back ultimately to Terra Ceia Island in Manatee County when I was 13 years old. I went to Biltmore High School (later Bradenton High School and now Manatee High School); I was in junior high at the time. I attended Palmetto High School as a freshman in the ninth grade in 1932 and, when my coach, Chet Ihrig, moved to Sarasota, I moved to Sarasota. My mother was in the hospital, my mother and father had been divorced, she was in the hospital in Tampa and in those days, we did not have any doctors down here, so she had to go up there and I moved to Sarasota so that I could go play football at Sarasota High School and stay in Sarasota. My mother came here when she got out of the hospital and I lived in Sarasota from 1933 till I graduated. I didn't graduate until 1937 cause in those days, you could do away with credits and everything and play ball until you were 21, so I graduated in 1937, should have graduated in '35 or '36. By that time I was reasonably well grown. These were difficult years; there was a depression right in the middle of it. I worked all during my school years. If I wasn't playing either football or basketball, I worked out in the woods cutting wood. Four of us had a wood business where we supplied all the wood for Palmer Groves to keep them from freezing and sold cordwood to the people downtown and that type of thing. Actually during those times - again nobody had any money, my father was a multimillionaire by the time he

was 33 during the boom years - the boom crashed first and then the stock market crashed in 1929, why everything went down the tubes, so it was a difficult time in that while we had no money, we all helped each other. I came back and went to the University of Florida for one year. I had been offered a scholarship to Rollins to play ball and I wanted to go to the University. I didn't weigh much in those days and the coach said he would send me to a two-year college in Texas until I got bigger. I didn't want to do that, so I went with a partial scholarship and I had to work the rest of the way. I went to University of Florida in 1937 and just stayed one year. I was in Jacksonville at the end of the session - played freshman football at Florida. I had an automobile accident and had to stay up in Jacksonville to help pay everything off and by that time World War II was coming on. I enlisted in the United States Army as a \$21.00 a month Private about a year before Pearl Harbor and after that my war experiences went from there.

M: That is quite a life up to this point. You were born in Jacksonville, where was your father originally from and your mother?

E: My father's family was from Petersville, Maryland. That's a small place right near Harpers Ferry where the states come together. He was born in Washington D.C. where most of the children came to be born. They didn't have any doctors out in the country and my great grandmother on his side lived in Sheppards Town, West Virginia right across the river. My mother was born in Ocala, Florida and her father was born in North Carolina and came to Florida from there. My mother's family, the Mixson Family, I am distantly related to Wayne Mixson and he is part of the same tribe that came to Florida from South Carolina. Some came to Florida, some to Georgia and some to Alabama.

M: There are a lot of those in Marion County.

E: My mother was born in Marion County and at that time Williston was in Marion County and later they cut it out and made Levy County out of it.

M: Of course, Marion is named for Frances Marion in South Carolina.

E: Absolutely.

M: So, when did they migrate down there? When would have that family have migrated down in Marion County?

E: In the 1800s.

M: Before the Civil War would you say or afterwards?

E: Some of them did.

M: Okay. So, your father again was from Maryland.

E: He was from Maryland and graduated from the University of Maryland.

M: Civil engineer?

E: He was a civil engineer. The family up there, his mother's family, my grandmother, was a Hilleary which is my middle name and they came over from England in the early

days, the family over in York. My son not too long ago went over to England and looked at some of the early houses that belonged to the family.

M: York is a fantastic place.

E: Yeah, he said it was great. I was stationed in England during the war, but I never got up to York. I was flying and I got liberty occasionally, but only 24 hours, occasionally 48.

M: Do you remember before you went to the University of Florida, do you remember as a kid growing up any political leaders that you remember specifically beside maybe Franklin Roosevelt?

E: Franklin Roosevelt was the first president that I voted for and of course he died while I was in the war walking down a street in London, so Franklin Roosevelt of course was our hero and I had the privilege in later years of meeting Mrs. Roosevelt down in Sarasota and other places. One of them was sort of a peculiar dinner place that night across from the Bradenton Airport and I got the flu and I couldn't go. We didn't know, but somebody threatened to bomb the building and kill Mrs. Roosevelt and the rest of the group.

M: Now, can you reflect a little bit on that kind of.... that would have been very normal I would imagine for Mrs. Roosevelt because some people really hated her, absolutely hated her.

E: Oh yeah, a love/hate relationship, you either loved her or you hated her.

M: Could you comment on that a little bit?

E: I just thought that she was a very brilliant person.... she wasn't a bit stuffy and she really wanted to do everything in the world that she could to help children and also, she believed very strongly in women's rights of course and she was FDR's ally by being his liaison to the people. He did not get around as much and we later on, went up to see his place in Hyde Park and Warm Springs. My Dad had a relationship with a number of political people in his early lifetime and I got to meet quite a few of them. I mean, he would go up and lobby in Washington for money to build the roads; he got the money to build that expressway in Fernandina and money for a hospital in Gainesville. I met members of the U.S. Senate and the House when I was a young fellow.

M: Where there any state officials that you remember, say by the time you had gone to college? Were there any ...

E: George Smathers was in law school at that time and I was involved later on in George's run for the Senate. They called us the Goon Squad. Claude Pepper was a good friend of Dad's and I got to know him as a youngster and in fact, he gave he a ride from Gainesville to Tallahassee. In those days that was FSCW where my wife graduated and nobody had any cars or money or anything else and I rode with Mildred and Claude over there as a freshman in college and I thought we would never get there because he stopped everywhere there was evidence of humanity, whether it was a gas pump out there or somebody selling peaches or whatever, he stopped to shake hands and say hello. He was a great fellow. I kept my relationship with him right up until he died.

M: What fraternity were you in?

E: Sigma Alpha Epsilon

M: SA? So, Doyle Senior, you would have been too young to remember him.

E: No, I remember him very definitely. He was Governor from 1929 to 1933 and I knew the family.

M: From him being around here?

E: Well you know, in those days we were pretty much from Tampa to Sarasota - I lived in Venice where my Dad sold the land to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers on which Venice is built and later we lived down there for a little while. We had to go to Tampa for doctors and everything else. Dad had an automobile accident back about 1928 and ran into a train up in Hampton coming back from New York to Jacksonville. He was trying to raise some money up there when the stock market was going awry. Larry Gahagan who was the navigator for Admiral Byrd on his trip to the North Pole, Larry went up to meet him in a Lincoln Sedan which had a wooden steering wheel in those days and he ran into a train in Hampton and the steering wheel went through Larry's neck and killed him and my father was broken up from head to toe. The Seaboard Airline Railroad stopped and put a special train in there and took him to Tampa. He was in Tampa General Hospital for one year, so we moved to Davis Island. I went to Woodrow Wilson Junior High School in Tampa and met so many people in Tampa that I have known forever. I knew Governor Carlton and Mrs. Carlton back then and my Dad knew them real well. The Governor, you know, he was such a wonderful guy. His salary was \$7,500.00 a year and he had to pay his own expenses, buy his own automobile. It was back in the time that the gamblers and slot machine people tried to put that through and he said no way and vetoed the bill.

M: Doyle Junior and I kind of went through that.

E: We knew him and my Dad knew Lex Green up in the Panhandle, the Congressman, knew him well and from the time I was a young fellow, I knew people in politics and I was interested in it.

M: Did you have a sense that you would go into politics?

E: Well, I didn't know if I would ever go into elective politics, but I wanted to be involved. I helped put in student government in Sarasota High School. I was President of the school body, we had student government there and that was interesting and later on, why, I tried real hard to be involved in helping other people who wanted to run for office.

M: Trying to get people?

E: Well, when I came back from World War II, I came to Manatee County and I helped Dan McCarty when he ran for Governor, he only lived six months and his brother took over for him and then when Dan died, Charlie Johns who at that time was President of the Senate, we didn't have Lieutenant Governors then, and Charlie Johns took over as interim Governor. Well, he decided to run for Governor and Roy Collins decided to run

too, so I supported Roy all the way and we were good friends, in fact he was the best friend I have ever had. I worked for him, I worked for Smathers when he ran for the senate, I worked for some other people and for local people and I served in some things like Chairman of the local school board trustees and things like that until the time came when Joe Bill Rood, we were in college together, he lived here, decided to retire from the Senate and that was in 1958. I was serving on the Board of Control and I decided to run for the Senate. Jim Haley was our Congressman. Jim was my Legion baseball coach in Sarasota when I was just a little kid. He married Aubrey Ringling, part of the Ringling Family, served a year in prison because of the Hartford fire when the Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey tent burned down all those years ago in Hartford. Jim was in Congress and he had to run for reelection that year and I ran and I had the biggest multi-county district in the Senate, Manatee, Sarasota and Charlotte. I visited every newspaper in the entire district immediately, got a commitment from all of them. I gave speeches all over the district, not on politics, I would go talk about Tropicana Products or something like that because I went with Tropicana in 1955 and we were growing and that type of thing and I was elected without opposition. After my first session and the second time around, I had Democratic opposition and I also had Republican opposition. Mayor of Venice was my Republican opponent and I beat him in his own precinct in Venice.

M: To go back to the University of Florida, you were there one year.

E: I was at the University of Florida a year and felt reluctant to go on the Board of Control because I only had one year of college and Roy said, well look, you've had an awful lot of experience, you've been in business. It was really a learning process for me. I really enjoyed the Board of Control because as I say, we had an opportunity to create the University of South Florida in Tampa and also what is Florida Atlantic down in Boca and that type of thing and I have served with some really interesting people on there. I got an opportunity - in the Senate, I made it my priority to be involved in education. I was Chairman of the Institution of Higher Learning and Chairman of the Subcommittee and Appropriations on Higher Learning and Junior Colleges and I was on K-12 Board of Education Committee. At the University of Florida we had people coming out of the University that later became appointed judges and some federal judges like George Young and of course Smathers came out of there. Most of the state politicians in that day were coming out of Gator Land, University of Florida.

M: Ya'll had a monopoly.

E: Yeah.

M: So you went into World War II. Can you briefly summarize as much detail as you would like?

E: I was working at the Sinclair Refinery Company in Jacksonville to make money to pay back all the expenses that I had from the automobile accident. I worked as a cashier at Sinclair and they paid me \$75.00 a month and wouldn't let me have but forty hours, so I worked with a guy that delivered oil and grease to factories and everything else. I drove a truck for him the rest of the time and I wanted to come down to Sarasota and have a Sinclair dealership and the President of Sinclair up there told me, well it's only a matter time before you're going to be drafted. Well, I had always wanted to be a doctor, that was what I originally went to Florida for, was going to be a premed student and go

on and I just went down and joined the Army and they let me select where I wanted to go. I joined the Medical CORP and went into the regular Army at \$21.00 a month and went to Ft. Screven which is in Tybee Beach outside Savannah and while I was there, I was there a year, went to Ft. Sam Houston Pharmacy School and became a pharmacy tech and also since I had been an ROTC at the university, when they started drafting people, I became a drill sergeant for some of the West Virginia boys that were coming in and what not. I took a competitive exam for aviation cadets and went to Maxwell Field where I took my preflight and as a cadet, I was in hog heaven because as a sergeant, I was only making \$50.00 a month and when I became a cadet, I was making \$75.00 a month. From Maxwell Field, I went to Camden, South Carolina for primary, soloed in a Stearman biplane. From Camden, I went to Blytheville, Arkansas, which is up the river from Memphis. I went through my basic there and while I was there, they changed it to advance school, so I finished out basic with the advance school there, changing to an instructors school and they had just moved out to Texas at that time, so I stayed there and took three days of instructors school and got my first class. After that I wanted to get out of instructing and they put a list on the board for anybody who wanted to go to combat, so we signed up and instead of going to combat, they sent me to Tyndall Field in Panama City, Florida to be a gunnery pilot and down there, they sent me off to Goldsboro, North Carolina to learn to fly Lockheed Hudsons came back ultimately went to Sebring, Florida to learn to fly B17s and ran into my company commander over there, a fellow named Marcus Sheffler, from Quincy, Florida, who was a fraternity brother. I hadn't seen him since school. I came back to Tyndall and was one of the first thirteen pilots to open up Apalachicola Army Air Base. They sent me off to B24 Transition School in Smyrna, Tennessee and I went up there for a month and learned to fly B-24s and got back to Apalachicola. I wanted so badly to get back into B17s and we had a month where we had an opportunity again to sign up for combat and in Apalachicola, we lived in tar paper shacks and the chow was not the greatest in the world. We had German prisoners of war there and that kind of stuff. I used to go down and eat oyster stew in Apalachicola for a quarter every day, to get something good to eat. They said anybody who left Apalachicola to go to combat was a coward. I did go. They sent us up to Georgia and they made me head of a little outfit up there. From there we went to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey and waited to go overseas there and we stayed there longer than I would like to think about. The weather was terrible, ice on the ground and what not. We finally got aboard ship, Cunnard White Star Liner Acquatania, one of the largest ships in the world and it was one that could go over without convoy and was no where near as fast as the Queen. Queen Mary could leave a day after us and get there a day ahead of us. We went over and landed in Scotland, we boarded a train and went to England, stationed in Ridgewell, England and they had us up pretty quick on missions and I flew my first six missions in six days and got a forty-eight to go to London. I got my first air medal in six days.

M: When you got to England, what day was it roughly?

E: It was in probably January of 1945. I spent Christmas in Camp Kilmer, I remember that and so that's when I first got there. By this time, the German Air Force was not as bad as it had been when the earlier people over there, but before I left, the Germans put jets in the air and we were hit by those a couple of times and they couldn't stay up long because they didn't have much gas consumption mileage. I flew twenty-six missions and when I went over you were supposed to fly twenty-five and come back. General Doolittle, Commanding Officer of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, he came over and said, ya'll got to fly thirty. I got hit about three times, the first time going over to a place called Ecklesau,

Germany not too far from Berlin, I lost an engine and came around and we had to take the pattern and fly over it again cause our bombs wouldn't let us drop the first time and I lost #3, I lost #4 the first time so I had both engines out on one side. I came out obviously not with my group and by this time P-51s could meet you quite a ways out and so when I got close to Belgium, why I had P-51 cover us. I landed in Belgium with two out on one side. I made a terrible landing, but we got down safely and we stayed in an old chateau that the Germans had occupied and later by the Ninth Air Force. Finally got back to the field and they had showed us as missing in action...and found that all of our canned goods and our candy and our soap was missing. The next time around, why we were coming back off a mission and took a piece of flak in the fuel line and my #3 engine caught on fire and my top man who was my engineer always told me he was scared to death of fire and that if we ever caught fire, he was going to get out. Well, it was my responsibility to ring a bell and tell them to prepare to bail out so they could open the doors and that type of thing which they did and the next thing, you would ring it three times and tell them to bail out. Well, I told them I was going to try and blow it out, they could either go or stay and everybody else stayed. Hawkeye, my engineer up there, he took off, bailed out, went right through the bomb bay doors and all we saw of him, because there was a big cloud coverage up there, going through the clouds, we didn't know if his chute opened or not and.

M: This would have been before you landed obviously.

E: Oh yeah. I was able to pull that thing up and the fire blew out the induction system and blew the fire out and got back to the field and when I did, why it took us quite a long while to get home. We were in Germany then. They said if I had stayed up there maybe just a few minutes longer, why, the wing would have come off, so I proposed never to stay any longer when one caught on fire. We went down one more time and we got shot up pretty badly and you could get three hundreds holes in a 17 and it still flew...it was a great airplane. This time, we went down in France and landed there. They ultimately were able to get their mechanics to fix the engine there and we came back from there, but we went down three different times. I had my bombardier, who later on lived on the east coast of Florida who originally was from up in the north country, took a piece of flak, right through the nose. We were coming out - and Germany had women gunners on 88s at that time that they turned up and made flak guns out of and we were getting so close to crossing the lines, it was on this side of the river where Germany could cross over, we took off our flak helmets, they got uncomfortable, I didn't have one on, but he did, he was up in the nose and a piece of flak came right through and hit him right across the nose. He lost an eye. We didn't know if he was going to make it or not, but I sent my waist gunner up there to take care of him and he gave him a shot of morphine which he wasn't suppose to do, but he did and we headed on out as fast as we could to try and get into our field. We were fired on by friendly fire. We had an IFF, identification friend or foe on there and the British didn't see it, and they fired on us coming in, but we got down to the field and the ambulance met him and took him to the hospital in Diss, England, which was staffed by doctors and nurses from Duke University and they did a beautiful job on him. You couldn't even tell it was plastic work but he lost one eye from that and he died just this past Christmas. I had my crew reunion a number of years ago and kept up with them and always stayed in touch with them.

M: How many of them were there?

E: Nine of us on the crew and there are three of us left and I was the old man on the

crew.

M: Did they happen to live in Florida?

E: Not in Florida to start with, they may have moved to Florida, yeah my bombardier lived in Melbourne and Jack Thorp my waist gunner died after Christmas this year. He lived in Tampa, but my co-pilot was from Brownwood, Texas and my navigator moved to Belgium after the war, France and Belgium and went into manufacturing business. He lived over there, but he was originally from Jacksonville and my waist gunner, one of them was from Memphis, Tennessee and the other one, tail gunner, the tallest man to put in the tail which is a bad place to be, but he was the mayor of Erlanger, Kentucky.

M: Now you said that Dolittle was your overall commander. Did you ever have any interaction with him?

E: Oh yeah. I had met him when I was a youngster when we went to Valley Stream, Long Island. The reason we were up there, my Dad was promoting a thing called the Rogles Orienttaor, which was a forerunner of the link trainer. We lived in Valley Stream, which is where Curtis Field is, and Garden City, Long Island was Roosevelt Field. This is back in the days when Lindberg was there. I got to know Red Jackson, a flight instructor and Casey Jones who was head of Curtis. He took me up in a tri-motor while I was up there as a kid and I got to meet Amelia Earhart, George Palmer Putnam, her husband from the publishing company put some money in this thing and I got to meet all of these people at that time and we got to meet Mrs. Dolittle. I saw her later when we were stationed in Kilmer and going to New York City. She liked to go to a little club that we went to at nighttime. I got to know her real well. I met Jimmy Dolittle when I was just a youngster. He was flying a mail plane at that time. He flew from a seat way in the back of a TravelAir biplane.

M: Golly, that's real neat.

E: So, I got to meet all of those people then which was wonderful. My Dad who never became a pilot was always interested in aviation and that is how he got Gahagan to come down and work for him later on. Dad flew to New York with Larry Gahagan and bought an amphibian plane from Igor Sikorsky. Larry flew Dad back to Florida, and they lost one engine and landed in a lake near Leesburg. Dad wired Igor Sakorsky and told him to pick up his amphibian!

E: Lindberg got back from Paris and they brought the airplane in up in the Potomac on a barge, so Dad took us up there to see the plane come in and they were taking it to the Smithsonian.

M: Golly that is interesting.

E: We had a good friend down here, Fred Williams, who was a pilot over in Arcadia, Florida where they were training the British at Carlstrom Field. He took me up on my first flight when I was just a, oh I don't know, maybe nine years old or something like that in a Curtis Robin in Sarasota, an old dirt field down there, he's the one that really got me interested at that time.

M: Do you ever go over to the Fly-In over in Lakeland? We have the Fly-In over there.

E: No, I haven't gone over there, but you know I have flown by it.

M: You have flown by it, okay?

E: Scott Linder was a good friend of mine. I used to fly with Scott a good bit. Scott was a real good pilot, both fixed wing and helicopters.

M: Well, if you would ever like to go over, let me know. I get special tickets.

E: Looks like a wonderful thing.

M: It is really wonderful. They have a lot of those old planes and I think you would really enjoy it.

M: When you got back, what was it like coming back to the US after the war or were there some other things that you would like to finish up with on the war before we go on.

E: Long experience. I was in the service for five years and that was primarily during combat times that I talked to you about. I came back and went to Sioux Falls, South Dakota after D-Day and we were still fighting the Japanese at that time and we were supposed to form up and go to another field and take B29 training and go out to the Pacific which I wasn't all that happy about. But while I was out there, I was checking pilots out coming back in AT6s, it was something to do. I went down to a little place in Minnesota and worked in a restaurant there. We had 25,000 troops down there, nothing to do with them and they were shocking grain out in the field for \$1.00 an hour at that time and I worked in the restaurant. There came a time I wanted to get out and so, I got my terminal leave from Sioux Falls and went to Jacksonville and I hadn't been married at this point. I met the woman that later became my wife at Palmetto High School (where I attended my freshman year), we were both freshmen there and I hadn't seen her for a long time until I got back. I worked in Jacksonville for just a little while and then my uncle by marriage to my aunt, lived on Terra Ceia Island and had the largest gladiolus farm most anywhere in the state. I came down and went to work for the farm and started at rock bottom. I started at 40 cents an hour out on the farm, that's what they were paying the men, paying the women 35, real chauvinistic, I got all that changed later and they sent me to New York to learn the business, wholesale commission, consignment business and so forth, gave me \$40.00 a week up there out of which I had to pay my hotel room and eat. I was on the wholesale market every morning about 3 o'clock, that's when everything started and we were through by 6 and I learned that part of it. I came back and worked as manager of the Terra Ceia Bay Gladiolus Farm. We had 3000 acres in glads. The Florida Gladiolus Growers Association represented the growers around the state and in 1949, they offered me the opportunity to become manager of the Florida Gladiolus Growers Association which I did and I built it up to the point where we represented 94%-95% of gladiolus growers across the state of Florida and of course Florida was the largest outdoor gladiolus producers in the world. When I was manager of the farm we shipped 12,000 dozen a day. It was at that time I got involved in a lot of agricultural organizations like the Florida Ag Counsel and later on I served for years on the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association as a director and Florida Citrus Mutual and what not, but that was later when I left .... I stayed as the manager of the Florida Gladiolus Growers Association for about three years I guess and then in 1955, Anthony

Rossi who had founded Tropicana had been talking to me since 1953 about joining the company. I really enjoyed what I was doing and in those days it was a real good job and paid a lot of money and he finally made me an offer I couldn't refuse, so I went to Tropicana as Vice-President and he was the only other officer, he was President. I became Executive Vice-President right after that and for a good long while there were only two officers. I made a relationship with the Gulf Coast Experiment Station which is now part of The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. Back in those days it was an experiment station and extension service, teaching college and so forth. Early on I started working with them and worked with them for years and years and ultimately when E.T. York came down and created the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Tropicana was the first contributor to the IFAS share program and I served as a Director of SHARE.

M: I am familiar with that. I worked in that a little bit actually as a volunteer.

E: E.T. is a great friend and he sent me a book that he wrote which is real interesting. I got married in 1947 here in Bradenton. My wife moved to Palmetto in 1924, the same year we moved to Sarasota and her father helped do some developing over there. Everybody was either in real estate or a developer during the boom.

M: What was her name again?

E: Her name was Elise Ingram. She was born in Georgia, a very small place. Her father was an accountant also and worked with the Comer family and they owned a lot of property and they had a commissary and a little railroad yard and houses for all the people that made up the company and that was about it. Called Milhaven, but her family really came from Eatonton, Georgia and of course, I was born in Jacksonville and we got married at the First Baptist Church here in Bradenton. We just restored the old chapel. She has been a member for about 56 years or longer, 58 and both of us Sunday School teachers. I taught for 25 years and Elise taught and she was the superintendent and I was chairman of the deacons over there. We just celebrated our 56th wedding anniversary in May.

M: Do you have any kids?

E: We have one son, Jerry. He went to Manatee Community College, got his AA and went to University of South Florida, graduated with a B.A. in Communications. He went from there .... when I was chairman of Higher Education in the senate, we created a law school at FSU, so he went to FSU Law School and when he came out he went to work for the Attorney General for six years and from there went to work for three speakers of the House and then he was a staff director of the Senate and he retired at a very early age.

M: I want to pull back a little bit if it's okay.

E: Oh sure. You know my life in Sarasota was great, knowing the Ringlings you know, knowing the people in the circus and having friends that were performers. I played AAU basketball and we played Ringling Art School and the only place they had was an old garage to use for a gym, it was a real low ceiling and they got Jacks Earle the Texas Giant from the circus to come out and play. He was 8 feet 7 inches tall, they just put him under a basket and he would drop it in. I knew Jack. They got an old Chevrolet for him

and took out the front seat and he sat on the back seat and drove it.

M: Do you remember Mr. Ringling?

E: Sure. I knew John Ringling. In fact, my Dad and a fellow he brought from Mobile, Alabama, T.A. Monk, built the first ten homes in Whitfield Estates and this is where the Ringling homes are. We lived in a Ringling house there about, gracious, about 76-78 years ago, something like that. Everybody knew each other in those days, I mean, it was sort of a small place and in fact when we moved to Sarasota, there was a shell road between Sarasota and Venice that ultimately became Highway 41. We knew all the Ringling family, John North and Henry North who were the sons of one of the other Ringlings.

M: Have you read the biography of Ringling that has come out recently.

E: I have read so many of John Ringling. When I was on the Board of Control, the predecessor to the Board of Regents, the Ringling Museum was my subcommittee and when I went into the Senate, the first bill I put in was to create a Board of Trustees for the Ringling Museum because I thought they were a step-child which they were and that has created the trustees for the museum, so I have had a long relationship with the Ringling Museum that way and with the Ringling family, knew all of them.

M: Now, when you were in the service, Spessard Holland was Governor and then obviously later on he went into the Senate for quite a long time. Can you reflect a little bit on him and what you thought about him and what he was like?

E: Well, we all admired Governor Holland a great deal because he had such a high sense of ethics and integrity and when he went in, he lived in the same little house in Bartow, he went in as Governor and he came out just as broke as when he went in. He was a good lawyer and of course, they created the law firm with Chesterfield Smith and Senator Holland which later became the biggest firm in the state and one of the biggest in the country, Holland and Knight. I did everything I could, anytime Governor Holland was running for anything, to help and we were all supporters of him. While he was in the Senate, we stayed in touch all the time and I served on some corporate boards later on and went up to Washington a lot and I used to see him a good bit. When he got ready to retire, I was still with Tropicana and we had by this time, gone public, had a board of directors and we badly needed some outsiders on there. I flew to Washington and met with him and asked him if he would become a member of our board and that's when I told you, he picked up the telephone and called Chesterfield and said Chesterfield, what do you think about this? He had never done anything like this. Chesterfield said sure. Chesterfield and I were good friends, we were the same age, known each other since college. So, he came down and served on our board for six months and died. The thing that impressed us all about Governor Holland, later on Senator Holland, was that when he came out of the Senate, he still didn't have any more money than he did when he went in and there was never ever a blemish of any type on his reputation anywhere and of course, he was one that was willing to speak up back, in those days it was difficult to do so, the same way and later to try and help those people who didn't have the franchise to vote, get rid of the poll tax, that type of thing. Of course I knew Fuller Warren real well when he was Governor too. I worked with Fuller and knew him real well. Fuller's claim to fame was getting the cows off the highway.

M: Can we get back to him a little bit, talk about Fuller.

E: Fuller was a real character. I mean, he was pure north Florida Panhandler.

M: He and my grandmother were friends.

E: He was really a great guy. I always thought the world of him. He gave some of us down here an opportunity to recommend people for jobs like, like later on Governor Collins, I had that privilege with Governor Collins, Governor Askew, Governor Chiles and some with Governor Graham. I remember we got a friend here locally who was highly qualified and got Fuller to appoint him as County Judge. He was full of humor and I thought he was a hard working Governor, but he was a little different than some that I have known, but I thought highly of him.

M: Do you think there is really anything to the charges of conflict of interest and some of the organized crime business?

E: I don't think so, I don't think so. Of course, my good friend Jim Haley, when he was in the State Legislature, set up a Haley Committee and their purpose was to dig out the organized crime in the state of Florida and they got deeply involved in that and Jim always told me that Fuller Warren was never guilty of anything.

M: That would have been, that Haley Commission would have been, was it 1952?

E: Somewhere back then.

M: We have the Haley papers at Florida Southern by the way.

E: Good, well we could get the date.

M: Sure can. So, they say that he was just an incredible orator.

E: He was. You know we don't have any oratory the legislature anymore and when I was up there, they still did and by the way, Lawton was real good. He was an excellent speaker. In those days you didn't have electronics or anything, you got up and had to say yea or nay by voice. If you were going to speak why you spoke without benefit of a microphone unless you wanted to go to the well. It was up in the front and you had to get the Speaker or the President to let you go to the well and speak. But we still had Verle Pope who was a classic example and great orator and Verle, the reason I call him the Lion of St. Johns, (St. Augustine, with the Bridge of Lions, in St. Johns County, which Verle Pope represented in the Florida Senate), everybody did, every year, there was something that all the people looked for to in the sense of hearing someone that was a real orator. He fought the small loan lobby every year and the galleries would fill up with people and with other legislators who were not in session and they would come to the Senate gallery and listen to him give his speech. There was a former senator who was a lobbyist, small loan lobby with all his people there and Verle would get up there and talk about the terrible person who had come to sink his diamond studded teeth in the veins of gold and bring out a golden stream and they would just give him a fit and vote down the bill every year.

M: The small loan lobby?

E: But Verle would always go first to the water cooler up in the front to see if the press was sitting in the back, everybody was in place. But as far as Fuller was concerned, he was a good orator and a great figure; he had a lot of stories. He had a lot of stories. I wasn't close to Fuller like I was to Roy Collins, Reuben Askew, Lawton Chiles and to some extent to Bob Graham.

M: I really want to go into them the next couple of times we meet. We'll kind of save them.

E: Tell you a little bit about my experiences with Claude Kirk too.

E: Millard Caldwell of course I knew, but I was not close to Millard at all, but when I was in the legislature I got to see him often.

M: I don't want to go into ... I'm trying to make sure that I don't ... I want to make sure I cover all of this thoroughly. I think we have enough time to get Roy elected here as Governor. Can you tell me about the first time you met Roy Collins?

E: Well, I met him when he was in the Florida Legislature and that was just the beginning or World War II. Leroy resigned from the Legislature to go into the Navy and I didn't see much more of him until it came time for him to run against Charlie Johns. He came down here and I met with him in a room at the hotel over here and we talked. I just admired this man's ability, which I thought ... one thing about him is he always seems to know the right thing to do and he was willing to stand up and be counted for his convictions when he stood alone. I don't know if you've seen his book, *Fore-Runners Courageous*, I wrote the preface of that. I started with him right there and went out and helped organize campaign committees in all our counties down here. I worked real hard for him and all the people worked for Charlie Johns, they thought Charlie was going to get elected and the newspaper put out the night before he and Leroy was supposed to be on TV in Miami, they put out the headlines that Charlie had won and Roy the next day was able to show the paper and everything you know. Later years we put on a dinner for Verle Pope, who was dying of cancer St. Augustine and we got Roy and Charlie Johns together and it was like old friends, mended fences and all that kind of stuff. Leroy was a wonderful man. I was involved with him during the civil rights and later while he was Governor, he gave his first speech, lunch counter speech and so forth, there were just thirteen of us in the legislature, thirteen of us who could uphold the Governor's veto, that's what it took and we were not members of The Pork Chop Gang. They had passed this bill in session before I come up there that would stipulate that any school in the state of Florida that allowed a black person in would be closed. When this bill came back up Leroy vetoed the bill and came up my first session as a Senator and we were able to uphold his veto, there were thirteen Senators. I have always, even though I am a Florida cracker, have always felt differently about the situation and I have always felt strongly in the need for equality among us. God created us all the same and I have never been a segregationist. I worked hard to see our schools peacefully integrated and that type of thing, but Leroy was, as far as I was concerned—and the legislature named him by resolution the Statesman of the Century. He did things while he was Governor that he knew that he probably wasn't going to get reelected if he did, but he was and he was the first Governor to serve more than four years because he started the two years unexpired of Dan McCarty and he served four years as Governor, so he served six years in there. He was chairman of the Democratic National

Convention in Los Angeles that nominated Jack Kennedy for President.

M: Isn't it true also that in that session you're talking about that Doyle Carlton, Jr. was in your group as well.

E: Absolutely.

M: He was one of the thirteen. Were there others that you remember?

E: Jack Matthews, let me see, I'm trying to remember. Amazingly enough we had Dempsey Barron was over there, he was from the Panhandle of course, but he didn't vote as a Pork Chopper. He stood up to be counted for his beliefs.

M: He was one of the thirteen?

E: Oh he stood up to be counted for whatever he believed in. He really did.

M: So he was one of the thirteen?

E: Yes

E: Elmer Friday from down in Punta Gorda, Doyle, I'm trying to think, I don't believe Reubin was over there by that session, Sam Gibbons from Tampa, Congressman Sam, Jack Matthews.

M: Would you say on that vote that it was a north, south thing?

E: Well it wasn't so much that as it was what they called segregation vs. integration. Keep in mind that some of the Pork Choppers were good people and were good representatives and good senators. Many of them did what they thought their constituents wanted them to do.

## SIDE B

M: You feel what your constituents want.

E: Well, Judge Clark (Senator) for Jefferson County. There were only 7500 people in Jefferson County, but they had one senator. Dade County only had one senator then. The Dade County senator went with the Pork Choppers sometimes and the fellow from Ft. Myers, when I was a freshman, he went with the Pork Choppers, so it wasn't north and south.

M: Now let me ask you about the Pork Chopper situation....

E: I had some good friends in the Pork Choppers. We got up and fought on the floor real hard and walk out and that night I might be over at Wilson Carraway house for dinner with friends he invited over for dinner and that type of thing. Some of them, Turner Davis from Madison, was one of the really good senators as far as I was concerned. He was a Pork Chopper, but he did an outstanding job and then I joined with Dewey Johnson. We helped set up the Junior College lobby and was in coalition within the Senate and Roy Collins was the father of Junior Colleges. I worked with him before I

went into the Senate and helped create Manatee Community College that is down here now and that type of thing. It wasn't strictly north and south, but it was a small county versus larger counties except a few like the senator from Dade who went with the Pork Chops and the senator from Ft. Myers who went with the Pork Chop Gang and they would try to seduce people into coming with them you know by having ... well, I know when I got elected, the next day, I had a member of the senate at my house who knew me, coming in to talk with me, it was Tom Adams. He talked to me as a friend and he was one of the best Cabinet officers we ever had, Secretary of State, but he was there to tell me all the great things that was happening and if I supported the incoming President, of the Pork Chop Gang and so forth. I listened to all those goodies and all that stuff. I told him thanks a lot, but ... in fact, I have a column that was written by Allen Morris, "Ed Price Morning Glory," and he said you don't have to go along to get along and I didn't. At the end of the Session in my freshman term in 1959, the Senate voted for the Allen Morris Award for the Outstanding Freshman Senator. The Senator from Ft. Myers, who was a Pork Chopper, ended up in a tie vote for the honor, which meant that I got a number of Pork Chopper votes.

M: Now in 1954 when the Brown Decision came down, I would imagine there were a lot of people who were thinking this is never going to happen. It's not going to happen here, it might happen up in New York or Philadelphia, but not happen in Florida and of course it didn't happen for a long time. Is it true that Governor Collins, some historians said he was sort of slow to get on board and things came along and he grew and ....

E: Well he admits himself in the book that he grew up in a generation and location and that was the way it was. I think one of the most poignant things in his book is when he talks about the old black fellow that just wanted a cup of lard with some syrup and that type of thing, we're talking about the difference between blacks and white, but he didn't come full aboard, but he made it abundantly plain however in his first acceptance speech where he was going to be. While he might have come as quick as he might have, he always had those feelings inside himself and when he came, he came all the way. He brought it to bear and they said you know, that's the way it's going to be. We couldn't have it done without him. And of course when Lyndon Johnson, after Roy got out and he was heading up the National TV Broadcasters Association making \$75,000.00 which was a lot of money at that time, Lyndon came to him and said I want you to be the first head of our Community Relations Commission which the salary was minimal you know that Martin Luther King, the march was going on in Selma and Roy took that thing out of conviction and he went to Selma and if he hadn't gone, there would have been more blood in the streets, but he walked down that street with Martin Luther King and the rest of them and because of his negotiations, they were able to meet in the middle and keep it from getting any worse than it did. That's why I supported Lyndon Johnson. I was a delegate, well the first convention I went to was in Chicago, and I was just there, I had press credentials through the Bradenton Herald and I sat in the Sergeant of Arms box up in the Rotunda and I sat right next to John Fell and Borden Stephenson. They had a smoked filled back room and waiting to see who they were going to nominate. I remember Harry Truman came in. He went over to the Stockyard Inn and Harry sent word back who was going to be the nominee. My Dad and Harry Truman were friends back in the early days and got some letters back and forth between them. Roy, to me was a very special kind of man. You see people you support in politics and what not that they are really hard to get them where they can speak to the public and they use that bad word charisma, all the time, but when Roy walked into a room, I mean, lights went on and bells rang and that type of thing, Farris Bryant was just

the opposite. The other part is that he absolutely had a great feel for the sense of right and wrong and he just made up his mind that he was going to do what he thought was right regardless of the consequences. You've seen the story about one of his colleagues up here came in and told him what he was going to say with regard to segregation and what not was going to be and what not and he said well, I have to look at myself. He said, I would rather do what's right...

M: Well you know that's what they said about Lyndon Johnson too and Lyndon Johnson accepted that he was really wrecking himself and the Democratic Party and he was destroying the Democratic Party.

E: Well I was a delegate...

M: And of course Governor Collins belongs to that....

E: Well, when he ran against Ed Gurney, it was like that, it was like having a cannon ball in my stomach. I was full time with the campaign even though I was at Tropicana, but I was full time with the campaign. It was so difficult because you know; many of your corporate boardrooms and everything else have just as many rednecks if you want to categorize them that way.