

CENTER FOR FLORIDA HISTORY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with: Reubin O'D Askew
Interviewer: James M. Denham
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JD= James M. Denham
RA= Reubin Askew

JD: Good afternoon, Governor Askew. Can you tell us a little bit about the first time you met Lawton Chiles, the first time you laid eyes on Lawton Chiles? Where was it, and what did you think?

RA: Lawton and I were in Law School together, so I met him in Law School and liked him, had no reason not to like him. I think Lawton was a pretty likeable guy. He finished a little bit ahead of me in Law School as I recall, but I met him in Law School and we worked together on some projects. We worked together on a Blue Key project on what would be the slogan for homecoming at the University of Florida, 1955. It was a slogan contest and we finally came up with "Relax a while Gator style", which I thought was beautiful.

I've got a picture somewhere, I may have it here in the office, of Lawton and I giving a check to the young man who won it, and it showed a very, very young Reubin Askew and a very young Lawton Chiles. I think I've got that here somewhere.

JD: Now that would have been, I guess, after he got back from Korea.

RA: Yes, yes.

JD: As I understand, that was kind of an interesting time because people were coming back; people were postponing their Postgraduate education and even first four years' education, so you had a real mix of people, of ages of people.

RA: You did but I went into the Airborne Paratroops at 17, finished close to two years and went to Undergraduate School at Florida State and then was in their FSU's first ROTC unit, which happened to have been the Air Force, and the Korean War broke out when I was in summer encampment.

Anyway, they were going to order us to active duty we thought for a while, but that didn't materialize and then the whole class of 1951 throughout the entire nation in every unit, every branch of ROTC, got called to active duty. So I was called to active duty just as I got a Bachelor's Degree from Florida State. I already had my orders, so we got handed our degree, took off our robe, we had our uniforms on, I got commissioned, so I spent two years, came out and then went to Law School.

So I had already served the second time and during the Korean conflict I went to France and Germany, so mine was never interrupted. I had a pretty good situation. I got out of high school, I went right into the Army, finished the Army, right to FSU, went straight through FSU in three years, got out, went back into the service for two years, and then Law School straight through for 2-1/2 so there were people like Lawton who had their education interrupted.

But Lawton was not in, see I was in twice, and Lawton is a little younger than I am, a couple years. So we met in Law School and as I say we worked together on some projects.

JD: Were there other people that you remember that were his friends there? Any who were particularly close to him?

RA: I would think Dexter Douglass. Of course he was close to Worley Brown but Worley is deceased now. I don't know, Lawton had a lot of friends because he had done his Undergraduate there and he had been very active in Student Affairs. Of course, Wilbur and Lawton became close friends.

JD: Wilbur Boyd?

RA: Yes, Wilbur Boyd, but he didn't go to school at the University of Florida. Wilbur, governmentally-wise, might well have been Lawton's closest friend.

JD: Did they meet while they were in the Legislature?

RA: That I don't know. I think they probably did because Lawton and I got elected to the Legislature at the same time. We served in both the House and the Senate. I served in the House four years and in the Senate eight years.

Lawton served eight years in the House and four years in the Senate, and then we both got elected statewide at the same time, so we continued to have common goals, and when you want me to I can get into some of the really exciting things in that campaign.

JD: You were both elected pretty much the same year in the State Legislature. That's a remarkable thing. Did you work together on any legislation?

RA: I remember one interesting thing and it didn't have anything to do with legislation, but the old small county group, often called the Pork Choppers, Jim Clendenin named them that in the Senate; so you really had the Pork Choppers in the Senate and the small county group in the House. When they would caucus every once in a while to decide whether that's a small county issue in which they would block vote, they were caucusing and we used to sit around.

All the rest would just sit around until finally I went over to Lawton and I said, "You know, we need to appear like we're doing something". He said, "I agree". So we sat

down and decided that we'd go back in this big committee room at that time behind the chamber and, if we didn't tell anything but jokes and stories, to be able to show, you know, that there was a little cohesiveness.

Interestingly enough, it really bothered all the small county group all of a sudden while we were doing our thing, but it was Lawton's and my way of trying to organize a minority as opposed to just having miscellaneous other people in it besides that small county group. When we first got to the Legislature, it was an overwhelming number of people. I mean, the first meeting, I only lasted one meeting. I lasted one meeting with the Pork Chop group in the Senate and one meeting in the House and they had this meeting out at a house that Bernie Papy; he was a Dean, which meant he had the bar in the House, and Bill Clark, the Dean of the Senate had the bar. You know, in a dry county, that shows you the absolute hypocrisy of it all.

I counted 95 members of the House and I think that there were probably 68/69 members of the Pork Chop group. Anyway, we really started trying to work with each others on some issues that were important to us. And I remember a specific piece of legislation that Lawton was a tremendous help to me.

Lawton had a local bill. Lawton was fighting the phosphate mining thing on trying to clear up the air and the water. I was fighting a paper mill in Pensacola. So we had some common opposition, or in support of the environment. The local bill was on education, not on the environment, and Philip Beall who was a senator from Escambia County at the time, whom I later ran against and defeated, had this bill that would have set up a local budget commission that could have really controlled the millage to the schools. It was a terrible bill for Escambia County, but it was done basically by a special interest over there and in particular, Colonel Mack Henry Jones, who was a close friend of Philip Beall and very respected member of the Bar in Pensacola and represented St. Regis Paper Company.

This was a bill that was extremely important to me. It was a local bill but it had statewide implications and so there was a committee hearing on it. Normally you just put them uncontested on the local calendar. Well in this instance, there was a split between the House and the Senate.

Lawton was on what might have been a select committee or it could have been just a subcommittee of a larger committee, and Lawton and I joked about it many times because he had what looked like an arrow, he being Mack Henry Jones. Senator Beall never showed up for the hearing and this was one of the biggest, most controversial pieces of legislation when I was in the Legislature, you know from Escambia County. Lawton played a very important role and I defeated it, I think we defeated it maybe 3 to 2 or something like that.

Lawton was not a guy that tooted his own horn. I guess that's one of the things that attracted me about Lawton. Lawton was not a show horse, he was a work horse and he didn't showboat. He was good, very bright, and very able and he was, as I recall and

you can check the record on this, the main sponsor of the creation of what became the Department of Environmental Protection. It started off as something like an Air and Water Pollution Control Department commission which headed up the department which was I believe our first major piece of environmental legislation.

Now the hunters would argue that creation of the Game and Freshwater Fish Commission was the first. The problem with that is that while it was environmentally sensitive, it was tilted very much to hunters as opposed to just being for the environment generally. But Lawton led that fight and again I worked with Lawton on it because here again, he has taken on the phosphate people, I'm taking on the paper mills.

JD: That's what I was going to ask. That legislation would have been very unpopular in some areas in both of your counties.

RA: Oh yeah, but Lawton was courageous.

JD: For example, I can't imagine Chesterfield Smith going for that.

RA: Well Chesterfield obviously wasn't, and Chesterfield loved Lawton and he always said that the great advice he gave was for me not to run and Lawton not to walk. And I love Chesterfield Smith. I think he is one of the great Americans of our time. But Lawton didn't let friendship get in the way.

JD: Do you think it would have been Lawton's connection with the land, hunting and knowing what the phosphate industry was doing to the environment being a hunter, for example, and also being a person who went in the woods a lot? He certainly understood the degradation that phosphate was causing.

RA: All that's true, but I think it's a broader issue, and that is, he just felt strongly about the environment in this instance, and he just felt like they had to clean up their act, which they eventually did. As I look back, I think that was probably the most important legislation that I can recall that –

JD: Can you remember what year that was?

RA: I think it was probably about 1967.

JD: Okay, I can certainly follow that up.

RA: Yeah. I think that's when it was created. And then of course he's had successive

JD: No I mean the bills that you and he worked on, those two different bills.

RA: You mean the local bill?

JD: Yeah.

RA: Well I was a House member. It would have been in the 1961 session probably.

JD: Okay, real early.

RA: It was called the Beall Bill. This was a huge thing and of course the *News Journal* was very much opposed to it.

JD: Earl Bowden would have been there then, Earl Bowden?

RA: Yeah, he would have remembered it. But it was one of the bigger battles I took on over there. Anyway, I remember Lawton was a key to it and we have often laughed about Beall not showing up and Mack Henry Jones, and I had to wind up debating a lobbyist in the subcommittee. But Lawton came through with me because it was a very important bill to me and a very important bill to the county.

JD: If we go back to the Pork Choppers a little bit, were you and Lawton in the beginning anyway, courted by the Pork Choppers? Did you have anything to do with them?

RA: I don't think Lawton lasted more than one meeting either. I mean, Lawton and I from the very beginning were for reapportionment. That was a cutting edge. When I got to the Senate, there were 37 Democrats and one Republican, Bill Young, who went all the way up to be Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee in the Congress, and a good friend. I would say really that the two of us from the beginning favored reapportionment.

JD: And that automatically put you on the other side of the group?

RA: Yeah, because the dividing line was much tougher then than I think it really is now partisan-wise. We used to say, you know, the Pork Choppers didn't take prisoners. They were very, very tough. But Lawton and I both had our degree of toughness too. He worked the House but by the time he got to the Senate, we had really reapportioned. So he played a role in the House, I played a role in the Senate.

Lawton was a good friend also of George Stone, a Representative from Escambia County who would have been Speaker of the House, my very dear friend who just tragically got killed in an automobile accident. As a result, Ralph Turlington picked it up and was designated to be the Speaker. Reapportionment was tough, in the House and the Senate.

JD: Can you reflect a little bit on Scott Kelly? Scott Kelly would have been in that mix too.

RA: Scott Kelly was for reapportionment. He was on our side, an interesting man who frankly I liked very much. Dorothy Smiljanich is writing a book on him and I talked to her at length on it because I really felt that Scott came closer to being elected Governor if he could have survived the first cut.

See, when I ran, I was confident that I could defeat Earl Faircloth in the runoff, fairly confident that I could beat Claude Kirk in the general election. I wasn't confident at all in beating Jack Mathews in the first cut. And so when I did, and eliminated him, I knew at that time I had a pretty good chance. I thought I had very little chance to begin with. But Scott, had he gotten the nomination, had he even been in the runoff, I think he would have most likely won the runoff and would surely, in my opinion, won the general election.

So Scott actually was a good guy. I will say in all candor that he wasn't the strong guy that Lawton Chiles was. I mean I will tell you in sum that Lawton Chiles in my opinion was one of the finest public officials that I served with, and I knew them throughout the nation. I mean I think that Lawton was that good. The thing that was so critically important on Lawton was that he was independent, you know, although I must say he played everything close to the vest, because I didn't even know he was even thinking about getting out of the Senate race in 1988.

I mean, I'm sitting down there, I'm his Finance Chairman in Orange County and he comes down, I'm jumping ahead but he came down and it was after the Robert Bork thing in 1988 and he worried too much. And I just said, "you know, Lawton, you've just got to put it all behind you", and so I gave an introduction and he gave frankly a half-hearted speech and people told me "you sounded more like the candidate than him" and I had no idea that he was going to drop out.

I was absolutely shocked when he got out. But I am so glad that he did become Governor because Lawton Chiles was an exceptional guy, but the people of Florida would have never really known how good he was until he became Governor, and then he was really one of the best governors Florida's had. I know I'm jumping around.

JD: Yeah, I've got that down though. We'll go back to the late 1960s. I think it would be fair to say that a lot of people were dissatisfied with Claude Kirk as Governor.

RA: Well he was a quintessential guy to run against. Most people don't know this but he ran for President in New Hampshire in the Primary when I was up there. Can you believe that?

In 1984. And when I got beaten so badly, I told my press that, once again I had decisively defeated Claude Kirk. I don't think Governor Kirk even got any votes up there, but that's when he became a Democrat.

He had his problems. I thought at the time anybody could defeat Kirk, but I believe it would have been a much tougher race had Faircloth been the nominee because Faircloth came with a lot of baggage himself. At any rate, he was controversial.

JD: I guess that was my way of saying that you're thinking about running in the late '60s for Governor. Did you have any inkling that Lawton was going to try to run for the Senate? Had you ever talked to him about that?

RA: I don't have a recollection of that, except Lawton pictured himself ultimately possibly as being another Spessard Holland running in the United States Senate. He pictured himself in the Senate, he told me this many times, and he has said this publicly.

Contrary to what some people might say, I never pictured myself being elected statewide. I thought that my chances would be pretty good for Congress. Lawton and I both supported Roy Collins in trying to keep out a bunch of school closing legislation. Bob Sikes wanted me to take his place. Well Bob Sikes was eternally running every two years, the next year he would run, and so I really felt like I could, not walk in, but that I would have a very strong possibility of winning for Congress but the first Civil Rights vote I had, I'd never get reelected. I don't think I ever had it and I can't recall Lawton saying anything about it at the time except when he started running. Then of course he spoke of it in retrospect and that's basically what he said.

I'll tell you an interesting little story: When I was running and he was running in the first Primary, Wendell Jarrard, you've probably never heard of him but Wendell Jarrard had a very, very successful used car dealership in Pensacola and he was probably one of the key people for Farris Bryant all over the State. Well Lawton supported Bryant as I recall. I supported Doyle Carlton in 1960. I ran without opposition in 1960. I was very much connected into the Collins' camp is what it really amounts to. I didn't really know Doyle Carlton that well at the time but I had worked with him some.

One night, I'm in bed trying to go to sleep, in Pensacola, and Wendell Jarrard calls me. This is toward the end but not completely the end yet of the nominating process. He said, "You know the Governor told me about Farris Bryant", and Farris was a good friend of mine. I liked and respected Farris. But he said, "he was really concerned about Lawton", and so I picked it up and said, "Well to tell you the truth, he ought to be". It took him by surprise and he said, "Well he just doesn't want to see Lawton hurt", and I said, "Well Wendell, I don't think you ought to worry about Lawton. He's a tough cookie. I don't think you need to worry about him, but it certainly sounds like you are". And he wanted me to call Lawton to try to suggest to Lawton that he withdraw from the race. Oh, I said, "Not on your life, I couldn't do that". I said, "Lawton is a good, good friend of mine", and I said, "Besides Farris told him he wasn't going to run to begin with, which I'm sure you're aware of."

I always thought that was funny. Lawton got a chuckle out of it. Now Wendell Gerard became a key person for Farris, and Lawton was somewhat supportive of Farris after he

got elected in 1960. He did say that he talked to Farris about whether he was going to run and Farris said no. I think he'd have run anyway.

JD: That was Pensacola. Can you remember the people that Lawton would have had as leaders in his campaign in Jacksonville? Of course Fred Schultz would have been the big guy over there obviously.

RA: I don't really have a memory on who supported him at what time. But he started his walk from Escambia County.

JD: Right. Do you remember that walk? Did you ever confront that walk on your various goings around the State? Do you remember coming in contact with that?

RA: I don't think so. I was naturally inclined to support Lawton from the beginning. It was sort of an adventure that no one knew for sure how it was going to turn out.

JD: Do you remember Schultz's campaign when he was running for the Senate?

RA: For the United States Senate? Not an awful lot. What year was that?

JD: That was actually the same year.

RA: Oh is that right? He ran in 1970.

JD: They were running against each other in the Primary.

RA: You mean Schultz running against Lawton? Lawton had a tough field.

JD: Yeah, he had Schultz and he had Farris, Farris Bryant. Do you remember Schultz's service in the Legislature? Wasn't he Speaker of the House?

RA: Yes. He was outstanding, and then after he got out and he lost that election, I appointed him Chairman of the Citizens Governor's Task Force, I think it was called, on Public Education and out of that came the whole present program on education in terms of funding. Schultz was a very bright guy and during the Carter administration he was Governor and I think Vice Chairman of the Federal Reserve.

Fred Schultz not only was an extremely bright guy, but he was an innovative guy and sort of a policy wonk. He was really a good guy. But I thought that Lawton had greater appeal from the very beginning basically than Fred had, but Fred was a good friend and as I say, he was outstanding Speaker.

JD: He was also very kind to do some time with me too on the tape. Of course you were wrapped up in your own campaign and would have been totally immersed in that.

RA: Well our campaign started meshing when we both won the nomination. I will tell you that probably the most exciting, electrifying moment of my political career, and people will say when you gave the keynote and all that stuff, and that's all fine and dandy and I was inaugurated twice, but the one that was electrifying was when I came out of nowhere and Lawton came out of nowhere. The Republicans were all set to run against Faircloth for Governor and Farris Bryant, people who had been around. So we came really out of nowhere.

I will tell you, I was surprised when I survived the first thing. I don't know whether Lawton was, but I don't think Lawton was that confident either. When they talk about doing away with the runoffs you know, and you stop and think of Collins or myself or Lawton or Bob Graham, you go down the line. That's why I've always been opposed to doing away with the runoffs and I don't think it's just all personal.

But right after we won, our first appearance was down at the Balmorall Hotel on Miami Beach and Sherman Winn managed it at that time. Sherman was a good friend of both of ours. I think I was closer and still close. He's having a health problem now. But there was one of the wildest crowds I've ever seen and I can remember Lawton and I walking in that assembly, I mean they had people hanging from the rafters. When we walked in there, they just went bananas and I just had chill bumps. I mean, Lawton and I were both enjoying it. We walked in together, our first appearance after we won the nomination.

I think that Lawton that night gave probably the best stump speech I've ever heard anyone give, and I've heard a few from Fuller Warren that were pretty good. That's when the whole Nixon thing was going on. He really wasn't that hot on Claude Kirk, he had presented problems, okay? But on Bill Cramer, Lawton's Republican opponent, he was big on Cramer, and the whole Cabinet, so what they started doing, Nixon would come down, everybody would come down, Cabinet members ending up with Martha Mitchell.

I can remember that night so clearly, it's just electrifying, which he said, "Well, the President has come and gone. [This person] has come and gone. [This person] has come and gone. [This person] has come and gone. Even Martha Mitchell has come and gone", and he says, "Now, Bill Cramer, you're all mine", and it was really the finest stump speech I've ever heard anyone ever give. He was at his best. I get almost goose bumps just thinking about it.

I had more reason to be confident against Kirk than Lawton did on Cramer because Cramer was much stronger in my opinion than Kirk. People in Pinellas County and some counties tried to divorce themselves from Kirk and our people started this A/C current, Askew/Chiles, and in Pinellas County, he had made it to Askew/Cramer, so they blended the ticket and would you believe as a historian, when Nixon came down for this big appearance, in the General Election when Kirk won the Republican nomination, at the Convention Center on Miami Beach that was supposed to be for Cramer for use in commercials, Kirk showed up.

I have no idea whether they expected Kirk or not but he had every right to be there, he was a Republican nominee and the incumbent Governor. But when they did the commercials, they showed Nixon holding his hand up like this, and then on one side it had Cramer, on the other side it had a hand.

They cut off Claude Kirk completely on Cramer's commercial. Cramer had done a good job in Congress and I thought was probably the strongest Republican. I was running against a guy that was real vulnerable but Cramer really wasn't that vulnerable, except this was a time in which some of the people credited the newness of Lawton and me.

As I say, it just took on a life of its own. It's hard to explain it or understand it unless you could have been there and seen what happened, because we both had enormous newspaper support. In fact I got the support of almost every newspaper in the State against Kirk. So, my job was less difficult. I was confident I was going to beat Kirk. Lawton was confident that he would beat Cramer except he had the tougher race.

JD: Again, you would have been wrapped up in your own race, but do you remember the people working with Lawton closest in that campaign? Some of the people he would have had to depend on for advisors?

RA: Well the person I remember the most would be Wilbur Boyd, who was there much for him. Dexter was highly involved in it. I'm thinking of a lawyer from Coral Gables.

JD: Eddie Gong?

RA: No, Eddie Gong was strong for him but this was a lawyer who was one of his key people down there. In fact, he went into business with –

JD: Pettigrew?

RA: No, no, no. Anyway, he may have been Lawton's key guy in Dade County, politically. I just can't think of his name right now.

JD: Okay, you're both elected.

RA: Well, I know but I think I have to go back a little more on Lawton's walk. It just caught on and the more he walked, the larger the crowds got. When I started up with corporate income tax, Barbara Frye, UPI Chief, who was my friend in Tallahassee, I mean I loved her but she was tough on me because that was her job, she said to me, "Well you didn't have much chance before you came out for the corporate income tax and now you have none."

But people started understanding when I got the two shirts out, which you're probably aware of, how they were being had and why these people saying 'don't pass this; it'll all

be passed on and their alternative instead of this was sales tax which you'd always have 100% passed on. So mine started catching on and Lawton's started catching on.

I think what made that successful was the legitimacy of his candidacy and his own personality, and of course Bud who was there plugging right with him the whole time going around the State. Just as in Graham's case, the workdays. People say it was a gimmick but they were so successful because of the legitimacy of Graham's campaign and who he was, and the same thing for Lawton.

People can be attracted to something like that. Call it a gimmick, whatever you want to call it. I never thought the corporate income tax was a gimmick, I mean they came out of the woods against it, but the very fact that Lawton knew what he had to do. Like a mule with blinders, he set out doing that and he went all over the state and he just caught fire. But again, a lot of people could walk the state and not make anything, or have anything, but Lawton frankly was so good it just showed through his genuineness is the word I was trying to think of. He was a genuine guy, and a gutsy guy.

And then of course in the general election, I mean our two campaigns just started blending. There were already so many people. For instance, in Dade County, Ritchie Pallett was a key guy for Lawton. He was my key guy in the county. I had other people, David Kinney and others working hard, Sherman Wynn, but a close, close friend was Ritchie Pallett. In Palm Beach County, you had John Moyle. What I'm trying to say is that John Moyle got these two old friends running for Governor and the Senate and neither one had a chance, he was going to help them. In some areas, we had such an overlap –

JD: I'd been in contact with him too, but I haven't had a chance to talk with him yet.

RA: Well he did the whole county for me. He did the whole county for Lawton. You wouldn't believe it. One of the greatest taskmasters I've ever seen. I mean, every time I'd go down there, he assumed I had a good night's sleep the night before and would have a good one the next night but when I was there, I was his. So you had a lot of overlap in our candidacies, our two candidacies just blended. That happens very few times. We almost became sort of one team.

JD: Well that's really one of the things I wanted to ask you, one of the primary things I wanted to ask you. I'm glad that you're telling me that. I thought that was the case but I wasn't sure.

RA: And then of course I could fully defend Lawton with vigor, and he did the same to me. I remember when we won and we came up, I think we were one of the first people ever to wave at people. I have a photograph of that and I'm sure you've got a photograph of it, the two of us right in front of the Capitol. The day after the election, we were up there waving. Horns you just wouldn't believe, it was like a parade. I kept telling Lawton, "We're going to cause a wreck here pretty soon". But we just sat there, both exhausted, both enjoying it.

JD: And that was at the Capitol?

RA: Right in front of the Capitol in Tallahassee.

JD: Appalachee Parkway.

RA: That's right, that's right. There's lots of pictures on it, but I have one I used to show my class when Lawton was Governor when they'd see these two guys. We both lost weight you know, but I had gained a little more than he had prior to that time.

Anyway, I love Lawton and think it was great, and it was just a pleasure to work together. And of course one of the important things we did was to rebuild the Democratic Party and Lawton and I sat down and talked to John Moyle. We just disrupted poor John's life. But within a couple of years, John Moyle was considered I think as fine a state chairman as there is nationally and in my opinion the best. So it was the closeness of both Lawton and me that helped us then rebuild.

Of course, senators are limited in what they can do in rebuilding if they have a governor in the same party. I mean, I was told by Jane Love, my appointments chief, when I left that I had made 14,000 appointments. I was staggered by that amount. But the Governor with all that patronage power and his presence on the scene has such a greater ability to impact on it. That's why I say I'm so glad that Lawton became Governor.

See, when Lawton died, the outpouring was just unbelievable. He wasn't seeking recognition but people understood him and realized he was a guy who was committed to the people. He was in no one's pocket, and that was his great strength. I'll tell you one other story.

I'll tell you probably lots of them, and this is jumping a good bit ahead, when he got out of the Senate race, against my better judgment, it was probably the worst political decision I ever made for my own standpoint personally not politically, was to get in that Senate race in 1988, a race that certainly looked winnable. People said, "Well you could've got elected," and I said, "I made my decision to get out on the assumption I would." That's right. And so Lawton came down and became the Chairman of the Collins Center at Florida State and he would teach at the University of Florida.

I came along and then decided that after I got out, I really wanted to do something different. At 59, I wanted to change the direction of my life. I had always wanted to teach. I was a teacher in the Paratroops, troop information and education, and enjoyed it and so I became a teacher. Doug Cook is somebody you need to talk to if you don't have him. He's one of Lawton's closest friends. Do you know Doug?

JD: No! I don't know that name at all.

RA: Okay, well you should know him then. Doug Cook. I'll get you his number. He was with Chiles in Washington and then came down with him at the Collins Center and then became his Budget Director and then became head of the Healthcare Administration.

But he wanted to get us both together, teach each others' classes, so I came and taught his class at the University of Florida and then I went down to Miami. It might have been my first semester. I started teaching first at FIU, later of course taught at FAU and became a faculty member for five years before I came to FSU. So he was teaching my class at FIU on the Tamiami Campus and we were talking and I said to the students, "Now all of you should think some day about running for office. It's a humbling experience but it's important for the sake of a democratic society to get good people wanting to do the right things." I said, "Now Senator Chiles and I, we're yesterday's news", and Doug Cook came all the way up out of his chair and he said, "Oh, no, no, no, no, no!" I couldn't figure out what was going on.

Lawton and I had a rest break and we were both in the restroom and he said, "One of the things I wanted to do was to come tell you something." And I said, "What's that?" and he said, "I'm announcing for Governor tomorrow." I tell you, I liked to fell out, just, I couldn't believe it. I said, "What do you mean?"

JD: Wow. While you were in the men's room.

RA: He said, "Well Buddy McKay and I are going to get together and Buddy's going to handle all the", he used a word that I don't use but all the "bad stuff", and I said, "Lawton, Buddy's one of the most able people we've ever had in State government and I congratulate you on that, but when you're Governor, you can't get rid of anything, it's all going to be yours." But he had made up his mind. I couldn't believe that. And of course, I appeared at some of the rallies when he announced and really started running. I just couldn't believe it. Here he and I, I thought, were pretty close.

In fact, Lawton called me the day I announced I was getting out of the Senate race and he said, "How you feeling?" I said, "I'm doing fine, Lawton", and went on and on and on. Doug Cook is the guy who could tell you this story better. Then I said, "Is there anything particular you want to talk about?", because Lawton had a tendency to agonize sometimes over decisions. I never saw that as Governor. In the Senate, for some reason, maybe the everyday decisions are more momentous in turn than most of what you do as Governor. Doug Cook needs to tell you about some of that.

JD: Did you notice that in the state legislature?

RA: No. I never ever saw –

JD: That is the agonizing.

RA: Well I don't think so. And Lawton didn't risk sometimes early on. When he got to the Senate, he really developed and of course he went all the way up to being Chairman of the Budget Committee.

But he just agonized, and I never saw that as Governor. But I also never, ever saw, I only know this from having talked to him about the Bork decision and whether he did the right thing or not and I said, "Personally I think you did", but I said, "That's yesterday, Lawton. You need to put all that out of your mind. You've got this campaign going." He was frankly a little concerned whether he could pull off his reelection. I don't know why he thought that.

JD: You think he was just really tired? Worn down?

RA: Yes. Oh yeah! That's what it was all about. That's really what it was. He was just exhausted, fatigued. I just said, "Lawton! The worst thing that could happen to you is you lose!" and I said, "I don't think that's going to happen." Every time you run there's always that possibility. I never knew that he went through that at the time, but I will tell you that I never saw Lawton be indecisive.

One of the things that he told Doug Cook and Doug Cook tells this story well. He told me, and that is, he said, "Rube may not always be right, but he's never in doubt", and I thought what a compliment and then when he said something about it in his second inauguration, I was sort of hurt that he had mentioned that generally. Once Lawton made up his mind, he was alright, but he went through this thing on Bork that I just don't think he should have. To me, frankly, I told him it would have been an easy decision to vote against Bork, be that as it may. I just think Lawton was terrific.

Ultimately he made up his own mind according to his conscience regardless. Period. He didn't get quite as far out front with reapportionment as I got out, he didn't get quite as far out front with Civil Rights as I got. The only thing was, he was so strong, that he was just a tremendous legislator and frankly, as I say, made a great governor.

JD: What would you say were his greatest skills as a legislator?

RA: As a legislator? I think getting along with his colleagues. I think Lawton got along with his colleagues a little bit better than I did. Lawton was sort of 'one of the boys' and I never was. You know, I don't drink and so much of the socialization in the legislature is around the bottle, of course Lawton never had a drinking problem at all you know, but he was able to socialize. Even more than that, he was a hunter and I wasn't a hunter. I wasn't a great outdoorsman, didn't profess to be.

Lawton just naturally got along with his peers I think better than I did. Plus, people respected Lawton. You could disagree with Lawton, but in the end you knew when he made a decision it was his decision. His closest friend could have thought something else. Lawton just had enormous integrity and in his own way was so folksy.

Of course, Bob Sikes must have turned over in his grave when Lawton used the word “he coon” because I had never heard that prior to Lawton saying it in that debate with Jeb Bush. I laughed! Because that’s what Bob Sikes was known as.

Lawton had a certain skill politically that I didn’t have and very few people ever have and that is he could come up with a folksy thing, old saying that wasn’t part of my vocabulary, just like when he talked about while it’s just before the light of day on the He Coon, and what about the dog –

JD: A bit dog barks?

RA: Bit dog barks. He was fantastic. In fact, Lance de Haven, whom you may or may not know, is now one of my closest friends, attributes a remark to Lawton that was important in terms of bringing the cracker vote around in the race against Bush.

JD: Reelection? In 1994?

RA: Yeah, ‘cause that’s the first time Bush ran. ‘Cause Martinez – but it was in ‘94. Okay, ‘cause ‘90 was Martinez. In which Bush started talking Spanish? And Lawton said, “I don’t speak Spanish, I speak cracker.” Lawton was able to relate to a whole group of people frankly. A lot of the Civil Rights thing, when I got up on the bussing thing, which I felt very strongly about, a segment of the state sort of gave up on me, but Lawton had such a wonderful way of thinking at the moment the right thing to say that could relate to people and particularly to a decisive group.

If you assume that a third of the state is Democrat, a third is Republican, talking about voting patterns, a third Independent, or more now, but so much of the Independent voters, what people call the cracker vote, personally I don’t mind if I was called a cracker, you know. Some people want to assume it’s a pejorative term. I don’t believe that at all.

JD: I’ve written some about that myself.

RA: I always tell people when they talk about red-necks –

JD: That’s different.

RA: But even red-necks, the reason it’s red is ‘cause they work in the sun, you know. So you have to be careful on that.

JD: But he was able to use just the right touch, so that it would not anger people. Because if you go too much on that, you can turn people off, if you go too far with it, if you start talking about the negatives too much, it may backfire. But yet he was able to do it in just the right moderation to make it positive.

RA: His political sagacity, which is a term – but when you go back and see that on video in that debate when he said that “the Coon walks just before the light of day.” Jeb Bush had absolutely no idea what he was talking about. I didn’t have an awful lot of idea about it myself.

JD: But everybody was talking about it the next day. They were thinking about it all day long.

RA: Oh yeah. Lance feels like that may have been, because you know Bush ran the most sophisticated money-backed campaign Florida had ever seen. I mean, he was not only a good candidate, physically and otherwise, he was articulate, but gosh he had so much money on it, and Lawton only won with 32,000 votes or something like that?

JD: But he lost Polk County. He lost in a lot of his stronghold and I think that was really sad for him.

RA: Well, a lot of that frankly was the tight campaign, I believe the most sophisticated campaign that’s been run in Florida. Governor Bush just brought in pros. They knew what they were doing. Just like Karl Rove. What he’s done otherwise I don’t know but he’s a brilliant strategist in trying to create the context of the campaign.

Lawton just, as I say, had a tremendous integrity matched with an old folksy attitude and political smarts. And Lawton was also fearless. The combination is fairly rare. That’s how he related to so much of the Panhandle. Of course, coming from Polk County is one thing. Coming from Dade is another one.

Of course, Cramer was calling him an ultra-liberal and Kirk was calling me an ultra-liberal, and during the general election, we met with Spessard Holland in a rally in Lake City I believe, and had our picture taken and Spessard had his arms around both of us. After that, there wasn’t any problem with being called liberal. Even though Claude Kirk ran against Spessard Holland earlier and called him an ultra-liberal. So Governor Kirk didn’t have much credibility on that issue. But it’s an issue that can be used and frankly the reality of it you have to deal with that.

When you examine all our records, I mean, in certain areas we were liberal, but when I left as Governor after eight years, Bill Hamilton, a pollster, showed me a poll that they had taken. I didn’t take it, they just stuck it on to something else. Someone was running a state poll on how they viewed me, liberal, moderate or conservative. As I recall, it was 30% conservative, 30% liberal, and 40% moderate. He said, “You know, if you had tried to do that,” he said, “This is the perfect thing but if you tried to do it you’d have never done it. It just worked out that way.” People didn’t accept that either one of us was ultra on anything.

Lawton also was able on a large scale to present this folksy attitude. A lot of people can do it on one-to-one, but it’s pretty hard to do it like he did on that television debate, ‘cause he was like Abraham Lincoln in terms of, you get clobbered on something and

he's got a story that deflates the whole proposition you're being criticized for in one brief story.

JD: Can we go back a little bit to the U.S. Senate, 18 years, and eight of those years when you were Governor? Can you remember anything during those first eight years that you consulted with Senator Chiles national legislation?

RA: Oh yeah. Well the first thing we did, we teamed up on the mini-convention of 1974 in Kansas City on urging the Democratic Party to bring some sunshine into the meetings and all of that. Lawton and I both were active on the Sunshine Bill. People will often confuse, and the press does a good bit, the Financial Disclosure Amendment and the Ethics Amendment of 1976 that I proposed and by the initiative. The Legislature objected to it tremendously because it stopped the revolving door on the Legislature.

Lawton and I felt strongly that we needed to open it up so we did that at the mini-convention while we didn't open it up as much as we'd like. There are certain things that a party would want to reserve to itself whether you call it back room or otherwise. It allows you to build a consensus without aborting it, without revealing your whole hand. We did that and then Lawton asked me to come up to Washington and testify and he introduced the bill that opened up the Federal government.

Here again, I don't think he got a lot of credit for it, why I don't know, but it's the bill that advanced that legislation. I came up at his request because frankly there were too many people promoting me to run for President at that time. Now bear in mind, I didn't run when I had a respectable amount of people urging me and when I did run, no one was pushing me. That's just the reality of it. So he asked me to come up there.

What also is a funny story, I go up there to testify and he's the only one there at this big table. I sit at the witness table and I'm the only witness. We have a row of press that's very interested in opening up all of government and this whole huge number of television cameras behind me. I'm the only one at this table, and Lawton is the only one up there. Frankly, I had to restrain myself from laughing.

It's like, there was a little hamburger place across from Law School and Lawton and I would go over there and have hamburgers and a cup of coffee and I thought to myself 'here are these two guys that not too long ago was just quietly having a cup of coffee across the street from the Law School without any attention', and all this attention and it's just him and it's just me. And of course, he's got the legislation passed and I testified on that.

JD: It was a hearing?

RA: Yeah, it was a formal hearing of his committee! But you see, he was the only one there! Now I wasn't that familiar with the hearings. Now later on, when I became part of Carter's Cabinet, the biggest problem a member of the Cabinet has up there is

having time to do your job because every little subgroup, I was in charge of trade negotiations for the United States, and I mean everybody wants you to come up and talk and you can't do it. So I'm familiar with them coming in and out. I wasn't that familiar on something I thought this substantial and it's just two old buddies up there creating all this news behind them. As I say, I really almost had to fight to keep from breaking out in a big grin because it wasn't that funny of a proposition.

JD: Do you remember what year that was?

RA: I don't think it was too far after the mini-convention in '74.

JD: So you were Governor then.

RA: Oh I was Governor. He wanted me to come up as Governor to testify. And it was his legislation and I think it passed. Well I know it passed 'cause that's the one that opened it up. And then of course, one other thing that Lawton and I did together, in 1972, we were both steering pretty clear on taking positions on it, but the fact of the matter was, we were both quietly favoring Scoop Jackson.

I had really gotten to where I liked Scoop Jackson a lot, and of course that's when Governor Wallace was making his big play and of course Governor Wallace wound up carrying Florida's Presidential Primary. He carried every county in the State. But Scoop was closer to Lawton. I became close to Scoop basically because of Lawton's relationship with him up there. During that campaign, we got a commitment out of Scoop Jackson on the big cypress to help us with the Federal funding of it, which proved to be extremely important. While we didn't publicly make a lot of noise, we helped him basically where we could but you couldn't help anybody that much 'cause Wallace was swamping everywhere, including all the way down to Dade County, all 67 counties.

When the election was over, Scoop Jackson (who I think is a guy that should have been President at some time or another), I think he was that competent, did everything that he said he would do in trying to help us. So I went up and testified for the federal purchase in creating this Freshwater Preserve of the Big Cypress. That's something that Lawton and I collaborated on. Of course, in 1972, we got to the Land Conservation Act of 1972.

He had created two big bond issues when the Constitution became effective in 1968; we could have general obligation bonds which you had never been able to have, even if they were secondarily pledged. Bob Graham played a very key role in this. I got the Legislature to allow me to offer \$40 million had a \$200 million purchase of environmentally endangered lands and \$40 million for the recreation park. We almost doubled the park system at that time, and so I was able to go up there strong by virtue of having a check in my pocket for \$40 million which the state was prepared to give the federal government so they could begin purchases in the creation of the Big Cypress.

But Lawton played a key role in that. He got credit, but he should have gotten more basically than he did because the key guy was Scoop Jackson, he was Chairman of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. Dante Fascell carried the water a great deal in the Senate and of course it being a big project that brought in Federal government, it wasn't hard for the House to support it. But that was something that Lawton and I collaborated on.

And you know, if Lawton Chiles would have asked me to come up there, I would have done it. He didn't ask very often and I believe I came up every time he wanted me to, because we had that close relationship and frankly it was one of mutual respect and admiration.

Over the years we developed affection. I wasn't that close to Lawton through the state legislature and into Congress. I will tell you that Lawton underwent a religious experience and he had a leap in his faith and he and Sam Nunn started a little prayer group that I attended a couple of times, When I was in Washington, when I could, and frankly, that's when I really started feeling the closest to Lawton.

JD: Do you remember when that was? Was it in his last term?

RA: I think it may have been when I was the United States Trade representative, so it could have been probably '79 or '80. I don't know that. Rhea is the one who could tell you that.

JD: Now I remember. You were in Washington at that time. You were in D.C. and so you would have seen each other a lot more often.

RA: Lawton was a good guy to begin with. We all have times when we have growth in our faith. He had a major one and I saw that and again, I never was 'one of the boys', you know. I used to get kidded, I was a 'do-gooder', and then David Lawrence started calling it 'St. Reubin' which I really disliked immensely.

All of us are aware of our own shortcomings so please don't make us better than we are because we might not know how to handle it. At any rate, that's when I really started becoming close to Lawton and frankly toward the end, very close to Lawton. After that, which would have been probably his last term in the Senate 'cause he got out in '88, so this would have been '82, past the time when I was up there, I think we became pretty close.

It just developed from a liking sort of thing became love. And I loved Lawton I guess for the person that maybe he became or maybe had always been and I didn't know it. So toward the last, we really were close. That's what stunned me when out of nowhere he said, "I'm going to announce for Governor tomorrow." I just thought he would've said something to me about it. But he didn't.

JD: Oh by the way, you're in the bathroom between classes.

RA: Yeah, I'm in the bathroom and 'I'm gonna announce for Governor tomorrow'. And then of course, I think it changed his life a great deal. Rhea can tell you that because both of them kept a regular daily devotional together, which frankly I have done for most of my adult life. Rhea is such a strong person and they were just made for each other and they fed off the strength of it, but Lawton got an awful lot of strength from Rhea, because he's told me this, and I'm sure that she drew the same thing from him. While we were always good friends, better than average, we became much closer friends.

I remember when Lawton had his picture hanging as Governor. He asked me to speak, which I did. Right off the bat to begin with he asked me to be Master of Ceremonies, I think for his first inauguration. I participated in each of his two inaugurations. I was honored by it and that was done. He then wrote me a letter thanking me and I got that letter he wrote to me, after he had died. At the bottom of that letter, and I still have a copy of it, he said, "Well at least they are no longer saying Lawton Who and Reubin Who". So we enjoyed a tremendous relationship. There were people much closer to Lawton than me, don't misunderstand me. He was a good guy.

When I moved to Tallahassee in 1997 toward the end of his second term, I told my wife, Donna Lou, that I'm not going to bother him. He's building a house out in the woods and he's tied up. I said I'd wait 'til he gets out of office and then we'll have some good times together since he's going to be staying up here, but we never had them. It was a blow to a lot of people for him to go out of nowhere. But as Rhea said, he left at the height of his game. Remarkable man who really did a tremendous amount of good. I can't remember a time when I thought that he was improperly motivated on a major position, he just wasn't. He just sort of gravitated to do what he thought was right and once you realized he was following his conscience there was nothing you could say otherwise about it.

I've really missed him. I've missed him but one of the great things Lawton did, infant mortality was a big thing for him. Children were a big thing for him. And Mike, you don't need to worry about people with my color hair politically. We're organized, okay? Children aren't. And that's why it was such a wonderful thing to see Lawton becoming their advocate, their #1 advocate, when they didn't have an awful lot of advocacy. He left a great history and left a great legacy. I wish you well in what you're doing.

JD: Well, I really appreciate your time with me today. It's been a little bit over an hour I think.

RA: Well it's been enjoyable for me because I think you're writing about one of the best people America has seen in many years.

JD: Well it's quite a daunting task ahead of me and it's going to be a life's work probably.

RA: It is a lot of work but you can do it.

JD: I'm really hoping to be able to take it up, I really am. I really appreciate your time with me today. I really do. Is there anything at all you think I have missed that you would like to state for the record?

RA: I think one of the things I should have said was Lawton drew great strength out of Rhea. They had an exceptional relationship that not only grew in faith and otherwise. Rhea is an extremely able woman and so she really became one of his key advisors and I think that probably a lot of the strength that he had and confidence, and I don't say that he lacked confidence, but that relationship was the ultimate symbiotic relationship in which they just drew strength from each other.

JD: Well, you know that's what everybody says. Everybody says that. Ed Price says that.

RA: Now he's one of the few guys I put in the category as Roy Collins.

JD: He was my first interview.

RA: He's as fine a person as I've met in State government. He calls Mary Collins and me for our birthdays. Of course I talk to him between times as well.