

CENTER FOR FLORIDA HISTORY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: J. ALLISON DEFOOR
INTERVIEWER: JAMES M. DENHAM
PLACE: STATE CAPITAL BUILDING
DATE OF INTERVIEW: APRIL 18, 2000

A= ALLISON DEFOOR
M= JAMES M. DENHAM, ("MIKE")

Transcribed by: Debby Turner

M: I am sitting here with the former sheriff of Monroe County, Allison DeFoor, and today is April 18, 2000. Mr. DeFoor, can you tell us a little bit about your background, where you grew up, where you went to school?

A: Sure. I think my claims to fame for your purposes would be being one of the few sheriffs to run for statewide office and belonging to a very, very exclusive fraternity of ex-judge sheriffs. There are only, to my knowledge, six of us, at least alive, at this point - me; Bob Butterworth, the current Attorney General; George Bresher who took his place; Bob Floyd who used to be mayor of Miami in, I think in '33 and then went on to a pretty interesting and eclectic career; David Strahn who now runs a mediation school out of Orlando and Tom Romberger who now has a very large law firm out of Orlando and Tallahassee.

The interesting thing about each of us is the eclecticism that seems to run as a common thread through all of us. I guess anyone who would want to be a judge and a sheriff is probably a pretty eclectic person.

I ended up in law enforcement kind of backhandedly. For some reason, when I was in my first year of law school I was in the top 15% of my class. I wasn't working my way through. I was living at the beach and was a little bored and started a graduate program at the University of South Florida while I was at Stetson Law School. I originally tried to get permission but realized that wasn't going to happen, so I just went ahead and did it.

To get your masters degree while you are in law school is pretty stupid to begin with. It became stupider when my family kind of threw me out and I had to earn by own living. So, I ended up working my way through graduate school and law school at the same time, which is even worse. I got a Masters in criminology. Specifically, they had two tracks, police administration or corrections; corrections didn't interest me all that much at the time, so I got one in police administration. That would become very, very valuable to me when I ran for sheriff. We will get to that..

M: So what year would that have been?

A: I got out of both of those programs in 1979. Went to Key West in 1979 and became an assistant public defender for a year.

M: Where did you do your undergrad?

A: USF.

M: Okay, USF, and then law school at Stetson. Then at the same time you were in law school you entered the criminal justice masters program at USF. That was all in 1979 when you got out?

A: Got out, went to Key West and became an assistant public defender. The State Attorney's office probably would have been my preference at the time, but was pretty thoroughly corrupt.

M: So, that was your first job out of school.

A: Nine months out of law school I tried my first murder case because the boss fired the entire felony division.

M: You are a public defender then? You were defending a murder case?

A: Yes and then a year out of law school we ran an obscure...about seven of us got together and said we either have to change this town or we have to get the hell out of here.

We ran one in our midst for, a guy named Kirk Zelch, for state attorney. We didn't stand a chance. The old guard was going to run over us like a freight train and a guy named Carl Hiaasen came down, then working for the *Miami Herald* as a reporter, and headed up a crack investigative team that turned the whole town upside down, showed where all crawly things were. The current incumbent state attorney who was running for re-election was actually removed by the Governor. By then the old guard was sort of stunned just before the election.

M: Really.

A: We ended up winning. I came over and joined his office and became head of the narcotics task force for Kirk Zelch and we indicted just about everything that moved. We put 8% of the lawyers in Key West in jail. We ultimately RICOed [Racketeering Influenced Criminal Organization] the police department as a continuing criminal enterprise. The city attorney, county attorney, state attorney, and public defender would ultimately go to jail.

M: And you were acting under the auspices of the county prosecutor who won the surprise election and then fought the war?

A: The reformed sheriff had taken office a couple of years before we won.

M: His name was?

A: Billy Freeman. Billy was a very interesting ex-county commissioner and ex-state representative. He was an honest guy who felt the incumbent was not doing a good job

and he was at least incompetent if not corrupt and ran against him and beat the incumbent sheriff, Bobby Brown, who went on to become supervisor of elections as things can only happen in the Keys.

He started making his deputies take polygraph tests and 60% of them quit on the spot - wouldn't take the test. His chief deputy took the test, failed it and he ultimately became my opponent after being Sheriff Freeman's opponent on two other occasions.

M: Okay, Sheriff Freeman was in office how long before?

A: He was in 12 years I believe.

M: Okay, so he was there from say '70-79?

A: No, no. He got in in about '76 because we got in in '80. No, he got in in '78; '76 or '78, I can't remember which.

We started doing a lot of the investigations that cleaned up Everglades City, cleaned up Key West, and then a vacancy opened up in the upper Keys for a judgeship my third year out of law school and I ran for that.

I will tell you a story that kind of captures how I won. I thought I would run in Southern style - run once to get known and once to win, and was out knocking on doors one day and had developed kind of a reputation for leading the raids. I knocked on the door of a bondsman who was affiliated with, as bondsman usually are, with the criminal community, and I had caused him a lot of pain because I had started actually calling in his bonds, which the previous state attorney did not do. They had a nice little racket going. So, when he opens up the door, he jumps back, looks to see if I am alone, and I look to see if he is alone, and he says in his thick Conch accent says, "Boy, what are you doing out on a hot summer's day like this?" It is July, hot as hell and I am knocking on doors. I said, "Benito, I am looking for votes. I guess there is no point in stopping here." He said, "Oh no, no, no brother. I am with you. My family and friends are with you." I said, "Why? I hurt you badly." He says, "Oh, we are gonna put your ass in traffic court where you can't hurt nobody." So, I won with about 69% of the vote against three opponents.

M: So, Freeman would have still been sheriff at that time.

A: Freeman was still sheriff.

M: How would you characterize his regime as sheriff?

A: Very, very, very progressive. He brought the department into the 20th century. He was scrupulously honest. He got the department accredited. He took up his budget when the commissioners would not cooperate on it, I think, on two occasions, and on one got money out of the state cabinet above and beyond what the county gave him. He cleaned up the department.

M: So, his decade as sheriff, a rough decade as sheriff, was pretty positive in your view?

A: Very, very positive. One of the best sheriffs this state has ever seen, and he was a very interesting and complex guy.

To be blunt, he had a drinking problem and ended up dropping his gun one day in a bar and Governor Graham called him and told him he could either be sheriff or he could drink, but you can't drink and be sheriff. So, he quit, and that really freed up his mind. He went back and got his college degree. He finished his masters, I think, by the time he died.

M: Was he a local Key West man?

A: A Key West boy, born and raised in Key West.

M: How old was he, roughly, when you got down there?

A: He was probably in his late 40's or early 50's.

M: Now, you just moved into Key West in 1979. Were you acquainted at all with what it was like beforehand?

A: When I came in, I had no idea that it was that corrupt. I didn't know two people when I got to Key West and one of them was the public defender.

M: So, you just kind of took this job cold and you didn't know anybody down there.

A: Liked the town and moved to town, didn't know two people, and three years later I am a judge. The Keys were good to me. We then basically began taking - our little crew of people began taking the places of either the corrupt people who were removed or the incompetent people who we ran off - and eventually, virtually all of our group, ended up as either circuit or county judges.

I finished my term on the bench, had a scrape that cost me a little bit politically - got a reprimand from the Supreme Court - while I was there. So, I was kind of feeling a little dispirited. I was unopposed for re-election but something in my heart said, time to move on. So, I left at the end of my term, called up Reagan Toney, Chief Assistant State Attorney, and I said I ain't gonna file like everybody thinks I am - you got until noon tomorrow and you can take my place. So, he did.

I went into private practice, and that turned out to be the right thing for the long term. It gave me some time to cool off, to rethink where I was coming from, to digest that mid-career screw up and to get much better known in Marathon, which is the firm I joined and is based there.

M: So that would have been what year?

A: That would have been '87. By late '87 I had become Chairman of the Republican Party in Monroe County and then in '88 I got a very interesting call from Sheriff Freeman at home one Sunday afternoon and he said the following - I had been gearing up to run for the State Senate against Larry Plummer, so I had a sort of a campaign going at the time, and he called up and said, "I am not going to run for re-election. I've got lung cancer and am gravely ill. I want you to know that, and you know it now 24 hours before my chief deputy will know it. You have always talked about being sheriff and, now is your chance."

So, I probably made \$400 worth of phone calls in the next 24 hours lining up the support. Back then, party didn't matter down there as much as honest people versus crooks. The

state attorney was an ally because I helped him get elected. By then the public defender was his former chief assistant and former law partner who I had helped get appointed when we indicted the public defender.

We had sort of a, for lack of a better word, a political machine. It was for a good purpose. We figured out a long time ago that the bad people conspired, so it was about time that the good people did. We were very, very afraid that the bad guys would try and take the sheriff's office, and that would have undone everything that we had done in the way of reforms.

M: Did they have a candidate?

A: They had Frank Hernandez, the Chief Deputy who had failed his polygraph test. He was once again the Democratic nominee. He beat the undersheriff in the Democratic primary. By then a lot of the progressives were in the Republican Party, and the Democratic Party, particularly in a low turnout second primary environment which is what happened in this case, the undersheriff who had the lead going into the primary, was defeated by the bad guy, because with the small turnout, they had enough bad guys to make a mark. So, our prudence paid off. I just buried Frank Hernandez. I got 62-63%.

M: Did Freeman come out on your side?

A: He did not.

M: Why?

A: His wife was running for Superintendent of Schools. So, he did not, but to his credit, the undersheriff, who I made quite clear to him that if he ran, that he could anticipate that post election I would not take any retributive action again, but the post or position of undersheriff would no longer exist.

M: If he ran?

A: And he did. So, I campaigned on the under sheriff's job being a redundancy, and this is where the tricky part politically came in. Sheriff Freeman and Under Sheriff Meg who went on to become undersheriff of Charlotte County under Worch, were classic command and control hierarchal organizational men. That is the way they were trained, that is the way they were raised, and that is the way people thought in their era. I was not.

I was a classicist I believed in decentralization to the maximum level possible. I believed in taking the risk that your frontline people really know what is going on better than you do as the general. It is classic - armies go through these conflicts in terms of management style. In peacetime they become more hierarchal and in wartime they become more decentralized by necessity, and it was my theory that at the time with crime rates then going up, we were in the functional equivalent of war and we should decentralize. It was also the beginning of community-based policing, problem-oriented policing.

So, I had to campaign on those themes to address where the people wanted to go, where the frontline troops wanted to go, where I thought we wanted to go but at the same time be true to Sheriff Freeman's legacy because he had left a great legacy. I finally was able to articulate it in a concept that every revolution needs to either be renewed or it will

expire, and Sheriff Freeman's revolution then being 12 years old needed to either be renewed or it would die.

M: Right.

A: And they had created such a hierarchal enterprise that all decision making flowed up to the undersheriff who then just went under from the weight of it. He couldn't process the paper; much less make the right decisions.

So, when I won, we began - I was only there two years (I'll talk about how I left in a minute), but we probably did more change in two years than certainly anybody had seen in 12 years in the department before. We changed everything. We changed the weapons. We went to automatic weapons from revolvers. We changed the radios, codes, and radio system. We privatized the jail, which turned out to not be a very successful experiment, but was innovative nonetheless. We went from three offices to eight. We went from nine functional layers in the department down to four. We totally decimated the upper middle management layers because they weren't productive and for every major I got rid of I could hire two deputies.

The institution was in need of reform. When I first started going around, they introduced me to my chief fiscal officer and my comptroller. I asked why I needed two and they said they kept an eye on each other. I said they look a lot alike and was told they were sisters and they lived together. So, there was a lot of..

M: What was your budget when you took over?

A: 23 million, I think, something like that. When I left it was up around 27 or 28.

M: Can you go through the subjects of the budget or divisions of the budget? For example, how much would it be for the deputies?

A: For personnel, I can't remember that. The jail was a big problem. We were then under court order from Judge Hoover. In fact, he came down one day to inspect the jail as he wanted to do. If Judge Hoover has a pound to screw in, he turns it one turn at a time and he came down and said, "You guys better make this place look good." They said, "We will boss." He shows up and leans against the wall, comes away and there is a stripe of paint up his suit arm.

There was also a bit of a cultural conflict. I brought in a bunch of Republican, very progressive police folks who had come from the upper Keys station which had been functioning on its own and into a culture that had been dominated by Democrats and Conchs in Key West.

Sergeant Gonzalez, for instance, I had seen him on Election Day and he was carrying a Hernandez sign. He said, I will never forget it, he said, "Stick it up your ass." He said this the day before. As soon as I got elected sheriff I, of course, called for Sergeant Gonzalez. He came in like he was about to be executed. I said, "Listen. You can cuss me all you want to after 5 o'clock and before 9 o'clock, but from 9 to 5, your ass is mine." I told him as long as he did his job, we would get along fine. He walked out and one of the majors said he thought I was going to get rid of him and I said no, not now. I could get rid of anybody and it can't be claimed to be political, because he is my poster boy and I didn't

get rid of him.

I was not going to do political firing. I had some top-level people who had been there just too long. I sent one of them off to Harvard for a fellowship to get him accredited to have him go out and be a police chief, and I started spotting talented young people and bringing them in. Steve Casey is now the #3 at the Department of Juvenile Justice. I plucked him out of beverage, sent him off to college, then graduate school and to the national academy.

I set up a program where the department would pay for people to go to college, and that was pretty innovative in its time. The bottom line of all of this is that we ended up with a crime rate that was 43% lower in the city of Key West than Dade County. We shared the same criminal base. So, what we did was very, very effective.

M: Geographically, the traveling back and forth between the upper Keys and lower Keys was really difficult.

A: Very difficult. It was broken into three zones. They each had one office when I started and several when I finished, but this was before cell phones and it was a big waste of time going back and forth, but you had to do it.

M: The radios probably didn't carry, did they?

A: We had three dispatchers, so you would have to be handed off. It, again, was difficult. They have now put in 800-megahertz systems and they allegedly can do the whole county.

We had two shot deputies during my tenure and one reserve deputy killed in an automobile accident, plus we buried Sheriff Freeman. So, I spent a lot of time at funerals. Actually, the first shot deputy was two hours after midnight when I took over. They said that Sheriff Freeman and I were both called because they said they didn't know who to call because I wasn't to be sworn in until the next morning, and they actually didn't know where I was. I figured like they did that I didn't need to worry about telling them where I was until the next morning. I was staying up a friend's house at Sugarloaf.

They actually did find me, to their credit. They said Freeman and I asked the same three questions in the exact order - is he okay, have you captured the perpetrator and what time did it happen. Each of us was hoping it happened on the other guy's watch. It happened on my watch.

M: What was the one thing when you took over the sheriff's office that surprised you the most?

A: I am used to doing a lot of things at once. You know anybody who goes to law school and graduate school at the same time probably has an attention deficit disorder. So, I am used to writing books while I am on the bench, teaching and doing all of these things at once. I didn't have time to turn around when I was sheriff. One day my wife..

M: So, it was even more action packed and demanding.

A: She said, man you were really absorbed during that one. You might want to read it -

there was a great article in the *Tampa Tribune* just about the time I ran for Lt. Governor. They did a profile on me. Paul Wilborn wrote it. He happened to be there just at the time we had a shot bailiff in the upper Keys and so he really got a wild ride, and the article is a real good profile.

M: Well good. I'll have to.. That would have been what year?

A: In '90.

M: November was the election.

A: It was just before I was named on the ticket. That would have been either June, I think.

M: June 1990.

A: If you can't find it for any reason, all of my papers are archived at the University of South Florida. Paul Camp has them. You can get a copy of it there. I told him nobody can see them until I am dead, but I will make an exception in your case.

M: I'll get it from Leland.

A: I was just basically minding my own business in 1990 and I get this call from, well actually it is a little more contrived than that.

A friend of mine, one of my political mentors, and I were watching the Martinez campaign from afar. His running mate had already announced that he was going to run for Ag Commissioner, Bobby Brantley. We sort of conspired to see if we couldn't get my name on the short list of people to be considered for Lt. Governor, and that really was the extent of our ambitions. We didn't think for a second we would be able to get to the head of the list. We just figured if we made the short list we would get a little press and for familiar purposes, that would be okay.

Well, the damn things starts to get some legs after awhile and I get this call from Jeb Bush and he said would you consent to your name being considered for Lt. Governor, and I said yeah. I asked if the only place where crime and the environment intersected in the whole word was me. I think he said yeah. I had sent up a lot of environmental...to give you a little bit of background. The environment is a big part of law enforcement in the Keys. Even when I was a judge 25 years..

M: Yeah, maybe you can go into that in a little bit more detail. Incidentally, was that the first time you had met Jeb Bush?

A: No. He had been Party Chairman in Dade when I was Party Chairman in Monroe. We shared congressional seats and senate seats.

M: That was in '90.

A: '87 and '88. In '88 we had swept - Republicans who had been in the doghouse for a 100 years - basically swept the field. So, we were kind of a little bit of a hot property with the state party, and then Tom Slade who became party chairman, was a dear friend of

mine. The environment and crime in the Keys were probably 25% of my caseload when I was a judge in misdemeanor court - lobster violations, fishing violations, mangrove construction, and I had kind of gotten a reputation for doing innovative stuff.

M: So, you probably had a lot of work to do to learn what was going on and to learn the laws.

A: It is a whole different world and, of course, the environment is the foundation of the economy down there, so I was pretty tough on them. I put them in jail and sometimes made them do innovative things - made them bulldoze things, put stuff back, if they killed a turtle replaced with two turtles. Someone asked me where he could get a turtle and I told him that it was his problem. Either he found turtles or he could go to jail. He got two from Sea World.

So, when I was sheriff I set up an environmental task force and by then had gotten on the board of a couple of environmental groups in the keys, the Marine Sanctuary, Florida Keys Land and Sea Trust, and I kind of became known as both a law enforcement figure and an environmental figure. So, I guess that was an attraction to Martinez. I ended up actually leading an expedition from down the coast of the Yucatan from Cozumel to Belize City and just as I am getting ready to leave, I get this weird e-mail from Duke University, which was actually command central for our expedition and they said they didn't know what is going on, but Jeb Bush says you need to be in Miami today.

So, I don't have any suits or anything. I called from Cozumel and got one of my deputies to meet me in Miami with a suit and Jeb sticks me on a plane, flies me to Tallahassee and I had dinner with Mac Stefanovich, who was the Governor's former Chief of Staff, and Brian Ballard, the current Chief of Staff. The probing occurs and it is a Latex glove inspection. It was an interesting experience. Then they called back about a week later and I flew up to Tallahassee with my wife, met with the Governor at the mansion, and he asked me to join his ticket.

M: Was that the first time you met him?

A: No, we actually had, interestingly, been friends in Tampa, where I grew up, where he had been mayor. When he first ran for mayor as a Democrat many, many years ago, and then when he became Governor we had two groundings of vessels in the Keys and he came down. He took a very serious interest in the environment and in the keys. I escorted him around. We renewed our friendship. We had him down - had a little land trust turn into a big land trust - and on Earth Day of '87 or '88 we opened a Museum of Natural History and had him come down to dedicate it. So, we had renewed our acquaintance.

M: I know that when you were elected as sheriff, you kind of turned some heads on your background in terms of the other sitting sheriffs. There had not been a lot of people like you who had run for sheriff or become sheriff. What was that like? What was your first Florida Sheriff's Association meeting like?

A: It was interesting.

M: Or, if you just want to lead into that.

A: I can get there from here. There were two lawyer sheriffs at the time - me and Sheriff Rice over in Pinellas. Most of the sheriffs weren't real fond of lawyers to begin with. There was Sheriff Don Hunter who wore silk jackets because he was from Naples and Sheriff MacDougal. I will tell you stories on each of those. I kind of got into a little bit of trouble my first sheriff's meeting because the *Tampa Tribune* had done an article about the baby sheriff's school. I had graduated from it and taught at the baby judge's school and at the National Judicial Academy.

So, I think in some respects I was looking down my nose going into the whole idea of baby sheriff's school and I am prone to witticisms that sometimes look less appropriate in retrospect than they did at the time. So, I made some crack to the reporter from the *Tribune* that I went in expecting something on the level of roping and spitting and was actually very, very impressed

M: This was after..

A: with the intellectual quality of what was presented, which I thought was a compliment, but was interpreted by the sheriff of Ocala, Marion County, who had a flat top and I should have known that our styles would be different. He took umbrage and I got word the night before the general meeting the next day, the closed general meeting, that he was basically going to jump my shit and that I better get up there and get right back at him or I would be in a low place for a long time.

M: How long was the baby sheriff's school?

A: It was a week, I think.

M: This is an intensive program telling you this is the kind of thing you can expect, the financial obligations of the office, etc., etc.

A: It was very good content.

M: I would imagine that sheriffs elected without any previous law enforcement training found this useful. So that made it in the *Trib*?

A: Yep. The sheriff jumped my case and I got up and defended myself and that was it. Most sheriffs, I figured out quickly, wore their hearts on their sleeves and there wasn't a lot of pretension, which is considerably different than judges and lawyers. So, there was a little cultural shock for me. Hunter and I ended up going through the Boys Ranch at Live Oak on a tour. It was of interest to me because Sheriff Spotswood was one of the people who started this.

We had a long tradition of civilian sheriffs in our county, non-law enforcement sheriffs, and Sheriff Spotswood had been one; Sheriff Freeman had been one and I was one. So, the Boys Ranch had been a pet project of Sheriff Spotswood and it was of interest to me. So, we get over there and Hunter and I both have chief deputies about the size of that door and the guy touring us around is just sucking up to the chief deputies visibly as if they were the sheriffs. Finally I turned to Hunter and said when is this boy going to figure out that he is talking to the people who aren't the sheriffs. I thought he was going to die laughing. Then, MacDougal and I, MacDougal is a former assistant ... he is really an odd

duck sheriff.

M: Now MacDougal is?

A: Lee County.

M: Lee County? And he was the sheriff the same time you were sheriff.

A: Yes, at the same time.

M: And he is no longer there.

A: No, no. He is still there. He leans over and they are making a bunch of chittlins. I have eaten chittlins fine under duress. They were somehow broiling them and then putting hot sauce on them. I was looking down at this stuff. MacDougal is eating a mouthful and says, "What is this stuff?" I said, "MacDougal, that is pretty damn close to eating boiled condoms." He spit that stuff out. So, in that particular year, in '88, you had for the first time a very large turnover of sheriffs, probably over a third of the sheriffs in the state turned over. You had a larger number of new breed sheriffs. You had for the first time a cohesive minority, very progressive Republican sheriffs.

M: Can you briefly describe your relationships with other counties? I know bordering Monroe is obviously Dade and Lee County or actually Collier? Can you tell me if you had any exchanges or relationships with them or incidents when you needed to cooperate?

A: Even when I was prosecutor, Chokoluskee was a hot bed and I ended up going into Everglades City and checking into the Rod and Gun Club to check into what was going on. As I was checking in, a guy whispered under his breath that they knew I was there. So, we had done a lot of joint investigations and obviously with Dade, our relations were good as we shared a lot of the same smugglers. Dade was such a big shop and we were just a little tail of a dog.

We had very good relations with the federal authorities because of the drug smuggling and we had a unique position because our airplanes, if we were taking a prisoner somewhere, we flew over virtually all of Florida, so we actually set up a little mini-airline. We would e-mail or fax the counties and say look we are flying a prisoner to Charlotte, anyone want to ride in between. We would actually bill them and we made money on that particular operation.

M: How many planes did you have at the sheriff's office?

A: We had one small plane and we had a King Air for prisoner transport. We never did have a helicopter. I thought that was a little ostentatious.

M: Okay. What about boats?

A: We had one boat for each district.

M: So, that would have been just three boats?

A: Yeah.

M: That's all?

A: Yeah, because mostly we left that to the marine patrol. We had such a huge marine patrol and the feds had all kinds of boats in their task force.

M: So, it would just be a matter of you calling them and getting them to help?

A: Yeah. We had the highest level of interagency cooperation that I have personally ever seen in law enforcement. We had a seamless web from state, federal, marine patrol. We had to do it that way. In the old days you didn't know if one deputy was going to walk in on 50 smugglers or vice versa. We also had an interesting unwritten arrangement with the smuggling community which was that nobody was going to get killed over dope. Again, you never knew if there was going to be 50 of them and 1 of you or vice versa, and it was pretty much made clear when the Blue Lightning Task Force people came in that if they started drawing weapons, we were going to draw down on them, because we were not going to break that unwritten rule - nobody getting killed over dope.

M: The Blue Light Task Force, tell me about that.

A: Then Vice President Bush set it up in the mid '80s. At the time we started focusing on narcotics activity, there was very, very little federal presence.

M: You were sheriff at that time?

A: No that is when I was a prosecutor. When I was sheriff we ended up actually joining - when they first set up the HIDA groups, a lot of the local enforcement people - the feds made their presentation and all the locals started jumping the ship saying this was wrong and bad idea, I was sitting there thinking this is the best idea I have ever heard. So, I just assigned about three deputies to them and we ultimately had a 25 million dollar seizure based on one they started.

M: Were they suspicious that they wanted in on the activity or was there graft?

A: No, no. They were just scared that they were going to be replaced or downsized because of the boys coming in. Then, the other side of that equation is the relationship with the City of Key West. We had a request from their mayor to look at their operations, that their department was in turmoil and had never really recovered from the indictments and incompetence that characterized them when we did the RICO [Racketeering Influenced Criminal Organization]. The unindicted co-conspirator chief of police, for instance, stayed chief of police for two years after he was an unindicted coconspirator. Half the department was taken out.

So, that will tell you how things went. He was replaced by an honest chief but one very much of the old hierarchal school. So, he was less effective and he never really got his arms around some of the subtleties of the Key West culture. The mayor, who was a dear friend and the first gay mayor of Key West and just a wonderful guy, Richard Hyman, calls one day and says would you do a report and tell us if we contracted with the sheriff how much you could save.

We had so much duplication. We had a dispatch center which was two blocks from their

dispatch center. We got the 911 calls and we transferred their 911 calls to them - it was crazy. So, I came back with a report that was about four inches thick that said I could give you what you got for a million dollars less a year and I can do it right for a half a million dollars less a year.

So, needless to say, the chief of police was not my buddy. He and the unions fought off our attempt to contract for services, but then the black community, who were real mad at him, came to me and said that he is not paying attention to crack cocaine in our community, would you put in a foot patrol. I said sure I would put in a foot patrol because I was sheriff there too. He didn't like me cause of that. He ended up calling Ruben Greenberg from Charleston, who I happen to think is one of the best policemen in the country. I think their original intent was to use him as a weapon against me, and he is very smart - he figured out exactly what was going on in 10 seconds. They started asking him questions like - cause he would say in his professional opinion food patrols didn't work or he'd say this guy is just a lawyer and a politician, what does he know.

So, they asked Ruben if your professional opinion told you something and the people wanted to do something else. He said that when he was young he would have done his professional opinion but the older he got he found out the people are right more often than I am. So, finally before he leaves town, he pulled me aside and said that you are obviously having a war with this dunce police chief the same way I did with my state attorney.

I got to tell you what I did when I just couldn't stand it anymore and had to get rid of him. So, he tells me this tale of what he did and I waited about a month before I just couldn't stand it, and I did exactly what he said to do. I went out and got 20 pounds of baloney and I went down to crack cocaine corner and held a press conference. I pulled that baloney out and said this is 20 pounds of baloney and you can call this the truth all day long and it is still going to be 20 pounds of baloney, but let me show you what cuts through the baloney, and that is the truth. So, I went and got a meat cleaver and cut that baloney in half. It made the front page of the paper as you can imagine. About seven months later they ran the police chief out of town. We had some fun.

M: Were there any specific incidents or times or times of the year that were any more pressing for you as sheriff? I know the Keys have a seasonal variation.

A: It is very seasonal and it is hard to bulk up for the high points. You just had to be ready for it. I did a lot of things that other sheriffs don't do. I used to go out and make crack cocaine buys myself personally. I liked to be on the front lines. I stuck a *Miami Herald* reporter in the back seat one day and we went and did it.

M: So how many deputies or how many personnel did you have, officers and line item deputies would you say you had?

A: I couldn't remember at this point. It was almost like running three different departments plus the jail.

M: Did you live in Key West at the time or did you live in Key Largo?

A: I lived on Summerland Key and moved back down to the lower Keys when I got elected sheriff. If I had any regrets it is that I did not move the headquarters to Marathon.

In retrospect, that is what I should have done - the operational headquarters.

M: As far as retrospect goes, you know it has been 10 years ago..

A: 12 years ago.

M: Is there anything that you wish you would have been able to do - when you were tapped you obviously did not serve out the rest of your term - was there anything that you didn't really quite accomplish that in four years you would have wanted to do? If you had more time?

A: To be honest with you I moved at a blistering enough pace that I think we did at least four years worth of work in two. I think the only regrets I would have would be not moving it to the Marathon, which is the center and is where it should have been. I don't regret privatizing the jail, even though it did not work. Trying something and failing is not a mark of regret in my book. I left a good man when I left, Rick Roth. They had had so much change in so short a period of time - in effect this was their third sheriff in three years. Rather than going for an innovator, I went for a little more conservative, more traditional sheriff. Because one of the conditions of my joining Martinez's ticket was that I be allowed to pick my successor and Rick has done a capable job. He has kept a lid on the place for the last 12 years.

M: So, he is still sheriff.

A: He is still sheriff and is running for reelection.

M: So, Governor Martinez allowed you to recommend a successor for you when you had to resign.

A: The deal was that he would pick whom I had picked.

M: Okay.

A: It wasn't a recommendation; it was a deal. Because we worked too hard to change that place to allow it to go back.

M: I have never run out of things to ask. This is amazing. Are there any specific incidents that were very troubling to you when you were sheriff? Obviously the people killed in the line of duty. Any decisions you had to make that were personally hurtful to you?

A: Yeah. It is tough to reprimand people who were your friends. The deputies in the upper Keys and I had become very close when I was their prosecutor. They were the foundation of my campaign, the core of the leadership team that I brought in. For instance, when you have to look at one of your brightest female deputies and tell her you are going to put a reprimand in her record - she screwed up. She looked me in the eye and said that is a career-ending move. I told her no it was not and that we would get through this. She is now a captain and may well be the next sheriff before it is over with.

M: That is one of the things I didn't mention. How many women were on the force when you were there?

A: I am very proud of the fact that we really reached out to diversify the base of the sheriff's office. I appointed the first female officer. I appointed the first female district commander, Captain Val Thompson. I appointed the first African-American officer and district commander.

M: By officer you mean sergeant up to..

A: Lieutenant or above.

M: Okay, like the military.

A: I had the first gay division chief. He wasn't sworn, but he was head of a division. We greatly changed the face of the department in that regard. In fact, the first order that I signed came about because at Sheriff Freeman's retirement party, the human resources director who was a very attractive young lady who wore a very attractive gown that went down to - very low on her back, and I watched one of our senior officers run his hand right down her backbone. I called her over and asked if there were sexual harassment problems in the department. She said, no sir, we have a very large sexual harassment problem in the department. I said I want you to make sure that the first order that I sign is the toughest sexual harassment order in the world. She brought me that order on the first day that I was sheriff and I said this isn't strong enough. She said there was nothing stronger in the world. I said yeah there is - you put in there that if the sheriff that does it that they go directly to FBLE. I want these people to know that I mean business. I ended up losing a senior officer who did not believe that I was serious.

M: So there was a code that you implemented, not specifically for that case, but just as a general code that would be on record, that people would know about.

A: Yes. We really brought this department into the 21st century.

M: Now, my research has shown me that it was in the early '70s when women started wearing a gun and going on the road. There are a lot of disputes about where was the first woman deputy with a gun on the road. Some counties claim that they had the first black sheriff - you know what I am talking about. It is kind of the same for the women's side. How many women were on the staff when you took over - do you remember, just roughly?

A: It was a minority.

M: Were there any with guns?

A: Oh yeah. Sheriff Freeman in the late '70s, early '80s cracked that barrier. He was very progressive.

M: What about African-Americans? Did Sheriff Freeman hire them too?

A: Sheriff Freeman hired African-Americans but none of them had progressed to the level of officers. I made sure that..

M: So, by the time that you came on, there were some senior people who had been on

the force for quite a while.

A: There were both women sergeants and African-American sergeants that I made sure became officers.

M: Now, when you wiped out most of your senior command staff..

A: Yep, there is a lot of antigravity that goes with that.

M: Kind of like the French revolution and Napoleon. Opportunities for advancement were great. Okay, after you left, let's just go ahead and summarize a bit. After you left the sheriff's office obviously you did not become Lt. Governor. So, you went back to practice law and have been doing that pretty much up until now.

A: I went to Wackenhut and became president of one of their subsidiaries, set it up and got it started. I then went from there to be general counsel for a pharmaceutical company that was based in the Keys and in Philadelphia. I divided my time but stayed in the Keys. I went into practice about 1993 and built the firm up until I joined the Governor's office in 1999. I also started seminary and am in the third year of that experience.

M: Where are you doing that?

A: South Florida Center for Theological Studies in Miami. I wrote a couple of books. I wrote another dozen articles or so, mostly of historical subjects, Florida history subjects, and went on the boards of some corporations. So, I kept my eclectic tradition intact. In 1999 I became Everglades Czar for Governor Bush and will be leaving here May 15th and will be re-entering the private sector. I joined the faculty at Florida A&M when I got up there.

M: I didn't know that. So, you are going to be leaving this job May 15th?

A: Oh yeah. This job is done.