

CENTER FOR FLORIDA HISTORY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: D. BURKE KIBLER
INTERVIEWER: JAMES M. DENHAM
PLACE: LAKELAND, FLORIDA
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D= DENHAM (James M.)
K= KIBLER (D. Burke)

D: Mr. Kibler, how are you today? Today, I'd like to focus primarily on your background so that we lead up to that point when we can talk about Mr. Chiles. Where were you born Mr. Kibler?

K: I was born here in Lakeland. Actually I was born on Success Ave. That was back in the days when births occurred in the home and Dr Herman Watson who lived on Success Ave and was married to one of my father's sisters and I was born in their home. My father's mother at that time lived in Dunnellon, FL where my father owned a phosphate mine. It was 1924, 5th of February.

D: It was 1924, the 5th of February. So you lived in that house on Success for. . .

K: No, I never lived there, Dr. Watson who was my uncle, Herman Watson lived there for, at that time and lived there until I think he and his wife, my aunt Lucille, moved down on Lake Hunter in a home that was built by my grandfather, D. B. Kibler. At the time, though, we lived in Dunnellon FL, my father and mother did, and we moved to Lakeland I think in 1932 when I was 8 years old.

D: So they actually came to Lakeland so that you could be born here in Lakeland under the supervision of the doctor.

K: Yes, there were two doctors in Dunnellon. One was Dr. Stutts and he had an addiction to cocaine they said and the other doctor who is Dr. Baskin and he also had a very great fondness for alcohol, which really was not the sort that you wanted to be attending when the births took place, so my mother and father came to Lakeland for the event.

D: Do you remember how long you lived in Dunnellon before you moved to Lakeland? That would've been about. . .

K: I was 8 years old, 1932. I had just completed the 3rd grade in Dunnellon when we came to Lakeland and I went to Dixieland Grammar school, and Dixieland of course, is still there on Belmar I guess it is, I attended Dixieland and then went from there to Lakeland Junior High School which is now where Lawton Chile Middle Academy is.

D: yes

K: That was both the Junior and the Senior High School back in those days.

D: Just a block or so from here.

K: Yes, Right across the lake.

D: While we're still in your early days even in Dunnellon, can you tell me a little about your father? His family? How did he get to Dunnellon? Did he meet his wife, your mother in Dunnellon? Was your mother also from Dunnellon?

K: No, she was from St. Petersburg. And she was a student in the Florida State College for Women. And she was a sorority sister of my father's middle sister; he had two sisters, Clara and Lucille. And they were both Pi Beta Phi's and she introduced him to my father who, at the time was, attending Georgia Institute of Technology. He was an engineer.

D: And they just had the chance to meet at some point?

K: Somewhere, I don't know exactly the details and they had I guess a whirlwind type romance.

D: Now was he a native of Dunnellon, or a native of Florida?

K: He was born, I think in Florence, SC. The family came, my grandfather, AB Kibler, DB Kibler, he had a twin brother called AB they moved from SC to Fla in the 1890's somewhere. He was a station agent, ran, operated a telegraph and then later went to Inverness, Florida and then he later became, really had the commissary franchise, I guess you'd call it, for the phosphate mine. The phosphate mining industry really sort of originated in Marion County.

D: Yes

K: It came, it was a different geological formation. They called it a hard rock phosphate. Then my grandfather brought his twin brother down to Inverness and they lived there until the early 1900's when they moved to Lakeland. I don't know the exact date. But my grandfather still ran the phosphate mines up in the Dunnellon area up until the early 1920's.

D: So that would've been pretty much the ground floor of the phosphate industry. That's extremely interesting. That in and of itself would be quite an interesting thing to cover. Have you done any oral histories before?

K: No

D: With Dr. Proctor's oral history Program at the University of Florida?

K: No, I haven't.

D: Okay, so your mother's family. What was her maiden name?

K: Dew, D-E-W.

D: That's where Nancy comes in. [Nancy Dew Kibler Ross]

K: That's right, my younger daughter.

D: By the way, I'm going to be with George Ross tonight for our Historic Lakeland meeting.

K: Oh good

D: Your son-in-law. This will be his first regular meeting as president. Okay, so her name was Dew. Her first name was?

K: Bessie Ruth? And she disliked the Bessie. She always thought she was named after a mule perhaps. But she was Bessie Ruth Dew and she was called, by her friends, Bess, usually.

D: So she grew up in St. Petersburg?

K: Yes she was born in Louisiana but the family had moved a bit from Tennessee to Louisiana to Florida and her father was very old, no I misspoke, her older brother; her father died when she was fairly young. There were 6 children and Roy Dew was the oldest of the children and he really raised the family. He was the oldest living Cadillac dealer in Florida when he died. There is still a company over there that bears his name, Dew Motor Company.

D: Okay. Back to the circumstances that you moved here to Lakeland, that your family moved here to Lakeland. They came to work in phosphate?

K: Well, my father left in his senior year in Georgia Tech to take over running the phosphate mines in Marion County. My grandfather had health problems of some sort; they used to call them nervous breakdowns, I think. But not sure quite what that meant, he had some cardiovascular problems. Anyway, he was living in Lakeland at the time though he still had the responsibility for running the mines. There were superintendents there but my father came and moved there and took over the active conduct of that business back in the early 1920's. And then again, my grandfather's twin brother, AB, died in 1931 and he died in 1932, maybe it was '33, he died in 1933. My father moved to Lakeland after the death of his uncle AB Kibler. And my grandfather's health was so bad then and, so, they had developed cattle and agricultural enterprises and it was called AB & DB Kibler Incorporated and they had some properties here and in Hillsborough County and they took some active management. My father took that over as well as continuing to run the phosphate mines that were actually ongoing in Marion County. So both of those moves were precipitated by the health problems of his father and his father's brother.

D: Can you explain one more time the relationship between your family and the Watson family? And that was, of course, the Watson Clinic family.

K: Yes he was the founder; Herman Watson was the husband of my father's older sister, Lucille. They had one child who was married to Judge [Richard] Bronson who was a circuit judge here for a number of years. He is still alive but he has Parkinson's disease, very poor health now. Herman Watson was the founder of Watson Clinic. He's been dead many years. He died in the 60's, I think.

D: Can you remember, you would have been about, I guess, about 6 or 7 years old, when you moved to Lakeland?

K: 8, I'd completed the third grade.

D: 8 yrs old, Can you remember that move?

K: Oh Yeah, I remember it quite well. I remember Yarnell Van Company, which was, up until recently still was a Yarnell identified, but it had been acquired by Allied or something but used the Yarnell name. They came and the fellow who was driving the van and loading the furniture had a heart attack on the back porch of our house and died. It was the first time I had seen a dead person.

D: Oh, right there, right then.

K: Right there, when I was 8 yrs old and they were making the move. Though, Dunnellon was a violent town, that had nothing to do with it; its just it was maybe apocryphal or something that that happened. But my father told stories of sitting out in the yard listening to his father and some other men talk and a man came up and the sheriff there pulled out a gun and killed him. Just right in the front. And every Saturday there was reputation, clearly, I'm sure it wasn't literally true, but that somebody would get killed on Saturday nights in Dunnellon, Florida. It was a violent time like the Wild West.

D: Yes, you've had a chance to look at my book on sheriff's and I got a chance to get into that, also, there was a lot of convict lease going on there, as well, wasn't there, so that meant that there was a lot of escapes and people coming in and out and like you say, a mining town.

K: When my grandfather took over the mining operation from J Buchenbach, as I say, the Belgian company, they were leasing convicts and he stopped the leasing of them. He didn't believe in it, in fact, they told us stories of the whipping post where they would administer corporal punishment to the laborers and that's when the commissary started. Many of them, they had to have, they were out in remote locations, the mine was, didn't have much technology back then and it was mostly done by brute labor and explosives. It wasn't true here in Polk County where they had little communities, and it had everything self-contained, the schools, the stores.

D: company stores?

K: Company stores and the running of the commissary was, eventually, before my grandfather actually got into this, he had the concession for the commissaries for the mines and he went there and they put him in charge. He became, I guess, General Manager of the mines. And somewhere along the way he stopped all of the leasing, at least at that mine. This went on well into the 1920's before it was all stopped, up through the First World War.

D: Now so that day that you moved, where did you move first when you came to Lakeland? Where did you live?

K: 751 Edgewood Dr.

D: Way out back then.

K: It was, yet I live on Fairmont Ave now down on the lot, just before you get to Lake Hollingsworth, on the corner and the southern end of Fairmont, it's only two blocks long, if you just kept going south directly on Fairmount you'd run into this house. It's an English Tudor house. It was owned by Jim Manley. It was leased for a year and-a-half or two years until my father built the house which is caddy corner to where I live now. Dr. John Peacock, in Virginia, bought the house from my father's estate, from my mother's estate actually, because she died a couple of years after his death. That house, I was raised in. It is a red brick Georgian house.

D: And that's still standing?

K: That's still standing, Oh yes, the Peacocks are living there.

D: Okay, when you were here growing up in Lakeland you would have attended fourth grade. What school did you go to then?

K: In fourth grade I attended Dixieland and then I went from there to Lakeland Junior High School, the only one they had. There were five grammar schools in Lakeland then, Central Avenue, Webster Ave, John Cox, Lake Morton and Dixieland. That was before they built Cleveland Court and it was closed down. That was built during the boom time and I don't think it ever opened until after WWII.

D: Who were at the time growing up in grammar school and also into your, I guess, your adolescence, who were some of the leaders of the community that you remember here that were here at that time? That you recognized or that you would recall?

K: Well some of them were, Hammond Jones, we had the Hammond Jones Chevrolet Company, Fred Binford, who had Binford Stationary, his brother Charlie Binford had Binford's Bootery. There was Clara Henley, who had Henley's drugstore. These were leaders in the community. They were, most of them, either Rotarian or Kiwanis. Only had a couple of city clubs back then. They were active in those.

D: Did you have any Aunts and Uncles that lived in the area?

K: Just my Aunt Lucille and her husband Herman Watson. My mother's family, most of them were in Pinellas County, St Petersburg. She had three brothers that lived there and two sisters.

D: Who were some of your closest friends from high school that you remember?

K: Well the one still living is Dr. Alvin Fillastre. He and his family lived on Fairmount Ave. Ted Weeks who is a lawyer in town currently lives in that house. But Alvin, he's retired now; he and I were in the fourth grade together so I have known him continuously

since then. We roomed together in college and I've known him all of my adult, of course all of my life except for 8 years. Albert King, who is deceased, was a doctor at Watson Clinic, he was in high school with me and probably my closest friend in high school. His family, A. G. King's daddy ran a produce company. His sister is still alive. She is married to Billy Chase whose son works in a department in, I think, Smith Barney. His father was a very well known citizen and one of the great athletes produced by Polk County. He set records that were held for a long time at University of Florida in both swimming and in football and his father which was young Bill's, I say young Bill, he's in his 50's now, his grandfather was W. W. Chase who was a sheriff in Polk county.

D: Sure, I know that name. In fact, I ran into one of his descendents recently at a Rotary Club meeting that I spoke at, I'm pretty sure it was him.

K: Could have been Frank Chase or his brother. Sheriff W. W. Chase had been dead a long, long time.

D: While we're on that subject, do you remember any sheriffs that you remember vividly? As you go down the different sheriffs of Polk County over the years are there any that leap out, other than say, Monroe Brannen? Let's say going a little further back than him.

K: Well, the ones that uh, Sheriff W. W. Chase, I remember. He was a sheriff when I was in high school. Right after, then I was absent from Lakeland for roughly three years in the service. Then I left here in 1941 actually, and was pretty much gone except for coming back for holidays and all, up until I got my law degree in 1949. Then I came back. So for those 8 years I don't have a recollection very much of things that went on here locally.

D: Sure, sure.

K: But Monroe was probably sheriff when I got back.

D: That was 1960. He was Sheriff from 1960 – 1976.

K: Okay, I guess, it was Hagan Parrish.

D: Hagan Parrish would've been sheriff and then. . .

K: Did he precede Monroe?

D: Yes.

K: Okay, well, I knew Hagan pretty well. I remember him. Hagan was a tough sheriff. He had that reputation, I thought, was straight and um. . .one of the ways you determined a sheriff then, if he was honest he was a good sheriff.

D: Because there weren't many. Or that's not right to say, but it was a very important thing to be honest.

K: We had a number of sheriffs that had dubious honesty. Frank Williams was one. There were some others. We had one that was kind of crazy, Dan Daniels.

D: Yes, that was a long time ago. That was fairly recently.

K: That was more recent. But Hagan, Sheriff John Logan, I knew his son, Clayton, who was a good friend of mine, Clayton Logan.

D: What about Pat . . . ?

K: Pat Gordon. I knew Pat. Yeah, Pat. He preceded Hagan. Hagan came in because Pat was sort of scandalized. Pat had been a constable as I remember and he certainly was reputed to have been involved in petty graft and I had no doubt that those allegations were correct.

D: I did an interview with an African American gentleman and he talked about Pat's hiring. He was the first sheriff to hire African American law people. And it was very early on, in the early 50's and it was even long before the voting rights act came in and it was quite a thing. And he had his own take on things, as you might imagine. Okay, I don't want to get to far off track here. What are some of the things growing up that you remember having fun pastimes, the things that you did growing up, some of your best memories, I guess of your childhood? What were some of the things you liked to do?

K: Well, it was a simpler time then. Sandlot baseball was a something that occupied you when you weren't going to school and even then you had neighborhood baseball teams. This certainly preceded any thought of little league type organizations but it was equivalent, I guess. But you'd have neighborhood teams that would get together and would challenge, it was three or four or five in the community and we would play and then the swimming was always a summertime activity. Crystal Lake which was clear spring fed sand bottom lake had a pavilion there and it was a place that was accessible and really, at the time, the only place in Lakeland really that you had good swimming. The lakes at that time within the city were all fairly well polluted from storm runoff.

D: Already?

K: Back then, it happened when developments took place and the elevation around the lake was such that you had big run-off. But I had a sailboat and that was another one of the past-times at Lake Hollingsworth, my family lived right on the lake. I can recall having turned my boat over and the mast being stuck at the bottom and going down to get it loose, it was the only way you could do it and I would be over my head in muck.

D: Already, by that time.

K: This was about; I'm thinking '38 or '39, '40

D: That is an astounding memory, because that really speaks volumes.

K: Where you really could tell was at Frances Beach, which was a pavilion where Seymour's Nursery was on the south side of the Lake 100 yards maybe east of the Yacht Club. It was a pavilion built on stilts in the Lake like a pier with a two story on top. My memories of it were it was sort of a beer hall. It was pretty; I won't say disreputable, kind of run-down. Probably that would adequately describe it. But it had been, a decade before back in the 20's, before the development took place around the Lake, Lake Hollingsworth was a clear lake and sand bottom. You can tell when they drained the

Lake recently that it was pretty much sand bottom that you could still see that. My father told me that. This was a wonderful place back before the 1st War and even up until the middle of boom time when the development started it was a very popular place for people all over the county to come and picnic. Back in the early part of the century being in horse and wagon come in on the south side and they'd spend the afternoon, Sunday afternoons would be on Lake Hollingsworth. And that pavilion was built in order to cater to these people who would come in and have a place. And that when you'd go and rent bathing suits which was very common any place there was swimming. Of course, they had diving boards and a restaurant of sorts there. And that continued on, that I can recall, that you could get beer, 3.2 beer because Lakeland was dry then and people still did some swimming there. But the bacteria count in the Lake came up by the early 30's.

D: That's really amazing .

K: They still had swimming, I think, probably until the early 30's it still operated. But it burned down somewhere, I'd guess, around '34-'35 and the Crystal Lake remained the only really viable swimming option. They built a swimming pool on the north side, just south of where the hospital is now. A federal project, the WPA or PWA or one of the alphabet projects. That was the first swimming pool in Lakeland.

D: Now is it true also that you could swim in Lake Mirror? And in Lake Morton? Or was that similar to Lake Hollingsworth?

K: All those lakes were, had a form of pollution in them. It wasn't sanitary sewage and kids did swim in them. In fact, I've probably been swimming in most of them. Lake Hunter was a better lake, it was a deeper lake and there was a contest the Ledger would have, the first person to catch a bass in each of the lakes within the city limits. There weren't many fish in the lakes then, I mean bass, I guess because of the pollution there. Lake Hollingsworth had a lot of catfish in it, of course there were trout lines; commercial fisherman would fish there.

D: We always think of the pollution as more of a recent development, but it's really not, is it?

K: No, it was all tied in with the development, particularly Lake Hollingsworth because there is more elevation around the lake than in some places.

D: Now those would be characterized as some of your best memories growing up in Lakeland, I'd bet. What would be some of your worst ones? What would be some of the things that happened that really bothered you as a young kid or struck you as . . .

K: Well, I had a pretty nice childhood. There weren't very many things that I can remember that were upsetting back then. I went to boys' camp from the time when I was 10,11,12,13 years old and my parents went to North Carolina in the summers. I was usually, had the summers broken by that. It was hot then, obviously.

D: No air-conditioning.

K: No air-conditioning. But the houses were built differently, high ceilings and a lot of them had attic fans and of course, the old cracker houses had the division in the middle where you had a breeze and tin roofs and a porch around them.

But I don't . . .

D: Can't really think of anything specifically?

K: Everybody was, uh, nobody had very much money then and everybody worked. I never had a paper route, I substituted on paper routes. I ushered at the Palace Theatre and at the Detroit Tigers, when they were playing baseball out there. I always loved baseball. The Tigers, of course, were training as long as I can remember. They probably started about '32 or '33 or '34 something like that. I remember the middle '30's going out there.

D: Do you ever get a chance to go anymore?

K: You know, I have a chance, I don't! I like minor league ball. There was a time when I'd go out and see, they were called the Lakeland Pilots. But somehow I lost interest. Exhibition ball doesn't really appeal to me as much. I prefer the minor league ball.

D: Now when your father came here did he continue in the phosphate business? Or did he change careers?

K: No, well, the phosphate business was depleting, the hard rock deposits were depleting and so time was limited. But he continued running the last phosphate mine, but it was the hard rock business, it was the merger of two businesses. CJ Camden and the company then that my father had acquired from the Belgians, called Kibler-Camp Phosphate Enterprise. They continued mining up until the middle to the late 50's and the deposits they were mining, they just ran out of them. Those deposits were smaller, a much higher grade than our Dunnellon Place.

D: So where was the location of his activities here in Polk County?

K: Well, he operated from the time he moved here. Of course, remember we moved here in the early 30's and he continued running those mines up there from the early 30's for another 20 some years.

D: You mean in Dunnellon.

K: In Dunnellon

D: Oh, Okay.

K: Even though he lived up here. They didn't stop mining until the late 50's so at least 25 years that those continued on. But, he would go up there once a week and a fine superintendent ran them and I would go with him from time to time during the summertime. And he was also with my grandfather in the cattle business and so expanded that during the time my father acquired it. A lot of it was on leased land in Polk County from the phosphate companies, some of the current companies are still there. IMC is one. The phosphate industry has changed so. And he acquired a fairly large tract of land in Manatee County and operations really moved down there. And we are still in the cattle business in Manatee County. My son, Tom, runs the cattle operation there.

D: Okay. Do you remember growing up and your first knowledge of a political campaign or political leaders at the state level? Or even presidential elections? What were your first real images of a political campaign?

K: The first political campaign that I guess I remember, gubernatorial campaign, was Dave Sholtz.

D: That's a while back, '36.

K: I think '32, I think '36 is when Fred Cone ran.

D: Yes, because he succeeded Doyle Carlton.

K: I believe, uh,

D: No, you've got it, you've got it.

K: I was trying to think if it was Martin or Carlton, immediately that he succeeded.

D: I think it was Carlton.

K: And John Martin before that, he was a pretty close friend of my grandfather's. And then Fred Cone, I remember that race. And then, of course, Spessard Holland followed Fred Cone. And Spessard Holland was somebody from Polk County that we were very much aware of.

D: We'll talk some more about him.

K: And my father-in-law, Tom Bryant, who was someone you asked me about, he was one of the most obvious leaders in the community, though he never ran for anything. If you had to pick one person who had more to do with things that happened in the community, probably more than any other one individual, it was Tom Bryant.

D: So he would have been someone that these candidates would have visited.

K: Always, always.

D: And you would have known of that because of interacting with them. So, um, did they ever come to Lakeland to campaign? Or give speeches?

K: Lakeland was a, Munn Park was a, they had Politics in the Park, they had the bandstand, the old bandstand, I guess you could see pictures of it, in the middle of the park, a big bandstand and big trees and all. It was a collecting point. It goes back to, William Jennings Bryan, I think, once spoke in Munn Park. Obviously I don't remember that. That would've been before I was born.

D: That would've been in the early 20's.

K: Lakeland had a reputation of being right in the middle of Florida.

D: They had one of the first big auditoriums, kind of a precursor to the Civic Center.

K: The only auditorium I remember, of course, was the May Hall which was in the city auditorium. That was all new. It was all built in the improvement when they did the lake and the new city hall. I guess that was done in the late 20's that those were constructed and was where the city hall was. Which is still the same site and all and it was right next door to it.

D: Did you have any brothers and sisters? Who were your brothers and sisters at the time and how old were they?

K: I was an only child.

D: An only child, okay. What church did you go to?

K: First Presbyterian, it's still the church I belong to. I went to several others, my mother was Presbyterian and my father was brought up a Methodist. I went when I was in high school, I would take my grandmother and she was a devout Methodist. I would take her to church. She couldn't drive. So I went to both the Methodist Sunday school and the Methodist Church but I guess I was always a, I was told that I joined the First Presbyterian Church. I was baptized there; sprinkled, they didn't immerse you then.

D: Would you consider yourself a good student? In elementary school or/ and also high school?

K: Yes,

D: What were your favorite subjects?

K: I'd planned on going to engineering school because, with the mining business and all so I took 4 years of mathematics and 4 years of science and 4 years of Latin and English and History and all. Probably English Literature when I got past where you had to deal with syntax and the rules of English. I look back, I had an English major in college. Both political science and English. I had enough for both, English major is what my transcripts show. But I didn't apply myself nearly as much as you ought to. I always look back on that. But I was a pretty good student.

D: I guess it's now about the time that we need to start thinking about your college. Did you always think that you would go to college or did you always plan on going to college?

K: My parents had planned on me going, I had expected that I was always going to college. In fact, I graduated in 1941, which of course, the year of Pearl Harbor. And the winds of war were blowing then. My father wanted me to go to enroll at Georgia Tech, and my mother wanted me to go to Duke. She thought that would be a better school for me to go to. So I enrolled there. All my friends were going to University of Florida and it was getting closer to the war and I just decided that I was going to go to Florida and they didn't . . .

D: They didn't object to that?

K: Well, I think everyone accepted that my college was going to be interrupted with service and I thought that maybe I could go and come back and go to engineering school. But after I got into college mathematics I saw that this was not, I worked hard to make good grades and no matter how hard I worked I couldn't make as good of grades, I wasn't as smart as some of those. . . .

D: It just wasn't your cup of tea.

K: Well, the thing that gave me the real insight, they had, everything was machine graded, they had comprehensive exams. In fact, when I was a freshman at University of Florida you took one test and that was your grade for the entire year.progress tests and all. . . . but I couldn't ever make the graded percent in liberal arts as well as science and math because. . . I stayed there, after I got out of the service, I went back and I don't know why I went into law except that it seemed attractive to me. I didn't have any of this burning ambition to go into law; it just seemed to be a profession that was okay to do. At that time I was married, I got married in 1945, right after the war was over and Nell's father I admired greatly and so...

D: What I think we ought to do now is kind of cut it at your college or WWII experience. I've learned with these things that much more than an hour is probably kind of counterproductive. It's better I think to come along. I'd like for you to reflect a little bit about the growing war clouds when you were in high school and what it was like to see on the newsreels and read in the newspaper and how those things affected you. Japanese aggression in the Pacific, German armament rearming and so forth. How did you feel about all of that? Did you have a sense that this was really important or really kind of scary?

K: I think that very, very, very, clearly that everyone was aware of what was happening in the world. There was not the realization of the horrors of the holocaust, the concentration camps. It just wasn't generally known.

D: Oh, certainly not.

K: I think that some people in our government should have known or did know more but no one really knew the full extent of what was going on because human beings just couldn't accept that, I think. Of course, it's like Saddam Hussein. But there were thing that I can remember, the cover of *Life* Magazine, about the play "Watch on the Rhine" which was a play. There were a number of, like when I was a freshman in high school in '37-'38, that we had a skit and it was, it had to have been later than that, it was '39, and one of the little skits we did was a satire on the, we dressed up in top hats like diplomats and had scissors and a big map and all the countries were sitting down to have a peace conference. We cut up Czechoslovakia.

D: Oh, my goodness, that would have been telling it.

K: These were little things done by the students. I guess, I was a junior, something like that in high school, sophomore or junior something like that.

D: Did you have any feel for the sentiment in Lakeland as to what people's minds were? Were they isolationists? Were the concerned? Were they pro-German, anti-German or. .

K: Well, my wife's mother was born in Germany and her and mother and her father was a baker and they came to Racine, Wisconsin and she came down and her father who was a Steitz was her maiden name and he was an avowed Nazi. When I say Nazi, he wasn't Nazi, of course, but he was very loyal to those, he had pride in what was going on. He would listen to the broadcast in German when Hitler would make a speech. And I would say that . . .

D: And he lived in St. Petersburg?

K: No, he lived here on Lake Hollingsworth in the house where Dr. Jack Stephans lives now. It's a yellow brick house just around the Lake from where Vane McClurg lives. He was an old man then, but he was proud of Germany and Mr. Bryant embarrassed him because he was very, very strongly against Hitler. I think most people in this country, there was very little support for the Germans. People were afraid of the Germans. So many people had just gotten through WWI. It hadn't been very long.

D: And the Depression was going on and that occupied people.

K: And the Depression and all and there was a strong anti-war sentiment. I have bits and pieces I remember, groupings when they had the, all kinds of clubs, protests, there about Veterans of future wars and things like that.

D: The America First Movement. I guess they would've had something similar to that perhaps here in Lakeland.

K: I'd say that it was pretty clear, obvious, that when Roosevelt was elected in 1940

D: So 1941 you entered University of Florida that would've been in the fall. And then on Dec. 7, can you remember what you were doing and where you were at the time?

K: I was in the living room of the ATO fraternity house. We had a dance every weekend, of course, University of Florida was not co-educational then, and we had big weekends where the girls would come.

D: How many students, by the way?

K: About 31 or 32 hundred. And we would usually go to a movie on Sunday afternoon, recovering from the weekend and we were, I cannot remember, I think we were, we'd just had lunch and it was in the afternoon, I don't remember the exact time, whether we had been to the movie or talking about it probably and it came on the radio that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. And strangely enough, not a soul in the fraternity house knew where Pearl Harbor was. They didn't indicate it was in the Hawaiian Islands. Shortly after, somebody looked it up or whatever, and we discovered it was a naval base. The reports were just beyond belief; they kept saying "we've been bombed, we've been bombed" and we kept trying to find out where it was.

D: And for all you knew it was somewhere else.

K: We had the feeling, the Japanese; that it was out in the Pacific probably somewhere.

D: Yes.

K: But we weren't really certain, like it could have been in the Philippines someplace. Nobody really identified Pearl Harbor as being part of the Hawaiian Islands. And then that next day a lot of us went down and volunteered for the Army Air Corp. We had no Air force then. And they told me I was colorblind. I'm not, I probably wouldn't pass the test because I had some nearsightedness then that I kind of out grew. But several of my fraternity brothers went on in at that time. We, after it calmed down, decided that they couldn't absorb everybody and everybody; there was counseling, go ahead with the education. I was in ROTC, stayed in ROTC and they offered ROTC in the summer and they had never done that before. I stayed in school until I finished my sophomore year but I had a half year of advanced ROTC and went to basic training and after that came back to the University of Florida in to what they called the ASTP Arms Specialized Training Program and got another semester of college and went to officer candidate school overseas.

D: And that would've been in 1943?

K: Well, '43 is when I went into the service. And then went to Fort Bragg, NC. From Fort Bragg, NC, back to the University of Florida after basic training and then from the university ASTP Program to Fort Sill Officer Candidate School and June of '44 I went to the 103rd Division and then in September of that year in '44 went overseas with the 103rd Infantry Division and was in Europe a year and came back the following September.

D: Have you ever spoken about your experiences in WWII for an oral history of any kind?

K: No

D: Would you be interested in doing that? Or could you do that a little bit?

K: Sure, I didn't have that significant of a, I was a union officer; I was a forward observer with an infantry and rifle company. I wasn't in any area where you knew very much what was going on. But you sensed things. I guess I was 19, maybe 20 and I had, I guess, a sheltered life and it was very hard to grow accustomed to the fact that there were people out there who were trying to kill me.

D: What month and date did you get to Europe? First step foot in Europe? Did you go to England first?

K: No, no we went with a convoy into southern France. They had an invasion of southern France in the middle of August and we landed there in the latter part of September or the last days of September or the first of October and we were the first landing that was not the assault landing. They had the assault landing in southern France, as they did in Normandy, it wasn't resisted and didn't have many casualties there. And they had secured everything and we got off the boat and walked 25 or 30 miles and then the division assembled and then we finally got all the vehicles and everything and went out to the Vosges Mountains up near Alsace, France and we were committed, saw action about the first week in November of 1944. We were in contact with the US 7th Army which was in the southern, 1st British Army, US 7th Army, then 3rd Army, the 1st Army, the 9th Army and then the British 5th. And that was all the Allied forces that they moved in toward the end of the war. We were south of the Rhine and that was a very terrifying

thing because the whole circumstance changed. Suddenly we weren't moving forward anymore. And we discovered we were going up to relieve the 101st Infantry, I mean, the 101st Airborne Division that was at Bastogne and then we substituted for the 4th Armament, they decided they wanted an army division to go there. All of this was very chaotic and very, that was the thing about war, nobody really knew what was going on.

D: And you never knew what to expect.

K: And you didn't. Bizarre things would happen that I can still remember. We were on the outskirts of this little village. Some automatic weapons were in a house up there and one infantry platoon were going up there and I went because they thought artillery could fire on it and we saw this kid that had been shot and we sat and kidded with him and the medics attended to him and were coming to evacuate him. He had a wound in the leg, and about a half and hour later we came down after; actually the Germans had retreated from there and we really didn't have much of a fight. We came back to where the boy was and he was dead. The medics got there and he had died of shock. That was one of the things I didn't realize. That here somebody could have the so-called "million dollar" wound; a flesh wound that went all the way through. We were thinking that he'd be back after a month in the hospital. These were things that they talked about a lot.

D: Right, and you had even spoken about how lucky he was.

K: Yeah, he was lucky and all but then he died. These were the little things, like that, that you remember.

D: So, did you have any friends that got killed in your outfit or anything that you remember?

K: Yeah, yeah. One of the forward observers that I was in the OCS with and got killed. One was in an artillery place. Another one was in a little town called Zollstock. He got captured and as far as I know he got killed. A lot of the infantry that I got to know were shot and evacuated and killed. And one time running across a road, we were at the end of the war, a shell came in and . . . you did sort of dumb things. You'd hear the artillery and you hated it; it was cold and nasty and wet, this was March, and you hated to hit the ground and get in that slush, mud and snow and all. And you'd hear the shells come in and it would be too late. Then as you were diving down you'd realize that a shell landed in the road. You could see the flash and all and in the impact I hit my head, my helmet, and I was reaching up and one of the things I'd seen happen where somebody had the top of their head taken off and still were alive; there was a shock or whatever but you didn't feel it and blood was running down my face and I can recall I was afraid to put my hand up in to see whether the hair and all was still there or not. Well it turned out that I apparently hit my head, I guess on the edge of the helmet. It came off and it should have taken stitches but it didn't. I wasn't hurt really. But the kid, one of them was almost as close as you are to me, the other one was next to me; they both were infantry, one of them was moaning and all. He had a shell fragment. I don't know what happened to him. And the other one was apparently killed and I was right in the middle. And we just kept moving. We had to go on. The medics were there, there wasn't anything . . . I screamed for medics and they came. He shook his head looking at the other kid. He didn't pay any attention to me. I told him I was all right. He didn't see the blood. But these are the kind of things that stick in your head.

D: For a long time afterwards.

K: Yes, forever.

D: So the next question is pretty obvious. How did the experience change your life? I mean, that is kind of a follow up to this.

K: War does change you. It makes you, ways even to this day, one of the great fears you had, after a while it isn't so bad, but you find that you were just incredibly frightened of getting killed. And when you saw that you probably were going to get killed in this in the kind of job I had. The only way I could handle it was I said, okay, you got to die sometime. And you don't want to go by the example of some of the Forward Observers. The infantry said that they won't go out and adjust fire. They want to stay in the hole and get shot at. I wasn't going to do that. I just finally decided, "the hell with it." If I get killed, I get killed. I wasn't going to try to expose myself unnecessarily. You adjusted to that. Once you accommodated it, that doesn't mean that you still didn't get frightened and all, but you just did what you had to do. This all came back to me when I thought I was going to get recalled in the Korean War. Then I was married and had a child. I just thought that I could not adjust again to being a forward observer. I wondered what would happen to me, I just didn't know and that's when I transferred to military intelligence. I guess I would have done the same thing, who knows. That's not what really changes your life but what it does is it gives you insight into yourself. And you saw a lot of kids around who just absolutely broke down, and others that were the kind that were Congressional Medal of Honor winners. They just were oblivious to it.

D: I am going to ask you a lot about Chesterfield Smith later in subsequent interviews. Did you know him then?

K: No, I knew Chesterfield, who he was, I had been at the University of Florida, but I did not know him then. I knew him now only because, I think he was there about then. I think he had gone in earlier. In fact, I'm not even sure he was at the University before the war, the same time I was there. He went up in the middle 30's. Chesterfield's 8 years older than I am. But I knew him from law school. We were both in law school at the same time. He was a year ahead of me.

D: Well, I know you have seen some of the WWII movies, was it difficult for you to watch those?

K: No, no. They bring things back to you. And some of them like, "Saving Private Ryan," had more vivid battle scenes, very realistic.

D: Would you say that that was the most realistic?

K: Oh Yeah, they concentrated on trying to do that and they have the technology and that was the way it was. There were others that I thought were better war movies overall: "The Bridge Too Far" and "The Longest Day." Those were very good.

D: They were more dramatic movies that were good stories while, "Saving Private Ryan". . . .

K: Well, Saving Private Ryan was a story of a sort, them trying to get that kid back. That happened, there was a policy, they didn't want to wipe out an entire family. So they were trying to get him. Little things you'd pick up on in "Saving Private Ryan," that you never saw an insignia of rank on a helmet. You'd see that officers in training would have a white stripe on the back of the helmet and then it would have the rank on there, Captain Barnes or Lt. Barnes or whatever on combat officers. But no one ever had any of that when they were in combat because snipers or anybody would always try to get the leaders, you know, the officers. And the non-cons. I'm sure the consultants probably decided that most people perhaps wouldn't know that and that the audience needed to identify them in the battle scenes. That was unrealistic to the extent, they knew better, they had to, it was such an obvious thing. For the most part, "Saving Private Ryan," the scenes were very realistic.

D: So walk me through your getting out, how did that happen? I guess you were delighted to get out of the military, when the war ended. Were you there when the war ended?

K: Well, the war ended in Europe in May, I guess.

D: Yes, were you there at that time?

K: Oh yeah, we were engaged. Actually, toward the end of the war, the last big push, that came for us was in March 15. It was close to the Ides of March, I remember. We had the big push-off. We moved forward against the enemy and then toward the very end. . .

D: Were you in Germany by that time?

K: We were in the Alsace. We'd been in the defensive situation for 6 weeks or so. Where we could see the Germans on the other side, there was a creek, a little river that went down there and there was a village and we dug in on this side and we would watch then during the day time and occasionally if you moved around they'd try to shoot, a sniper would try to get you, but they wouldn't much. We'd add some enfilading fire, throw some artillery rounds out there, just to make our infantry feel better; they didn't do very much.

D: You were actually still in France then?

K: Yeah, we were in France. Then after we moved out, we went forward along the Rhine River then we crossed the Rhine. We didn't make a combat crossing of the Rhine, Worms, I think, and then we went down toward the outskirts of Munich and then got down to Bavaria. We ended up in Innsbruck. But we were on the one road that goes down to Innsbruck from Germany. We had an armament division that joined us and we were given orders to mount up and they said that Innsbruck had been in communication and Innsbruck had surrendered. In fact, the German officer, the German command there, said they didn't want to tear up the city. They weren't going to fight. We were going along, I was sitting on a tank, lead tank actually, and a fellow pulled up on a bicycle, rode up waving his hands, got off. We found someone who spoke fluent German. He was telling us that some SS were there, some Waffen SS, Hitler's private guard and they were going to fight to the death. He said, don't go in there because they are fortified, they have all kinds of weaponry, 88's and stuff, and we sat there for an hour

and a half -- two hours, and finally they gave the word to go on. I can still remember that was as nervous a time, I can remember. One fellow said he really knew what he was talking about. We had a funny feeling going in there, how exposed you were. We got into Innsbruck, nothing happened. The people there did not consider that they were enemy. They thought they'd been conquered, and that they were being freed by us. It was just like the news reels you saw later in Paris and girls came out with garlands of flowers, trying to jump up there and try to kiss you, giving you wine. We were in Innsbruck for a week or so, it was a very interesting experience.

D: So, was that the first time you'd ever been in a city?

K: During the war, I got to Paris a couple of times. You'd get a weekend leave, when were in a defensive situation. When the war ended we went back to Nantes, France at a rest camp there. There would be all these programs for the combat troops to go back and get a week off. You had times that way. Most of Europe, you were in villages. Infantry always had to secure the ground, dig holes and stuff like that. I was artillery but I was assigned infantry and I discovered after a while that I didn't have to be there, I just had to be in communications. So I'd usually find a house and go in. One time we picked a house at night and got in there and got up the next morning, we were in between, kind of in no man's land, and went out to the pump and found that there were some Germans that had stayed in that house too. We went out to wash our face and all. They looked up and we both ran. It was a multi-level house on the side of a hill. We went out one door and they went out another.

D: Wow, so I would imagine that the French people were very receptive and very warm to the soldiers, or were they not?

K: Yes, once you got out of Paris, the French were pretty nice. The Germans were your enemy but they were much more industrious. The French, their villages would get shot up and they'd be sitting around. The Germans, as soon as you quit shooting, they'd be out there stacking bricks and trying to clean stuff up. The damn French would come back by, of course, you went back and forth in these areas, and they didn't do a damn thing! The general feeling and the equipment the French 1st army, we equipped them, gave them tanks, gave them everything, and none of them worked, they were just sitting on the side of the road. The French were about the sorriest damn people in response to the war. Now they had a lot of other qualities about them. And the French were very, in Paris and places like that, weren't very grateful kind-- but they just didn't demonstrate the sort of character traits that you would've like to have had in the people that you'd come in and helped.

D: So, back to Innsbruck. You were in occupation of that significantly large city for a week.

K: We were in the outskirts there. We were in the area for a couple of months. Then from there, our division, 103rd high point division, they sent it back to the states. We were sent to another division. The 45th infantry division which had a lot of combat, and they were a division that was going to be used in Japan. We knew we were going to Japan; the war was still going on over there. Then we were in camp getting reappointed to go back to the states when they dropped the bomb. I remember conducting classes there trying to explain what the bomb was.

D: It's not just a bomb; it's a REAL BOMB. You're trying to explain this is not a bomb like you guys know it is.

K: Like Hiroshima or Nagasaki. Almost immediately great moral issue came about should this weapon have been used and all.

D: That was even voiced at that moment, not a long, long time later, but at that moment.

K: Most of those there, we were going to go over and be an invasion force going into Japan and it was pretty apparent to me that if they hadn't dropped that bomb, I probably wouldn't be here today. And a lot of other students said that.

D: I guess that trip home was pretty nice, after all of that.

K: It was on a marine transport ship.

D: How many days did it take you to get back?

K: It took about 8 days to get back. It took over 15 days going over in convoy and 7 or 8 back.

D: And you came right into NYC?

K: Came into NYC, departed from NYC and came back into NYC.

D: Were you mustered out pretty much right as you came in?

K: No, we then got on a train and went down to Camp Blanding and then we were there 30 days, rehabilitation, they called it, recovery of troops and all, by that time we knew we were going to be reassigned to Japan, got another 15 days we were home. Got 45 days and then we went out to Texas where the 45th infantry division was being deployed. From there, the war ended by then. We still thought they were sending some troops over there, but the war had ended. I misspoke; by the time we landed we knew that we were not going to go to Japan. They dropped the bomb, I guess, in August, early August. Several of us had put in a transfer for airborne. We decided that we didn't want to go in as infantry. We wanted to be paratroopers and be used as assault troops and then withdraw. We just figured that that would be a better way. Then I had an awful time getting my application withdrawn. I had put in for a transfer and then tried to get it withdrawn. I didn't want to jump out of airplanes if I wasn't going to be in the war. But it turned out, paperwork was a lot more difficult back then before computers. A lot of stuff just got lost. Like a fellow that had been recalled after the first war and they gave him a statement of charges for a blanket that he had not accounted for in WWI. And he was back in WWI and had this statement of charges for \$7 or \$8 or something like that. They insisted that he pay it. He was signed out for it and they couldn't account for it.

D: Okay so you finally got home and you decided to go back to the University of Florida. How long, how many years did it take you to get your Bachelor's Degree?

K: When I got back I had 2 1/2 years, this was 1945 when I got back and I enrolled in the University of Florida in June of 1946 and I got my Baccalaureate Degree in June of 1947. In the meantime, I had planned on going to Harvard Law School. I had been

accepted at Harvard but I had to have a degree. I decided that I'd just stay. We'd had a child and going to Boston lost some of its appeal. I worked that summer and enrolled in law school that September of '47. I went straight through and got my degree in September of '49.

D: Well, what I'd like to do is pick-up when we resume with your wife, getting married. I think we've surpassed that a little bit. And then pick it up there when you began law school.