

**CENTER FOR FLORIDA HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

INTERVIEW WITH: **SCOTT KELLY**
INTERVIEWER: **JAMES M. DENHAM**
PLACE: **LAKELAND, FLORIDA**
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D=JAMES M. DENHAM
K=SCOTT KELLY

Transcribed by: K.C. Jarrett

D: I am here to talk to Mr. Scott Kelly's here at his residence to speak with him about his historical background, his business, and his political career. One of the things that we are going to talk about is Lawton Chiles. But what I would like to get to first is to talk about his early childhood memories. Mr. Kelly, can you tell us where you were born and what year you were born?

K: I was born September 3, 1927, in Madison, FL. A year later, in 1928, we moved to Gadsden County and that was where I was raised, in Gadsden County.

D: What were your parents' names?

K: James and Melissa Hunter Kelly. My daddy was the son of a Baptist preacher, William Scott Kelly where I got my name Scott, so I was named after my granddaddy.

D: And that was back in Madison?

K: Yes.

D: What did your father do for a living?

K: He was a farmer. He grew tobacco.

D: I have some relatives from Gadsden County and Calhoun County so I am very familiar with that area.

K: He worked for the AST Corporation, which was the largest cigar tobacco company at the time. He was the superintendent of the largest farm they had – they had 31 farms - Magnolia farm. We lived 10 miles in the country from Quincy – south Quincy.

D: Did you work tobacco when you were growing up?

K: Yes, I worked on the farm as a young boy and did what things I could do. My daddy got killed in an automobile accident when I was 14 and we had to move off the farm

because they had to move in another superintendent. Then we moved into Quincy and that's where my boyhood from 14 on was in Quincy.

D: Did you have any relatives other than your mother to help you through when that horrible event happened?

K: We were a large family – I had three sisters and two brothers – and I was the youngest of the six. All of them were still living when my daddy died. I had one sister and my sister and brother-in-law lived in Quincy and had a grocery store. They were a lot of comfort to me as I was growing up. My sister was named Maude and she was married to Harold Bevis, and they had Bevis Grocery store.

D: Is that the same Bevis family who came down to Polk County, the Bevis law firm?

K: No relation. But they all came from around Two-Egg and Malone.

D: My family is from Calhoun County, so I knew a lot of that stuff. Altha – which is a little teeny place.

K: I know where Altha is – the congressman what's his name?

D: Don Fuqua – he was my grandmother's 4th grade student. My grandmother grew up with his mother.

K: Don was there when I was there.

D: So you were 14 years old and almost ready to think about going off to school or college or getting a job.

K: Well, we didn't have any money much. Daddy left enough insurance for mama to buy a house. I went to school half a day and worked half a day, and then of course football season came and the man I worked for let me off to go to football practice. I played football for Quincy and got scholarship offers to go to Auburn, Georgia, Alabama, and Florida and I chose to go to Florida on a scholarship.

D: What year was that?

K: 1944-1945.

D: Those were the war years. Did you ever get a sense that it wouldn't be long before you would get drafted?

K: Well, I played one year for the University of Florida – 1945 – and in Feb '46 I was gone.

D: What happened then? Did you join the army?

K: Yes. I went in 1946 to Camp Crowder, Missouri, to basic training. Then I took advanced ranger training. Of course the war was over in 1945, but they were still training rangers - there were still a lot of Japanese soldiers left in the mountains in those caves and they were training to go in and get them out. By the fall of 1946, anybody

who wanted to get out of the army who was drafted they were letting them go. They gave me the offer to go to officer candidate school but I had to sign up for three years and I decided I would rather go back home.

D: Did you go back to Florida?

K: No. They had had a free-for-all in Florida and had fired all of the coaches that I played under, and they had a new coach and a new bunch, and all of the guys that I had played with before said that this new coach was a "bad dude" and I talked to him and after I talked to him I decided I didn't want to play for him. Even though I had a 4-year scholarship and I had only used one year. But this was in the middle of September and the season had already started, spring and summer practice was over and they were into the third game. There was no way without any football training that I could have caught up and played any. Also the university had already started, so I would have wasted 4-5 months. So I went back to Quincy and got married instead.

D: Was this a girl you had known before?

K: High school sweetheart. I dated her for five years. Her name was Marjorie May. Her family – she had one brother and one sister. She was the daughter of Louis and Lucille. That was in 1947 that I got married in 1947, and I worked there at the furniture store as a bookkeeper for the next 15 months, and then I came to Lakeland in January 1949.

D: Can you describe what Lakeland was like in 1949? What was going on around here? You obviously wanted to come down because your brother was here. You were married; did you have any children?

K: My wife was pregnant and she stayed in Quincy for three months to have the baby up there. Then she moved down here in April, we bought a house and moved in. Lakeland was a laid back place – nothing like it is now.

D: Would you say that in 1949 that Lakeland was probably a lot more prosperous, a lot more opportunity here, than in Quincy?

K: Oh yeah, the prospects were a lot greater. I came down here ostensibly to go to Tampa Law School. I had in a lot of my undergraduate work at University of Florida. Back then; if you had been in service, you had to go directly into your major. So I had it all set to go into Tampa Law School in May of 1949 into the summer session. They closed the law school in May of 1949. I was going to commute and work in my brother's office and I was going to commute. I was working in my brother's office as a law clerk. I thought between the two of them I would go straight through for a couple of years. But that was the end of my being a lawyer. So I picked up in the building business. I bought a house out here on Shore Acres on Holly Road that had two vacant lots one on either side and one across the street, and I bought it from a guy who had them and he gave me a good price on them. And I started building. I had a friend, Joe Bridges, who was a good friend here in Lakeland. He was a client of my brothers, he had built my brother's house, and he encouraged me to get into the building business and I did.

D: And I'm sure that at that time in the 50's it was beginning to grow.

K: Oh yeah. There came along of course FHA. Then with the VA it was easy for a veteran to get a house – about all they had to pay was the closing cost. So I built a lot of VA houses.

D: What were some of the areas that you concentrated on, if we take the story up to the mid 60's.

K: It was odd lots, mostly in south Lakeland. A lot of it was people coming to me to build in their lots.

D: So there really weren't any developments?

K: No, no developments.

D: Let's talk a little bit now about politics. When did you first become interested in politics? Even as a child?

K: Ever since I could remember I was interested in politics, even as a child, I was giving out cards. I specifically remember when Senator Holland, he was a State Senator, and ran for governor in 1940 and that made me about 13 years old. I went to his inauguration in 1940, I remember that. The deputy sheriff in Gadsden County, Oakley Edwards, his son and I were about the same age. I always got interested in his race. My daddy liked politics, he went to all the rallies and I was right there with him. We listened to all they had to say. They used to get after each other there in Gadsden County. It was fun. In 1948, Fuller Warren was running for governor and was elected. Of course I wasn't even old enough to vote, I wasn't even 21 yet, but I spoke for him throughout west Florida. And once I started speaking for him, I guess I did a good job, different little towns would go into to the campaign manager in Quincy and say send Kelly over here on such and such a night.

D: You would have been real close to him based on the fact that he was from Calhoun County, right?

K: Oh, yeah. It wasn't really necessary to go to all those rallies, because they were going to vote for Fuller Warren anyhow.

D: But it was a lot of fun anyway, right?

K: Sure it was! They were glad – anything I would say, they would clap. I was talking about "our boy Fuller."

D: He and my grandmother went to school together. She of course has passed away now. Now is there anything in your opinion to the charges that he was involved in corruption in the campaign? I know there were some accusations that he was affiliated with some Jacksonville developers and so forth?

K: They never proved a dadgum thing. I know that the Kefauver Committee came down here, or whoever it was investigating, and they didn't find a doggone thing. They had him under oath and subpoenaed and all this, that, and the other. They were trying to make a big to-do out of it. It was just a matter of Big Bill Johnson, the racetrack guy, he and all of his racetrack supported Fuller. And Lou Wolfson who was an investor and

he may have been in the horse track business. Then the citrus man from Howie in the Hills – C.B. Griffin – they were his biggest financial supporters. Their firms supported Fuller, and their employees. It is well known that this happens all the time. They have this soft money deal now; you can go the soft money route and give money. That was all it was – he just had those three big names supporting him – Lou Wolfson, Big Bill Johnson, and C.B. Griffin.

D: Now the Kefauver hearings at the state level, they came to Tampa, to Florida right and investigated Sheriff Culbreath and Walker down in Miami, for organized crime? Do you remember all that stuff?

K: I remember Culbreath. But I don't think there was an indictment come out of that either. I don't remember.

D: So you were in Lakeland. When did you first get involved in politics here in Lakeland?

K: My brother, Judge Clifton M. Kelly who is retired now – he ran for county solicitor in 1952 and I got active in his campaign. I was in the Jaycees, about 22 or 23 years old, and I got fired up about his campaign. Of course he won and won big. Then in 1953 I ran for City Commission. I ran against three opponents - Paul Ballew was the President of the Lakeland Board of Realtors, Henry Williams who was the president of the Lakeland Shrine Club, and the other opponent was H.L. Palmer who just the year before had run for county commissioner and ran an outstanding race and only lost by only a few hundred votes. Those were my opponents. My brother and I were new in Polk County, just about 4 years, so my wife and I decided that we would just go door to door and introduce ourselves to the people of Lakeland and ask them to vote for us. Well we did, and they voted for us, and I won in the first primary. I beat them all without a run off. So I was in there at 26 years old.

D: Who were some of the other city commissioners?

K: Oh, yeah. I had a lot of help and the reason I had a lot of help, before I got into the campaign, I went to them one by one and asked them. There were two seats coming open and I had to decide which one I was going to run for. I went to each one and asked if he was committed to anybody. Another thing that helped me a lot was that the city manager happened to be a Pi-KA from South Carolina, and I was a Pi-KA fraternity at the University of Florida, and that didn't hurt. So I had a lot of help from the administration. Guerry Dobbins was the main man, and Jimmy Musso, and Tom Banks and Pat Flanagan, and W.Y. Wooten. Then the first year I was on the commission in 1954, Tom Banks was the Mayor Pro Tem, which meant he would be the mayor the next year, but he had a massive heart attack and his doctor said he had to get off the commission to get out of the stress. But before he resigned he lined up four votes for them to elect me Mayor Pro Tem and I had only been on there four months. And they did - they elected me mayor pro tem first year when I had just gotten there.

D: So the city commission chose the mayor was the way it worked?

K: Yes. And on top of that, the Mayor himself was a railroad man and had, I forget what his illness was, but he had to go to the Coastline hospital in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, and he went up there for several months, so I was acting mayor my first few

months. And then the next year they selected me Mayor at 27 years old. I was the youngest mayor. .

D: That was in 1953-1954?

K: 1953 was the election, and I took office as mayor pro tem in 1954.

D: So you were mayor when LeRoy Collins was governor or I guess that was when Charley Johns became governor after McCarty died? And that was also the year of the Brown Decision 1954 – Brown versus the Board of Education – came down from the Supreme Court. What was the feeling around here when the Brown Decision came along about desegregation of schools?

K: Not then. It was in the 60s when it became an issue.

D: Did you ever have any interaction with Charley Johns when he was governor?

K: Well, I knew him very well. He helped us build a road from Lakeland down to Bartow. It used to be a hell of a way to get there.

D: Before 98 came in, you mean?

K: Yes.

D: Do you remember the election between he and LeRoy Collins?

K: Yeah, Collins beat him badly.

D: Which one of those would you have supported?

K: I don't recall that I got into it at all.

D: How many years were you mayor of Lakeland?

K: Just that one year.

D: Did they rotate it every year?

K: Yes.

D: And who was the Chief of Police?

K: Leo Brooker.

D: And the Sheriff would have been Pat Gordon?

K: Well, Pat Gordon or Hagen Parish. They were in and out of there. They ran in two or three races, and one won one time and one won the next. In fact, Gordon had to go to prison.

D: Did he actually go to prison for corruption?

K: Well really it was for perjury. I set my goal to run for state senator, even when I was mayor, so I wasn't taking sides in anybody's races. I ran for senator in 1956.

D: Was that an open seat, or was it contested.

K: No, no, Eric King was the president-elect coming into the senate. He was going to be President of the Senate in 1957.

D: And that's who you ran against?

K: Yes. And state Rep Boone Tillet from Lake Wales, and a preacher named Blewett, I can't remember his first name, but that's who I ran against. What happened was that Tillet and King had served together, King in the senate and Tillet in the house. They had a hostile relationship; they just didn't get along at all. And Tillet was intent on getting him one way or another. Anyhow, King tried to bribe Tillet to get out of the race. Well, I don't know the particulars; I didn't want to know the particulars. But I believe King went to Pat Gordon to see if Gordon couldn't get his deputies to set a trap for Tillet and the damn thing backfired on them and they got caught instead. And they got indicted – King, Gordon, and the deputies. And during the course of that investigation, Gordon according to what the jury said, committed perjury, and he got convicted of committing perjury. And I think the jury turned King loose. But in the meantime, it was too late. The train had done left the station. I beat them all; I swamped all of them in the first primary, without a run-off.

D: So Tillet was in the House, King was in the Senate and ..

K: And was scheduled to be president ...

D: And they were both rivals within the same county.

K: But King and them tried to set up the trap to get Tillet.

D: Did you know any of this was underfoot when you decided to run for the Senate?

K: Oh, no, I never heard anything about it. What it was, and it was easy for someone on the outside if they were looking at it. I had done a good job for Lakeland, and the newspapers especially the Ledger, had really been pushing me. Lakeland hadn't had a senate seat for 36 years. For 20 years, Senator Sweringen from Bartow had the seat from 1920 to 1940 and in 1940 King was senator and had been for 16 years. Well, I had been beating the drums around different speeches, not that I was running but I was making a point of it, especially here in Lakeland to get the people behind me. So when I got in the race King had a load to carry then. He had Tillet down in South Florida counties, and Lakeland got 40% of the vote so he was in a heap of trouble. He needed to get Tillet out of there to take me on head-on. Blewett didn't amount to anything. And him being the incumbent, and him going to be the president of the senate, he and I would have had a hell of a race.

D: So he got kind of desperate?

K: Oh, yeah. He made a terrible mistake. He was a brilliant lawyer.

D: And so he tried to get Pat Gordon to help him with his nefarious scheme.

K: And Pat went to prison and lost his job.

D: What was your opinion of Pat Gordon altogether?

K: I liked him.

D: I have heard so many different things. I have just written a book – the history of Florida Sheriff's up to 1940, and I might do a sequel to that, but I have done some research about that period. Everybody either really liked him or didn't like him at all.

K: Well, if you knew him you liked him, and I knew him real well. And I knew a lot of his deputies.

D: Wasn't he the first sheriff to hire black deputies?

K: I think so.

D: I interviewed an older fellow and he told me that story.

K: When I ran for City Commissioner that was one of the planks of my platform, to put...he had them with him that day – Sammy Lee King and Sammy Lee Williams.

D: I interviewed one of them, I think it was Williams, about two years ago, and he told me that whole story. While your name didn't come up in the conversation about black sheriff's deputies, he did talk about that. So I guess you were, at that time, in the 1950's you would have been criticized for that.

K: I didn't catch as much flack as you think, but I caught some. But one of the things that I did that was controversial is that back in those days we had the old Morrell Memorial Hospital, and where the pediatrics was were several old barracks hooked together, you could walk down the hall and keep going from one barracks to the other. That was where they had the blacks. It was all segregated. Running for city commissioner I made that a prime plank in my platform as number one. I set out from the day I got there I said let's do something about that. The City of Lakeland didn't have money to do much. Then I set out to get federal funds – they called them Hill-Burton funds, Senator Hill and Representative Burton from Indiana, named after them and I set out to get the funds. But when I did that, boy the medical association took after me because that was a liberal thing, having this federal money coming in here. If we take their money they will be looking over our shoulders telling us how to spend it. Anyhow, I went around to several civic clubs speaking on behalf of it. When the bottom line come down, to begin with the majority of the commission didn't want me to do it, but I said just let me work on it and I'll take the heat. When the smoke finally cleared, we got \$3,500,000 from the federal government, and we raised \$1,500,000 and we built a hospital and opened it in 1959 I believe with 100 beds, with \$5,000,000. On the final vote, it was unanimous. I started on it in 1954 and it took about 5 years to get it through. Two years of that was construction. By 1957 I knew it was on its way.

Lakeland having the only newspaper in the county with countywide distribution, all these things we were doing over here in Lakeland, the Lakeland Ledger was giving me all kinds of newsprint, all kinds of publicity. So I picked a citrus and cattleman Eugene Griffin to be my campaign chairman when I ran for senator, and he took me all over this county meeting all the citrus people, and without exception they would say we've been reading about you and it sounds like you've been doing a good job in Lakeland. So when King was screwing up, as the old saying goes "That train done left the station."

D: So walk me through your first session in the Senate in Tallahassee. What were some of your first impressions when you went there?

K: Well, I had sort of a load to carry since I had come from Gadsden County originally, Madison and all up there. All those boys from west Florida, they were called the pork chop gang – have you read anything about them?

D: Oh, sure. I'm sure they liked you!

K: Yes, they thought I would just fall right in line. Well, I couldn't do it. Because Polk County was one of only five counties that had its own senator, five – Dade, Duval, Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Polk, and on reapportionment I had to vote with the big counties. There were only 13 of us, out of 38, and they could get up 25 but they couldn't get the 27 to get two-thirds to override. I told them up there, I said, "Now look, I'll vote with you. I'm a conservative, when I was mayor of Lakeland I showed it, and you will see I am a conservative up here. But when it comes to reapportionment I have got to vote with the – they called them the lamb choppers – I have to vote with them." I did, but I still got outstanding committee assignments.

D: Who was the Senate leader at that time?

K: When King got knocked out, it was Bill Shands. He called me the night of the election. He called me at my home.

D: He was glad – you made him leader, didn't you?

K: Well the word was out that I was going to beat King. It was cut and dried. We used to have rallies, maybe 25 or 30, and we went to every little hammock in every county. You could just tell from the crowd – no matter where we went they were voting for Kelly.

D: I'm sure he wanted to shake your hand.

K: He came down here. That was about the first Tuesday of May. He came through here about the first of June he took me down to convention with him down in Ft. Myers, so we spent the weekend together.

D: So when it came to reapportionment you couldn't vote with the pork choppers. But what were some of the issues that you supported with them?

K: There wasn't much controversy going on then. On fiscal matters they were tight-fisted. They weren't big spenders.

D: What about roads or internal improvements? Did they try to keep them all up there, or did they share with the south?

K: We have a five-member road board back then and they all cut it up amongst them. They had one road board member that covered from Tallahassee to Pensacola, and one up in the Jacksonville/Duval area, one in Orlando, one in Tampa. The governor had full control of the money; we didn't have a damn thing to do with it. Then constitutional revision came about in 1968, and now the legislature does it. I don't know who does a worse job; letting the legislature do it or five road board members do it.

D: So what committees were you on when you first went up there?

K: Well, they put me on the appropriations committee first shot out of the box, which was just unheard of, for a freshman. They put me on the citrus, and on natural resources because of my phosphate leanings, and education and higher education. The Miami Herald had an article that year, and the other papers picked up on it, that I probably had the strongest committee assignments of any senator up there. So Billy Shands was taking care of me.

D: Is that the same name as the hospital, Shands?

K: Yes.

D: And where was he from?

K: Gainesville. He ran for governor in 1948 when Fuller Warren got elected. He had a slogan: "Join hands with Bill Shands." But I'll tell you what Shands did do. Fuller Warren was going around the state. All the education people had come to the conclusion that we had to have a sales tax or else we were just going to be ignoramuses over here, we were just going to be another Mississippi, that our schools were going to hell because the ad valorem could not support the school and education program and needed something else. Bill Shands was openly advocating a sales tax. Well obviously it got beat. And Fuller was absolutely adamantly opposed to it. But to Fuller's credit, and one day history will show that he was one of the best governors we ever had, he against his own promise when it came down to education or us being without it, he turned and did it. And that was the end of Fuller. And when he tried to run again in 1956 he didn't win. But he did it. So when Shands introduced it in that 1951 session of the legislature, he rammed it through, goddam he got it through, he raced his motor and made them eat it. He was a powerful individual. He was a quiet man. You would think he was a college professor. But he was a strong individual.

D: That would have been when Spessard Holland was in the US Senate - in the US Senate in 1954? Did you have any interaction with him at all?

K: Here in Bartow?

D: Yes. Can you reflect on that a little bit?

K: His law firm wrote all my speeches. Chesterfield Smith wrote my speeches when I was running for state senator. They got behind me right quick. King had run his course.

Polk County was a hard county to represent. You've got big citrus, big phosphate, big cattle. The businesses were strong and powerful and rich.

D: And you can't do it for all of them.

K: And back then we had big labor. That's when the phosphate industry was flourishing and big labor had a big voice.

D: Can you talk about Chesterfield a little bit as a leader of the county and also a behind-the-scenes supporter of various political factions?

K: He was like a mentor to me. He picked up on me through Eugene Griffin. He was in citrus and very prominent. No relation to Ben Hill Griffin. Ben Hill Griffin and I were buddies going all the way back to Gator boosters. So when I ran for senator, he ran for state representative the year before that, when Perry Murray got killed in 1955, and Ben Hill Griffin ran for his unexpired term and got elected, then in 1956 he ran for full term. So we were both running at the same time. His influence throughout the county was great, more so than Eugene Griffin's was. Ben Hill was down in Avon Park, Hardee County and all down in there. I had a lot of things going for me when I ran. Right here in Lakeland I had the golden triangle – George Jenkins, Bud Smith who owned the Ledger, and Ernest McClurg who owned People's Bank – they called it the golden triangle, they were behind me when I ran for city commission and when I ran for state senate. So I had a little help.

D: You mentioned phosphate, cattle, and citrus. How did you manage to keep those people satisfied and labor?

K: One thing with the phosphate companies, there had not been a severance tax on them yet, but they were polluting the hell out of everything. Chesterfield Smith and that law firm were their firm, and Gene Griffin and I were adamant with the cattlemen about the phosphate fumes causing the cows' bones to disintegrate. There was some flap going. Chesterfield Smith is a pragmatic politician. What we came up with was that I would introduce the first air pollution act. Citrus people were thinking maybe it was hurting their groves too. So by that one maneuver it would help the cattlemen and citrus. And the union workers felt that those fumes were also hurting their health. So with that one act, for me boldly to get up down at Bradley Junction where there are so many mines, laying out that when I'm elected I would support the clean air act, and they clapped and clapped. I was on my way.

D: That was in your first campaign?

K: Yep. Chesterfield and them convinced those phosphate people that sooner or later it's coming, and when it comes it will come with a severance tax too, so let's take an air pollution act that we can live with and something we can grow with, and as more amendments are added we can grow with it, but not something that's slapped down our throats that's going to kill you. So I put through my air pollution thing, and they had to start putting in some washers and things. Since that time it has been amended. It's not near like it was, not near as bad as it used to be.

D: So how long before you got that through the legislature?

K: I guess '59 - because all the pulpwood mills in Jacksonville, and up in Port St. Joe, and several in west Florida, the pork choppers – they fought me like hell. But we finally got it through.

D: What were some of the coalitions you had to put together to get that through?

K: Well, I had all the senators I had been voting with on reapportionment, because they came from urban areas and it wasn't hurting them. And I just picked up odd votes here and there that didn't have pulp mills in their areas. And I just stayed away from the others until it got through.

D: So would you say that was the first air pollution law passed in the state of Florida?

K: Yes.

D: To me that's astonishing that there was one that far back. So you won your next election 1959, 1963, In 1959, another surprise election occurred in this county. Somebody unseated the incumbent Surles. Lawton Chiles. Can you talk a little bit about Surles, what kind of man was he and about that campaign?

K: Roy Surles had been there, maybe as long as King, a long time. And he was brilliant, he really was. But he was hard to get along with people. By all rights he should have been elected speaker of the house, and he made several attempts at it but didn't get it off the ground because you had to work hard to be his friend.

D: He probably thought you were a young whippersnapper.

K: He didn't pay any attention to me. We worked together on some things. We got the district Court of Appeals here in Lakeland. We flat did that. We whipped all around in Tampa and that District Court of Appeals. That was the first major coup I pulled. And Bill Shands showed me how to do it. I got in my car and went to every senator in the state. I had me a bill made out that they designate that the Second District would be in Lakeland, Florida. And the day I put it in the hopper when the Senate opened, I did it like very stealthily. I didn't let it out; none of the papers had it. The Ledger didn't have it. None of my dear friends knew I was working on it. When the Senate opened we had 38 senators and I had 31 on my bill. I mean it stunned them, especially there in Orlando.

D: So Orlando was contending for it too?

K: Oh, yes, J.B. Rogers he was quoted in the paper. They said we heard that Kelly's working on it. He said, oh that's just freshman work. The boys won't pay much attention to that and J.B....I don't know ... he was alright but he took too much for granted. And when I hit 'em it stunned 'em. And Shands was President, he was backing me up. When some of my senators wanted to get off, he said stay on it. And Surles had done likewise in the House. He and Ben Hill Griffin and Ray Maddox had the house lined up. They had to line up 120, in other words they had to get about 60-some votes. Anyway, they had the house and in a short length of time, within a week's time we had introduced those bills passed the house, passed the senate, and boom we had it. It was like "death in the night."

D: Do you remember Lawton Chiles' campaign? Did you think he didn't really have much of a chance?

K: I thought he had a good chance and I told him so. He did it just like I did. He introduced himself and asked people to vote for him and they did.

D: Who would you say were his major supporters? Were there any big people on his side?

K: He had young people. He was younger than me but he had young people. He might not have been but 27 or 28.

D: Do you remember working with him in the legislature? Were they good to work with?

K: Yes. But let me go back to Surles. Surles and I never crossed up on anything to help Polk County. If it was for Polk County, like getting a junior college in Winter Haven, we got it. The four of us banded together and anything that had to do with this county, we got it. The air pollution bill. Another fight we had going - do remember anything about green stamps? Well, as you know Publix gave green stamps, Winn Dixie didn't because they couldn't. Publix had the franchise from Jacksonville south. Winn Dixie came up with Top Value stamps but they never did get going like green stamps did. And Winn Dixie had a lot of clout in the legislature. They were always trying to outlaw green stamps. That was one of the things that turned George Jenkins against Harry King. Harry King had voted in one committee to do just that, and it didn't get to the floor, and he lied to them. So that's what had Jenkins and his crowd lined up behind him. But Surles, he was working the House to keep it down over there, and I was fighting it over in the Senate.

But back to Chiles, he was a breath of fresh air. Did you know him?

D: No unfortunately I never got to meet him. But I followed his career all my life.

K: He was a person who was blessed with a smile on his face. Even when he wasn't smiling. Even when his mouth was closed, he had a smile on his face. Like Jimmy Carter, but his was even better than Jimmy Carter's. He had a smile on his face even when his mouth was closed.

D: Upbeat, always something good to say, positive. Do you remember the first time you met him?

K: It was at one of the J.C. functions. He had Jaycees all over the county. Polk County was active, really active. And each time I ran they got behind me. And when my brother ran, they got behind him. The Jaycees got a lot of people elected.

D: Can you go through some of your favorite senatorial colleagues? Let's say, 1957 to some of your colleagues. Did you work with Doyle Carlton for example?

K: Yes, he was citrus.

D: And Ed Price?

K: Yes, citrus and all, we worked together on that. And higher education matters. Carlton and Price and all - our counties were alike. Bradenton was about the size of Lakeland. They had the same concerns, citrus and cattle and general farming. Phosphate wasn't in Manatee County then.

D: One of the things that everybody says is that Rhea was involved in his campaign. Do you remember her being involved, campaigning with him and going around with him?

K: Yessir.

D: What about his family?

K: Well, they were too young. As soon as they were able to, when they were old enough they did. Rhea had a big thing the other night for Senator Graham at her house, June the 24th.

D: By the 1960's then, or 1964 I guess, you decided to make a run for the governor. Can you walk me through your decision-making process in that regard, why you decided to do that?

K: In 1959 I was chairman of the Senate Roads Committee. And I got a bill passed creating an investigating committee with subpoena powers because there were a lot of shenanigans going on that Collins had. He was a good man himself but he had some bad eggs out there somewhere. And his road contractors were running rampant. But I got the bill through but it was tough sliding. It was the last day of the legislature but Collins finally agreed he would sign it. The bill he wanted passed created a six-man road board.

D: You were talking about how your investigators were tipped off.

K: My chief investigator Elmer Rounds was tipped off that there were some shenanigans going on at Cone Brothers in Tampa. This tipster had worked there one summer and had seen what they were doing. They were regularly paying off on Friday some of our state engineers putting cash money in envelopes and mailing it to them. Well, Elmer - it never came out because it didn't even get to trial - but he went to Cone Brothers and applied for a job, and where he was sitting he could see them stuffing those envelopes because his tipster had told him right where to go. And he was able to come out of there and sign an affidavit what he had seen. When he got through with the mail thing, they put it all in a mailbag and took it out back to put it in the truck to carry to the post office. When they got out back, the postal authorities as well as the authorities in Hillsborough County, deputies, and the states attorneys, they followed them to the post office. When they got there, there were other postal authorities who dumped the bags and picked out those letters and then the next day those letters were mailed out - some here in Polk County, some in Pasco and around. There was a Deputy Sheriff standing right there and said, "Let's go" and they brought them in to Tampa with that cash money.

D: Were they paying them off to make certain reports?

K: Come to find out, Paul Johnson the states attorney in Tampa, he set out to indict them, but we had no laws against unlawful compensation. We had no laws to indict either the giver or the taker. Now there is one, but it took this to make one. And that has convicted a lot of public officials in Florida.

D: What year was that?

K: 1961.

D: That would have been under Farris Bryant?

K: Yes, he was in office. So this committee got to be known as the Kelly committee. They held hearings in Tampa for a week. Channel 13 covered it from 10 in the morning, break at noon for lunch, back on until 5 in the afternoon. For five days. So throughout the whole state of Florida, the Associated Press, the UPI, all the local papers, they were there. We didn't only investigate that; we investigated short loading in bringing in asphalt, also on density of the roads. I hired engineers to go in there and to cover the roads where they had been, and down where you have lime rock, you have 7 inches of lime rock and 7 inches of asphalt – and some showed short cuts. Then we went to Miami and had additional hearings. Went to Jacksonville, Duval Engineering was into it head-over-heels, with short loading on different things and all kinds of ways to steal. But in no instances did we have laws on the books. So we in the committee drew up a program of bills to pass. That senate roads committee, they left me as chairman, but they sure gave me some guys in there that damned sure didn't want it passed, who were beholding to the contractors. They were powerful powerful – I might even say the most powerful political organization are road contractors because they have the money and whenever they want to do something they could do it. So with that I determined that if I was going to do anything about the road mess that I would have to be governor. And I passed a few laws – unlawful compensation was one them, and a few others but only a handful. But even then, they weren't used. Later on they were. So I decided that either I could pass a mountain of laws but unless the executive part of that government is there to enforce it, it ain't worth a damn. And they knew goddam well that I was running then. That was in the 1963 session. The last days of May.

D: So had you already decided back then that you were running even though you didn't say anything?

K: I didn't go through the campaign bit. But everybody knew (I was going to run).

D: Was that statement critical of Governor Bryant?

K: It was critical of the whole system.

D: Can you talk about Farris Bryant a little bit?

K: Yes, I supported him against Doyle Carlton, our next-door neighbor. We carried Polk County, and by all rights Polk County should have gone for Carlton, him being a citrus man, a cattleman, next-door neighbor, son of a former governor.

D: Was that a hard choice for you to make?

K: I had known Farris in 1956 when he ran then. I was for him then. It goes back when Farris was big in the Jaycees and he kept coming back, and he just got in with Jaycees all over Florida. So he ran a credible race in 1956. I didn't realize how popular LeRoy Collins was. He ran third to Charley Johns and LeRoy Collins. That wasn't bad. Like I said, I didn't know how popular Collins was going to be. Anyway he ran a credible race and he came down here when I was running, came down to speak to some people he knew in the lime rock business and a lot of lime rock up in Ocala and all, and he helped me a little bit and I told him I would support him and I didn't back out. I told Collins I was sorry that I was already pledged.

D: Were there any issues that you disagreed with him on as governor? How do you feel about his handling of the civil rights situation? Do you think he did a decent job with that? Of course the big thing was the St. Augustine uproar in 1964. Do you remember how all that went?

K: I don't even remember it. I was staying as far away from that as I could (laughter).

D: Walk me through your campaign in 1964. Who were some of your biggest supporters at that time?

K: My biggest supporters of course were Polk County and west Florida, because I was from out there. I had bet on the fact that I had played football with so many of those guys who later on were in city government and county government and prominent businessmen. I carried every county west of the Suwannee River except Okaloosa - and that's Bob Sikes home county and I couldn't beat the he-coon in his own county. He was always supporting Haydon Burns both times. I carried Escambia County.

D: There really weren't any west Florida candidates that year for the primary. It looks like Fred Dickinson, Robert King High, Fred Karl, and Jack Matthews. So you had the west Florida candidacy there. You ran against Haydon Burns and he eventually won that year. What were your opinions of him at the time?

K: I looked at him as a slick big city mayor. Remember, Haydon had that road program he was very popular about. And the road contractors were for him.

D: Fred Dickinson.

K: I served in the Senate with Fred. Matthews was the smartest one of the whole bunch. But he was like a college professor. When he got up to speak, he didn't speak to you, he spoke at you. Even in the senate when he spoke on a particularly subject, particularly when it was on a judicial subject or higher education, he would be right on target he would be right up here and the rest of us would be down here. He would go right over our heads. I believe his daddy was a Supreme Court judge, and he would have been a damn good one.

D: One of the people that really was strong in that race and nearly won was Robert King High.

K: Robert King High and I became really good friends, and I helped him in the next race. He and I met in Baptist work, he was really active in the Florida Baptist convention and I was too. When I was mayor of Lakeland I was down at Miami a lot at various

conventions and he was too and we got to be friends way back. During the roads investigation, and I came to Miami, he sort of clandestinely furnished me with investigators, cars, undercover investigators, he helped us in any way he could. He and my chief investigator Elmer Rounds became good friends. I was just heart sick because he had encouraged me to run for governor, and then he got in there too. But he had made such a good mayor to the poor people, to the blacks, and to the Hispanics that it carried throughout the state. I had always carried the black vote in this county big.

D: He was always criticized for that, that he was courting the black vote.

K: But it put him in the runoff twice, and he beat me.

D: I remember some old redneck told me one time "You know he's kin to Martin Luther King – that's why he's called 'King High'!" So was there a runoff in 1964, or did Haydon Burns win it all.

K: No, no, hell no. I missed the runoff by 2201 votes. Bob beat me by 2201 and he went into the runoff. And I didn't endorse either one. In this day it would have been an automatic recount. I asked for one and couldn't get it. I had to show where there had been some malfeasance or some corruption somewhere. Chesterfield Smith promised me one thing. Claude Kirk made him chairman of the Florida constitutional revision committee and Chesterfield called me to tell me, he said, "Scott, I'm going to tell you one thing, that if it's one-half of one percent spread, it is going to be an automatic recount." And he put it in there. And it came close to kicking in with Reno and McBride. It came close. But it didn't quite get to one-half of one percent.

D: Then in 1966 you decided to run again and ran against Haydon Burns and Robert King High and Sam Foor, correct, in the Democratic primary. That was for a two-year term?

K: The Democratic party had this brilliant idea that since the Republicans were getting stronger in Florida that they should take the governors race out of the presidential year. So that first year we ran for the 2-year term was in 1964, and Burns won that. Then he come back and ran in 1966. We had a donnybrook then – Burns only got 36% of the vote and he was the incumbent. I got 32% and High got 32%. I missed it that time by 6600. When I swung in behind Burns that was 64% going against me.

D: So was Claude Kirk at that time a Democrat or Republican?

K: A Republican.

D: When did he change?

K: He changed to run against Spessard Holland, well I don't know exactly when he changed.

D: So what do you think of Claude Kirk – what do you think of him as a governor, as a politician, as a leader? What do you think his legacy is to Florida?

K: I don't think he has one. I can't think of anything worthwhile that he did for Florida. He was just a showman. He flew around the country and did everything silly that you could think of, I thought.

D: So after Kirk had his time of it, 1970 comes around and he's going to run again, and things are really shaken up in 1970 in the state when Reubin Askew ran, and then also Lawton Chiles ran for the senate as well. New leaders. Were you involved in either one of their campaigns? Did you support anyone in those years for office?

K: No, I got out of it. When I lost in 1966, I got out of it. I was able to get my day in court when I swung in behind High and beat Burns. You know, Burns made the damnedest mistake I have ever seen a politician make. He kept trying to get me to endorse him. And of course High did the same thing. And I had made up my mind that I had been campaigning against Burns and his road bond issue. I had fought that vigorously; the roads were going where they should be being put, they were being put where the pork chop gang would agree to put them in the road bond issue. But anyhow, I just felt that Burns' administration had no concern about higher education or had no concern about anything much. And there was no way I could support him after I had campaigned against him like I had. I didn't in 1964 because I knew I was going to run again. I think I voted – I'm not sure I did but I think I did. I had already made up my mind that if I lost again that was it, I was through; I wasn't going to run again. So I could sit on the sidelines. I knew Burns would beat High in a head to head race, it was still the conservative running against the ultra-liberal, and I knew that he would beat High like he did before by 60-40, or whatever it was before. But High kept on and High had promised me that if he didn't make the runoff he would support me, that he wasn't going to run anymore either. And that night when I was leading the state, his top people were talking to my top people and saying that he was going to fly to Lakeland and endorse me in prime time, where all his supporters - and namely they were talking about minorities and knowing that they would get it done and that it wasn't a backroom deal being brought up four or five days later - but do it right then and they would see it. Well, the power went off in Dade County, somewhere around 8:30 or so, and I was leading the state. And when the power came back on, I was in third place. But the point is, he was ready to come and he was in third place and I was leading. So I finally wrestled with it and wrestled with it and finally decided I was going to endorse High. I was simply going to issue a statement in Lakeland on Friday. So on Wednesday and Thursday Burns was calling me and Mrs. Burns was calling my wife, and I told Bob on Thursday night that we would issue a press release in the morning. And I told him "Bob, I'm not going to campaign for you, but I'll endorse you. I'm sending my children to Anna Maria Island and we are going to stay there the rest of the summer." We did that every summer anyway. He said I wish you would campaign with us. Then he said, well do this for me if you will. Let me send a plane up there and get you and come down here and endorse me down here where we've got all the press. We'll do it live, and that will be a big help. I said if we do that I want Ben Hill Griffin to come with me, because he was always right there with me. And Ben said he didn't need to send a plane, we would go in his plane. So we got down there about 11:00 and I sent my children to Anna Maria Island. Burns got ahold of the fact that I was headed to Miami to endorse High, and he dreamed up this idea. Burns called a press conference and accused me of taking \$500,000. I am over at High's, all of the TV cameras were there, set to go, and a TV reporter rushed in and said did I hear what Burns said, and he told me something about it and I didn't really pay much attention. And some guy came running in with a hand-carried battery TV and he put that in front of me and I saw what that son-of-a-bitch was saying about

the \$500,000, and I don't know what all my remarks were, I know I cussed some, but I said "That's a damnable lie!" And without even thinking, I whirled around to Bob and I said, "Bob, I'll carry through with you shoulder to shoulder. I'm going to wipe that lie off my back." And I said, "Let's go. As a matter of fact, I'm going to call my headquarters right now, and I'm going to round up all of my county chairmen and they are going to be in Lakeland tomorrow at 2:00 and you be there. We'll turn all of the Kelly team over to you." And that's what we did, we campaigned with him from that day, and we beat the living hell out of him. But when my people were campaigning, and my county chairmen were saying we'll do it, we'll do it, they said to me, "But Scott we can't vote for him in the general (election), he's still a liberal. But we'll get that lie off of you. Ain't nothin' ever been said about you." Not one breath of bad air would get in my way. But they wouldn't vote for him after that.

D: You mean in the general election?

K: Yes, general election, because Burns won in the general election.

D: Have you ever thought about how he got that in his head?

K: Oh, no, he did that for about 4-5 days and he saw that none of the papers were buying that. They were asking where, when, how – and he saw they weren't buying it and he called a press conference and apologized and said he got bad information, apologized to Scott and to Marge and his family, and to Judge Kelly, and all the Kelly family and all the Kelly supporters. I mean the press hopped on him, they said where did it happen, who told you, where is the proof? Why don't you charge him with taking a bribe?

D: I would imagine that after going through all that difficulty, your feelings were that you would just forget it for a while.

K: I did. But that was a foolish mistake he made. Number one, my endorsement wasn't going to do the job. It would have tightened the race some but Burns still would have beaten him. High was the liberal and Burns was the conservative and he would have beaten him anyway. As for Lawton, I never did get close with him in any of his campaigns.