

**CENTER FOR FLORIDA HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

INTERVIEW WITH: JOHN LAND

INTERVIEWER: DR. JAMES M. DENHAM

PLACE: APOPKA, FLORIDA

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D= DR. JAMES M. DENHAM

L= JOHN LAND

D: It is August 22, 2008 and I am here with Mayor John Land in Apopka, Florida. We are here to talk about some of the reminiscences of John Land and begin our oral history with Mr. John Land.

L: I am glad to have you here today and I appreciate you bringing Jennie Gordon Scully, a long time citizen of Apopka. Good to have you.

D: Mr. Land, what year were you born and where did you go to school?

L: I was born in Plant City, Florida on November 5, 1920. We moved to Apopka when I was one year old and I went to school here in Apopka. Actually, this is the same campus where I went to school. City Hall is now located where the school was located for grades one through twelve. We are in what was the gymnasium when I went to school. I graduated in this same building and met my wife here at a school function during World War Two.

D: You mentioned that you came from Plant City to Apopka when you were one year old. How long did your parents live in Plant City and what were their names?

L: My father was Bennett Land. He was a civil engineer with the Seaboard Airline Railway, the SAL. He was in charge of the maintenance of the right of way for the whole state of Florida. I am not sure, but I think, at one time, his office was in Jacksonville and he and mama lived up there the first year they were married. Plant City is where my mother went to school and graduated. They were married in Plant City.

D: Were both of your parents from Florida originally?

L: No, my father came from Princess Anne County in Virginia and, prior to the Civil War, my grandfather, Henry Gaskins Land, went to Tulane University and became a medical doctor. He served in the Confederate Navy during the Civil War. After the war he migrated to Currituck County in North Carolina and met his future wife, Sarah Jane Poyner. The Poyner family settled there about one-hundred years before that or more. They married and he set up a medical office there. My father was born there in the Poplar branch of Currituck County, North Carolina in 1878. My father attended N.C. State and graduated in 1903. After about a year, they moved the

civil engineering team to Florida and went in with the railroad. My mother was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Her father was born in Philadelphia. Her last name was Schneider, Josephine Hording Schneider. My grandfather moved from Philadelphia to Lancaster and married my grandmother. The Schneider family, which had migrated from Germany, was in the produce business and some of the brothers stayed north handled the business in New York and Philadelphia. My grandfather and great uncle, Albert Schneider, moved to Florida to acquire the produce to ship north and set up businesses down here and lived in Plant City. So when my father graduated and moved to Florida, my mother was still going to school. She graduated from the high school in Plant City and then went to Brenau University in Gainesville, Georgia. She had a close friend that went to college with her, Florence Smith. Florence had a boyfriend that was a close friend of my father's, Claude Root. Claude followed her to Georgia and she ran off and got married I think before she started school, but mama stayed there and finished up and then she and daddy were married. I think it was around 1912, somewhere along in there.

D: That's fascinating; you actually had a grandfather that was a Confederate veteran. Did I hear that correctly?

L: Yes, that's correct.

D: Did you ever see him or know him?

L: No, he died. My father was an orphan at the age of ten. His mother died when he was five. He did have another brother that was orphaned at about two years old. His father remarried and he had a half-brother and half-sister that were born after his mother died. The family helped him and his younger brother, John Thomas Land. John Thomas Land went to N.C. State and they graduated in 1903 together, even though he was a little younger. Daddy had to work some before he went to college. My mother's family, the Hording family, Granny Hording, had a brother who lost his life at Missionary Ridge while serving under Grant after the Battle of Chattanooga and Chickamauga. Although she came to Florida to live, I think she was always a little bitter about that.

D: When you were small was there any discussion of that or tension over that kind of thing?

L: Not that I know of. I did know, you know, that there was a little difference between Florida Crackers and folks from up north.

D: Did you associate with your Pennsylvania family?

L: No, we didn't . . . my mother kept up with them, with the Schneider family. She kept up with the Hording side some. Her father and brother were well to do in Lancaster. Other than that she did not keep up too much. Mama said she kind of shunned the family a little bit. Mama took us on a little trip, my older sister, younger twin sisters, and I, my two older brothers did not go with us, to tour the north and see Lancaster and saw her Yankee cousins in Philadelphia and New York in a 1935 Chevrolet. We went all over.

D: How old were you at that time?

L: I was about, I think, between tenth and eleventh grade in high school.

D: That must have been a fascinating trip for you.

L: Yes, it was. That was the first time I met my Yankee cousins and even met some Republicans. Of course, Florida was all Democratic at that time. I think my grandfather Schneider, we called him Beau, so if I call him Beau that means my grandfather; my older brother said he went into some politics but I wasn't aware of it, I was too young to know about it.

D: Now, even when you were living in Apopka you would go back to Plant City fairly often to see family?

L: Yeah. After we moved here, actually my daddy bought into business here before I was born; the day I was born, Friday, November 5, three days after President Harding was elected, that was the time of the problems over there at Ocoee, and I found a lady here in town that told me that daddy had put up guards on the outskirts of town to keep violence from getting to Apopka. I kind of doubted it because I thought maybe we weren't even here then. But, after checking the old records of the crate mill, I found that, yeah, he was here. They bought into the mill in the spring of 1920. She told me the story and then checked with a fella' a little older than me and he reminded me, or told me the story about, daddy opening up the warehouse over at the mill and let people go stay there at night in case something happened in town so they could kinda' be protected in one of the old warehouses there, and he described it to me.

D: That mill, if I could get the proper geographical place, the mill you are talking about which became the Consumer's Lumber and Veneer Company; geographically, where was that located, between here and Ocoee?

L: It was within the city limits of Apopka. It started right at Eighth Street, right between the railroad tracks. It is an industrial park now. At that time it was important to have rail transportation.

D: That presidential election was extremely controversial. Right after World War One with labor strikes going on and race riots all over the country and, here in Florida, we had various outbreaks of events too, of which you are referring to at Ocoee. So was movement between Apopka and Ocoee really constant? Were people coming back and forth a lot?

L: Well, at that time in 1920, the roads weren't that good so that distance was a long way.

D: But people were still concerned about it?

L: Well, a lot of the people that left Ocoee went to Clermont and there were stories about how they had to run all night and there was concern that people would run them down or something like that. Of course, the people I talked to appreciated the protection and letting people stay there for protection and everything. But, I started thinking about it myself and thought that he wanted to keep workers and not have his workers ran off. It was the biggest employer in the

area. When I grew up in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, we had anywhere from three hundred to six hundred people working there which was a big workforce. The six hundred was about wartime when we had war contracts and had to go twenty-four hours a day, three shifts a day. But, back in the twenties, I would expect maybe one-hundred fifty to two hundred people might have worked at the mill plus workers bringing in raw materials and such.

D: Let's go back to your early childhood in the 1920s . . .

L: The reason daddy got into the mill was because, Beau, my grandfather, and my great-uncle Al had a mill in Plant City that made fruit and vegetable crates so it was natural for the son-in-law to set up in Apopka.

D: So your father left the railroad by then?

L: He left the railroad after about seventeen years.

D: So what are some of your first memories besides visiting your relatives in Plant City? What were some of the things you did in your childhood days?

L: Yeah. The things we did for fun over and above our chores around the house, which were milking and feeding chickens, and just all things we'd do in that time during the 20s, 30s, and 40s, when most families had a lot of animals, we had about three acres with our property so we had a little room for a pasture, but I was talking about playing cops and robbers, and fox and hounds, and just kind of run away from the younger kids. My younger brother, he was a couple years younger, he had buddies and I had buddies, Conley and I were running from them and were hiding behind a hive of bees, I knew if you didn't bother them they wouldn't bother you, but we were scaring them by saying the bees were our friends and they'll protect us if you come over here where we are. Conley said, "They're our friends." He was getting into it. He didn't know about bees and he kicked the hive to show them, and I said "Uh-Oh" because I knew what was going to happen. I ran, but they bit Conley and he was running and hollering and everything. The younger kids got a big laugh out of that because they ended up with Conley getting bit by the bees that were supposed to protect us. We did a lot of outside things with no supervision. Sometimes we would get a field, a cow pasture or goat pasture or wherever, across the street with the Martin house, and they had a son my age or about eleven months older but we were in the same class in school, and get up a scrub baseball game. We called it diamond ball or softball, baseball or softball. In the fall maybe a football game was going. No supervision. The street in front of our house was the old Dixie Highway, but when they built the new highway in 1930, probably all day long only one car would come by and that was the mailman. So, my father, he wouldn't let us play in the street, but Albert's family didn't bother him that much. Of course, when they moved the highway there wasn't that much traffic so we would get out there sometimes on roller skates and play hockey or other things on the street, stop long enough for Mr. Anderson, the mailman, to come by and go back to playing. That was some of the things we did in our younger days. Inside, during hurricane time, we had a lot of things like Parcheesi, dominoes, and one old game called crocono we always liked. That's where a big wooden frame that you sled little pups into the center for a twenty count and then there were circles behind with fifteen, ten and so on. You could shoot those and knock the opponent off the board then you

count up the score. That was always a big thing for inside. We had other card games and things like that, tiddlywinks, you name it; we had all kinds of inside games for during a hurricane. Most of the time if it wasn't something like that or in the evening, we would be outside playing, boys and girls alike.

When we got a little bit older, Albert Martin and I would get into some things. He'd been over to Daytona and seen one of those mini-golf courses so he came back and we decided we would build one in the Martin's grove. So that was one summer we were working to build that and we got in competition with my older brother and some of his friends. They were going to build one on the Land side and have a better putt-putt golf course than we did. Another summer, when we were a little older, Albert and I bought a twelve or fourteen foot boat for about a dollar or two dollars and kept it on Dream Lake for fishing. Albert's grandfather was an architect from England and Albert got the idea build a sailboat out of our old fishing boat and we made that our project one summer. I guess before he got into that I'd sold him my half for one dollar but I helped him build it and we put in on Dream Lake and he'd sail it across Dream Lake. Another summer we decided we would make a diving bell. Our family had some pretzel cans, the five gallon cans, and we took some lead plates from the Apopka Chief and used them to take us down, then we hooked up a bicycle air pump to pump air in there, and I forgot how we put in the little Plexiglas for the window, or whether it was real glass. Anyway, we were out on Lake Marshall and I was the one who had to go down and test that thing out in about twelve feet of water. He swore it was going to work as he was pumping that air down to me. Another summer we set up a little fair in the grove on the Martin side where we had little bean bags to throw and little prizes for the kids in the neighborhood. We came up with one of those little glass domes that have the peanuts in them where you put a penny in and get a handful of peanuts. I don't know where Albert got that, or maybe I acquired that I've forgotten, but went up to the Gulf station on the corner of 441, just a block from our house, and we bought a little five cent bag of Toms Toasted Peanuts and put in that thing and tried to get people to come and put their penny in. Finally just one penny went in and Albert opened it up to get the penny out and we passed it around to let everyone get the peanuts out. We spent all summer entertaining ourselves all summer until it was time for school. Then, of course, it was time for school and there were many activities to do then like practice for different athletics and going around to ball games at Edwards Field. It was just about a half of a mile for us to walk to school so we would enjoy the walk to school and seeing friends along the way and making friends. George McClure lived almost a block from school. He was about two years old when I first met him. So, there was just a lot of togetherness and fun in that era. We didn't have any supervisors. If we had four or five kids to show up down at Edwards Field, the baseball field for Apopka, we could choose sides and, if you get into a scrap about whether someone was out or not you would settle it all yourself and go back to playing again.

We had a lot of open country. I could walk down about a block or two to Martin's pond and I had some buddies that liked to fish and we would go down and catch some bream. Later, I went with a friend that took me out to Clarcona, there was an old boat there, and that was where I caught my first bass. I was really hooked then for fishing. As I got a little older I was able to go out to the streams and lakes farther away, like Pravat Lake and Lake McCoy, and other lakes that weren't too far. We could walk a mile or two and be pretty close to a lot good fishing. Then if you wanted to go a little farther or ride a horse you could go all the way out to Rock Springs. As

you got a little older you could get a boat and go down to Wekiwa. In high school, Jack Grossenbacher and me, the Grossenbacher family was a big family here in Apopka, spent a lot of weekends on the Wekiwa with hardly anybody else on the river. Sometimes two boats of us, maybe three or four of us, would go down and have the whole Wekiwa down to Shell Island, about three miles down from the springs, to ourselves. We would spend the whole weekend down there catching fish. We'd carry something to fry the fish in and a few other things to cook with, some grease or whatever. The water was good clean water so you didn't carry water. I spent a lot of time down there and that was what we did a lot when I was in high school.

D: When you were a kid was Rock Springs open to the public or did someone own the land then?

L: In the early days my parents went to Wekiwa. That was the place everyone went to for entertainment and swimming. In 1927, Dr. Kelly donated Rock Springs to Orange County and they fixed it up so there was a caretaker and made a nice pool and nice diving board there. So then Rock Springs became the place for everyone to go.

D: Before that it was actually Wekiwa Springs, where the current park is now?

L: Yeah. When the depression came, a lot of people left this Country and Wekiwa kind of died out. There was a hotel there that was no longer in use after that.

D: There was a hotel there?

L: There was a hotel there. I think that's where Rotary had their charter night in '27, at that hotel. My mother remembered going out there for some card parties and things.

D: So the hotel would have been where the parking lot is now?

L: Pretty close to the road, yeah.

D: When did the state purchase that and make it a park?

L: In 1969.

D: We can get back to that later on.

L: The Wekiwa at that time still had docks, but very few people around. Not too long after that a fence was put around it and made it private. The Sportsmen's Club owned part of that too so we could get in there anyway. In the summer of 1930, I can remember mama loading the whole neighborhood in the back of my dad's pickup truck and took us all out to Rock Springs. That's where I learned to swim. We'd go out there every afternoon. Even as an older child, ya'll don't remember before air conditioning, but the hot summer days, if you would go out there and swim in that cool water, seventy-two degrees, around dusk and then come home, you would stay cool all night. That was a big thing. It was about 1930 that I experienced going to Daytona Beach. Prior to that, I'd gone to my grandfather's cottage over on the Gulf at Haven Beach or Indian

Rocks. But, in 1930, daddy took us over for an excursion to the beach which he liked because he was born up there. Anyway, I fell in love with Daytona and the Atlantic beaches with surfing. So, all through high school, that is where we would have some of our class parties. It was just a lot of fun growing up during that era with no air conditioning and no T.V., something everybody thinks they got to have today. My junior party, our teacher's husband was kind of the caretaker out at Wekiwa, we went down the river to Shell Island and had our picnic down there in the evening. She was the teacher and was married to Lionel Starboard. His father had a home on the Wekiwa. This is 1937 so there was not much going on out at Wekiwa then. But there were a lot of things going on at Rock Springs. We had one of our senior parties out at Rock Springs. We'd have ice cream churns; little outings or socials where everybody would bring an ice cream churn or different things, cake or something. That's what we did for fun. Not all at one time, but over the years.

When I was fifteen, my father had strict rules about guns; he wouldn't let us have a gun. Like a lot of things you had to be a certain age, like coffee, you could have that at fifteen and iced tea at fifteen. Of course, the older kids would lord it over the younger ones. He died before I turned fifteen so I never did get to hunt with him, but my mother and older brother made sure I got a gun at fifteen so I could start hunting. My first hunting trip was just walking away from the house with Albert down to the Smith house out in the woods there. I was walking the dog and the dog pointed. I had my old double barrel and pulled both triggers at the same time and it about kicked me down. I got a quail with that. But, from then on, I could do some hunting. Some of my buddies had already been hunting for a long time because their folks let them have guns at a younger age. I'd sneak with them and get my first shot. "Gator" Starboard let me shoot his when I was ten or twelve. We could walk all the way out to where the state park is, which is where the Apopka Sportsmen's club is, but this is when I was younger and there was a lot of open country. We didn't miss T.V. and all that stuff very much.

That brings us up to about war time when I was member of the Apopka Sportsmen's Club and hunted out there. Some of the people my age were in the club, like Tommy Smith. Jack Grossenbacher, I mentioned him going down to Wekiwa, was not a member. The old timers camped in a big old camp there and, maybe, twenty of them would get to drinking around there and playing poker. Tommy Smith said we'll take up a collection and get enough to let Jack be in the club. About ten o'clock we took up a collection and went up to town and got Jack and said "you're a member, they took you in." This was before the war. Jack went on to the service and flew P-38s. Jack was killed during the war. Before he died he went around to all those who gave to the collection and paid them all off with the money he'd earned as a lieutenant. Anyway, that was kind of an experience with hunting. There were other times. One time I had a buddy that let the gun go off in a boat. It didn't come close to me but it was kind of a reckless thing. You kind of remember when somebody's gun goes off near you. J.D. Odom, George McClure, and I were in an old rickety boat messing around. Of course, most of the old boats you had to dip water out of them half the time. We'd be in some of these lakes using somebody's boat they left stuck on the shore or something and go hunting or fishing from them. George's gun went off and all his life I told him he about killed me out there. I think I was fifteen and he was like twelve or something. So that is what we did for fun. It was great I think.

D: Now, when you were growing up, were your parents and your uncles involved in local or state politics? What was your first memory of a political election?

L: Well, my first memory was right here on this campus. I don't know if he was in the convoy in the 1928 election; I went to the curb with my older brother who was in high school, Henry, he was like seven and a half or eight years older, and we were pulling for Al Smith. That was the year he ran against Hoover. So we were out there cheering for Al Smith.

D: Did he come through here?

L: I don't know if he was with the group that came through . . . but there was a big hoorah and everything. That was one of my earliest . . .

D: So you know that was something pretty exciting?

L: Yeah. I kind of got into with my older brother in eleventh grade and we got to pull for Al Smith. He later got into politics and that was part of, I believe, what led to when he got into it later. He didn't make it of course and I really didn't cheer for him, but I was kind of leaning toward Hoover in 1932. I didn't know too much about Roosevelt except that Teddy Roosevelt was kin to him. Anyway, I didn't get too much into it then. In 1940, when I was in college, my brother Henry ran for county commissioner and, coming home on weekends from college, I went out door to door politicking for him and that got into my blood. My father, he didn't like politics. He didn't think too much of politics, he was kind of a least government is the best government kind of person. He was old school. My older brother knew him better than I did and he said daddy loathed them. One time I said he didn't like politicians and my brother said, "No, he loathed politicians." I always tell that because two of us, his boys, went into politics. So my brother was in it in 1940 . . .

D: Was your father still alive at that time?

L: No, he died in 1935. Henry was just twenty one when daddy died. In 1940 he got the Democratic nomination. I got revved up, of course, if you get into that in college some of the McCarty's who later were governor types . . .

D: You probably went to school with a lot of those guys?

L: John McCarty was president and I worked with him up there and Dan McCarty was up there when Henry was. So, you know when you're in college you get into it even though it's not the big politics you . . .

D: Was there any question in your mind when you were in high school that you were going to go to the University of Florida or did you just know it?

L: I always knew that. I always knew I was going to college. My dad went to college and my mama went to college.

D: Did you know what you wanted to do?

L: I always thought it would be something like Agriculture.

D: What about engineering or . . . ?

L: I didn't think too much about that at the time. I thought about it later when I got in the Army. I was an S-2 and you had to be a survey officer and all that. So I got a lot of it in the army and took some survey courses. I got into forestry and you had to survey, so after the war I should have gone into that, but I was mostly thinking of agriculture. I ended up in forestry because I was thinking about more of an outside type of thing. My grandfather was a doctor so sometimes I thought about that but I was too much on dissecting frogs and things like that so . . .

D: Before we get to your days in U.F., let's summarize the family a little bit. Your father passed away in 1935, your older brother was obviously about 21, and you were working at the company when he passed away?

L: No, I was only fourteen.

D: Did you ever work in the company?

L: Yes, about my first year of college in the summer.

D: So, you never really worked there until you were quite a bit older?

L: Daddy wouldn't let us be there. Sometimes he would take us over to the office and just stay in the office. If I got to the outside I was sneaking.

D: So what do you think his rationale was? Was he afraid you would get mixed up in the machines? What about the laborers? Did he think the laborers were good for you to hang around?

L: No, they . . .

D: That wasn't the problem.

L: No, I hung around with a lot of them. They'd come to the house and bring wood over there and there were a lot of them I got to know.

D: Would you say that the relationship between the management and the labor was pretty good or . . . ?

L: I always thought it was. Daddy was an engineer, so he was a stickler on safety. I didn't realize it, but some of the old timers told me that he did some things in the mill when he got there that made safety better by protecting them from the steam and belts flying around and big saws; four big boilers, one-hundred fifty horse boilers that hold big pressure. Before my time, and

even before my daddy bought into the mill, Mr. Lowell told about working there as a young guy and the boiler blew up on it. Things like that could happen around a place like that. He just didn't want any of us being around that. I guess it would be kind of like now how people, for insurance reasons, don't let anybody go around places like that. They wouldn't let any kids show up around something like that. But it was kind of open and sometimes the workers' kids would bring the workers meals so it wasn't that the whole community was scared of the place and it was kind of a focal point because, at that time, it blew the big whistle and told everybody what time it was.

D: When you were growing up like that, how often did you go to Orlando?

L: Mama took us down in the spring and fall to buy clothes for school. Maybe once a month we would go. It was an excursion, about an hour's drive. Daddy would take us down to big things down there like the Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey; he always liked that and thought that was good entertainment for families, so that was something he liked us to go to. He would take us to the county fair and always wanted us to go. And, of course, he enjoyed the exhibits and we enjoyed the rides. He took us to Tinker Field. One time he was managing for the Sportsmen's Club town team, which was big entertainment here. I didn't get into that, but, before T.V., baseball in the summer time was a big thing. City teams played other cities. We played in what was called the Lake Orange league. I think there were eight or ten teams and they would rotate around. He usually took us to any special things; we saw Tom Mix at the big auditorium in Orlando and Admiral Byrd. He paid for me to go see Paderewski play the piano and I still have the bill. I didn't know who he was and I found out later it was five dollars a ticket. I went with mama and the older siblings. My grandfather was there, he came up from Plant City. I didn't realize the importance of Paderewski, but later I did. I'm glad I went. Daddy always wanted us to keep up with such things. My grandfather too; I think he took some of the kids down to see John Philip Sousa play in Tampa. Anyway, my father died in March of 1935, I was fourteen. Henry took over the crate mill. Between him and mama and everybody working together we all made it through . . .

D: Was he, at that time, at the University of Florida?

L: No, he graduated in 1933. He'd been working at the crate mill with daddy since the spring of '33.

D: So he was certainly ready to do that?

L: Yeah, he was familiar with the operation of the crate mill. After daddy died I could get over there a little bit more but it was still kind of not expected for kids to be hanging around. But, even like when Albert and I were building our fair, we needed saw dust and, of course, the crate mill had plenty of saw dust. We were going over there and daddy would get his daddy's Austin, which delivered milk, and we'd slip into the boiler room to get sawdust. I remember we were in this big old pile of sawdust and I saw daddy walking up and I hid in that sawdust. Anyway, we got our sawdust in bags and brought it back. I think that's what we used it for that one summer; one of our projects we were working on. I didn't get over there too much. I went over and got a bell off one of the locomotives that were no longer in use and I kept it for a long time. I got

another one later and put it up out there at camp cozy when we had our camp in the state park at the Sportsmen's Club. When I was home for Christmas vacation in 1940 I had to work one of the shifts there because of the government contract to ship boxes to England or somewhere for Lend Lease or something. I did work before the war there like that; it was day labor at eleven dollars a week. Then I went work there after the war until we sold it.

D: Walk us through your first days at University of Florida. What were your experiences there your first year or so?

L: I was a country boy from a small town and I got up there with four thousand people. Henry had been a member of the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity, so he just dropped me off up there and told me in no uncertain words that I was supposed to be a Lambda Chi. During the 1930s, they were short of getting people in there so nobody argued about it and you were just automatically a member. You pledged in the second semester and I got to be a member my second year. It was kind of a shocker. Coming from a small town, I was kind of homesick. It was the first three weeks before I tried to come home. I tried to stay there and get oriented a little bit. But, gradually it kind of caught on. It was a dry county. I think it did sell beer. I think some of them were able to get a little hooch at this place or that place. You would go down to Marion County, across the line, and there was a place there that was pretty popular because they could drive down there and buy hard liquor. I didn't drink. Henry dropped me off and everybody was nice and real good till they did all the pledging and then they had a party and everybody got a little nipped up. I was sitting there, an old country boy, and saying to myself, "I don't believe Henry knows what he got me into up here!" I realized the next day that they were all nice guys so I went along with it and made a lot of good friends. I didn't drink until I was off in my twenty first year. I might have fudged a month or two there. I went to a summer camp between my junior and senior year at Fort Benning. My fraternity brother, Tom Howell, was in the same battery with me and he was from Miami, so he was pretty knowledgeable about things. They gave us a furlough one Saturday night so he took me into Columbus and introduced me to shooting pool at the pool hall, rum, and drinking a beer while you are playing pool and I thought that was pretty snazzy. That was my introduction to having a beer. But, that year I turned twenty one. It was a lot quieter then nowadays. They are talking about lowering it to eighteen to accommodate the college kids. At that time, of course, it was twenty one but it was a dry town. But, they were able to acquire. Of course, a lot of them would drink beer and weren't twenty one and nobody said anything about it. So when they talk about lowering it my wife said [?], and I said back then I think they got out of high school and nobody worried about it too much. Of course that wasn't too long after prohibition you know. I remember some around here would get out of high school and they would go with the big boys and nobody would say too much about it. Same with up there; I remember another of mine in the fraternity, he ended up in the Air Force too, we were sitting having a hot roast beef sandwich and everybody was having a beer and he said, "You know, maybe we'll die from drinking and eating all this meat and everything." So later you kind of wondered about that because all the cholesterol talk and everything else. We would go up and have us a hamburger and, while everybody else was sitting around having a beer, we would have a coke. Of course, we didn't drink cokes either when I was young and the soft drinks like Ni-Hi orange and stuff like that, and root beer. That was another thing we made was root beer. I should have told you about that; that was a summer project, making homemade root beer. Five pounds of sugar and a little bowl of Hires root beer extract, one yeast, five

gallons of water, and mix it all together and the yeast to make it ferment and the sugar; bottle it and wait about ten days I bet it was. That was a long wait to open that homemade root beer. When I got to college they had you put a nickel in to get a nice cold coca-cola and, man, I went crazy for cokes. The chemistry building and all the buildings had those coke machines; you'd put a nickel in and out rolled that nice, cold old time eight ounce coca-cola. So I drank a lot of those during the summertime. I still like coke.

D: So 1939 is when World War Two breaks out and December 7, 1941 is when Pearl Harbor was bombed; you were at University of Florida then, correct?

L: Right.

D: What were you doing and how do you remember that event? What were you thinking at the time?

L: Well, when I went up there in '38, I remember vividly back in one of the rooms of one of my buddies in the fraternity house, a few of them had their radios, I think we had one up in the front room, but some of them had little radios, we were hovered in one of the big rooms listening to the radio, six or eight of us in one room, listening intently to the stories through the static and everything of the radios of that day and Hitler was going into the Sudetenland, into Czechoslovakia, so from the very beginning of our college career we pretty much knew there was going to be war. Hitler was already in the *Rhineland* and a lot of other things were happening in Europe. Then in September, in my second year in college, in '39, Hitler went into Poland and that started the Second World War. So, the whole time the war was kind of a cloud over our college days. As a senior, in December 1941, I was actually going with a fraternity brother to Tallahassee to visit his girlfriend at Florida State Women's College for a special event. We would invite the girls to U.F. for special events as well, like the R.O.T.C. ball. We were in Tallahassee and it was about one o'clock, it was after lunch I think, that we heard about when Pearl Harbor was bombed. That drew us into the war. The next day the President went before Congress and they declared war on Japan and a few days later they declared war on Germany. I was a senior and in R.O.T.C. In R.O.T.C. so I was a lieutenant, which you got to be if you stayed in R.O.T.C. until your senior year you could be an officer. They put us to work filling out people for the draft and they set up operation in the gymnasium and asked all the students to come in and register. They had us doing work for that. We set up tables and I registered a lot of my buddies for the draft and, of course, then it settled down to just the operation of my senior year in R.O.T.C. and my other courses. Then, of course, June of the next year, I went into service as a lieutenant from the Reserve into active duty on June 25, 1942. It was four years later before I got out. That's pretty much my story from the start of the war until I got out. Of course, there is a lot in between.

D: Have you ever discussed your activity during the War in a forum like this?

L: No too much.

D: Would you like to do that?

L: Well, I'd have to do a lot of recollecting. Our battery, a field artillery battery, wrote a little history from the time we went in to my fighting unit. I've got some history that was written up. Not a whole lot about me personally but about the Charlie Battery of the 656th Field Artillery, which is Corps Artillery. I was in a training organization in June of '42. I went into Fort Bragg at the Field Artillery Training Center. General Coveson was the general there. It was a big operation there at Fort Bragg. Of course, the main base was separate from that; this was a training area. We took in new recruits and trained them. Colonel Marcus A. L. Ming was the Regimental Commander. Colonel Emerson James Bush was our Battalion Commander. General Coveson was the head of the Training Center. I thought I was pretty good at training people. I kind of liked that; bringing in the new recruits and give me twelve or thirteen weeks. They finally sped us up and we had to do it in six weeks. They wanted them out faster. So we had to train them and then take them on troop trains to their base. Then they sent me to Fort Seagull for training out there, which is all field artillery. I was out there for about three months and then went back to Fort Bragg. In the early part of '44, they were afraid I was going to miss things; they sent me to Camp Rucker to join our Battalion, which ended up going over to Europe together. The 656th field artillery Battalion and I was in C Battery. Most of the time, I was the S-2 in charge of forward observing and surveying the targets for the big guns. We had eight inch Howitzers, which were pretty big; they would shoot a two-hundred pound projectile. We went over to Europe and stayed in England for a month or so. We were there about the time Hitler played out the Battle of the Bulge. They ran out of gasoline. That's always bugged me, why they don't just drill and get gasoline. He was giving us a hard time and ran out of gasoline. Anyway, he still was fighting when we got there at the tail end of the Battle of the Bulge. We went all the way through and met the Russians in Czechoslovakia. We were there when the Germans surrendered. About two or three days before that though we were setting up and drew some '88 fire and I thought, "Darn," we knew it was going to be close and I said, "Boy it would my luck if one of those things bounced in here," and it was the last day or two of the war. It was overshot. It was just a few hours after that they sent a march order and moved us to this little old town and waited for Churchill and all of them to announce the end of the war. Truman came on and made his speech. That was pretty much it. There were a lot of experiences in between.

D: Well, at some point if you would like to do something in more depth we could certainly go back and look at some of those issues. What you were thinking at the time, some of the incidents you remember, maybe some contacts with German civilization; that kind of stuff.

L: Our old GIs were pretty good ambassadors. They made a lot of friends over there after the war and were good to people. Little kids would come around after the war, we always had more food than you needed, and we would give it them. That was the case in England too with the kids and then they wanted to know if the Americans had a stick of gum to give the kids or something. They took care of one little guy, they called him Herman the German, and he would come in and get his little mess kit and eat along with us, whatever was left anyway after everybody got theirs. I stayed there long enough to have some pretty good relations and I learned German pretty easily, I think because of my grandparents.

D: Do you remember them speaking German at all?

L: Never did. My grandfather did call me *Janess* for John, things like that. I figured it out later that during World War One I had a lot of people tell me how great my grandfather was supporting the war and everything, so, I think, maybe during World War One they decided they wouldn't speak anymore German. I never did ask him about that while he was living. He died in 1940. I remember Uncle Al writing him a letter kidding him and saying, "Watch out, old Hitler will get you," or something. I remember him telling me too when the Hindenburg blew up in '37, my grandfather was living with us for about the last three or four years, and I remember him saying, "Too bad old Hitler wasn't on there."

D: So he was very informed and also very unhappy about the way Germany was moving?

L: I always figured that they got out when Bismarck was consolidating. I don't know that and he never told me that, but after studying history that was about the time they came over here. I think they came in during the early 1860s. My grandfather was born in this country in 1864, but I think his older sister, who was about ten years older, might have been born over there. When I was over there during the war, I learned a lot about those little German states. In fact, we went into [?] and we were moving so fast we couldn't even set up the Howitzers because, by the time we would get the big Howitzers set up, it took several hours, we were there to secure the area. The Captain saw this big palace there and said that we were going to stay in there. This prince came out, Prince [?], he had three palaces, and he couldn't speak English, but he had a caretaker that spoke for him, he was the Uncle of Queen Wilhelmina of Holland, because she was born there in that palace, it was a miniature *Versailles*, and the caretaker said, "This is the last palace that the prince has and I hope you don't run him out." There were one-hundred and twenty of us and the Captain said, "We'll stay in this wing over here and he can live in that wing." So we got to know a little bit about his history. It used to be a small Principality, . . . and he did have one castle that was fortified. When I went back in '83 as a tourist, we stayed in the fortified castle. . . . "This is the one I went to in the war." So went on up to [?] and went through that. He had a museum in that palace with stuff way back from his ancestors when we were there during the war. When we left the Captain said we wouldn't touch the museum because he said it was against the rules of war. When we left he said the Belgians were going to take it back to Belgium. So when I went back in '84, sure enough, there wasn't anything there. The only thing left was Napoleon's bed that he carried into battle, like a camp cot or something. They did let us tour there. That was one of our experiences. They had a son that was a big S.S. guy. The S2 from Corps came down and wanted to go through his headquarters, which was right up the street, and they came in and went through all that to see if there was anything there of interest.

D: After the war you came back to Apopka and everything probably changed a lot since World War Two. What were some of the changes you immediately noticed when you got back?

L: Well it was, you know, Apopka was a farming community so things moved sort of slow, not like a big city.

D: Was the economy better?

L: Yeah, I think so. One thing that might be a reflection on the economy is wanting to always do things outside like being in citrus or the farming part of Apopka, before the war and when I

was in college I thought about owning some land and planting an orange grove. When we left for the war property was about five dollars an acre and when I came back it was about fifty dollars an acre. It changed that much. You might find some less desirable land for about forty dollars an acre. I suspect everything else had probably gone up equally because property usually seeks a level of where the economy is. A lot of people were buying up property at that time to put into orange groves. Some of the people that didn't go to war benefited from that; some that were maybe a little older and didn't have to go to war and were able to stay and invest in some of the citrus and agricultural type things. When I say agriculture, a lot of the economy then was saw milling, naval stores, and things to do with forest products like the crate mill.

D: So the company was really booming then at that time? Did you go back to work for the company.

L: Yeah, I went back to work for the company, but all of us boys went into the service and left the mill in the hands of someone else to manage it. Of course, my mother was the owner of it having inherited it from my father. We each owned a little bit because he left us a percentage as children. Anyway, we were off in the service and during that time the unions took over our crate mill and put us at a disadvantage with other competitors in the state that weren't unionized. So that had changed and it was kind of a . . . I guess we felt bad about it because most the people that worked there were our friends.

D: Why did the union come in there and not other places and how did that happen?

L: There was an organizer there in Apopka and there were all these stories whether he had direct contact with the people in Moscow. He was kind of noted for being a socialist I guess, but some even claimed he was more than that. It was during that era and I don't know all the details because I was off in the service. Henry had come back sooner because they let him come back because of the country needing production of products like that. He got to the *Rhein* and he got a leave to come back to the States and, while he was in the States, the War ended over there. He got back a little sooner because of some of the disruption at the crate mill with the union. The guy locally organized it with a Mr. Conner; he was sort of a promotion guy and sort of a likeable guy in his early days. As Mayor he wanted to make friends with Unions.

D: Was he a local guy that you knew before?

L: Yeah. I knew him during that time. Anyway, we worked with the union until we finally closed up. We organized the mill out at Mississippi that was not union which supplied crates here and we moved all the operations to that one. It was in Waynesboro, Mississippi and they had a deal there to balance agriculture with industry and the county . . . had a glove factory come out of the north and put it there and they granted the building, it was like a million dollar building. They were going to hire three or four hundred people; a lot of time women that didn't have to work on the farm could work in there and make gloves. They had a contract that stated if they had any union problems there in Waynesboro the contract would fail for bond and would become null and void and they could move on somewhere else. So that whole town didn't want unions. We had a mill there that was non-union and the mill here was union. A lot of that happened during war time and that was one change since I left and it was kind of disappointing

because most of the people that worked there were friends; they went to school with us as kids and some of them didn't support the union.

D: At that time, what was the ratio of black and white employees at the mill?

L: I guess about fifty-fifty and they were all . . .

D: Did that go back to the thirties and twenties even?

L: Well, a lot the people during the twenties and thirties came into Florida from the southern states; sharecroppers and such, both white and black. Of course, it was a struggle after the Civil War in the south. White and black people were pretty poor. They came here during the height of the twenties, after World War One, and times were pretty good in Florida. The boom broke about '26 in Florida and the bust in '29, so it was a double whammy. We kind of came through pretty good because of the farming and we still had citrus. We kept the mill going and people came and worked, but we were all about in the same boat, including us. Nobody was getting real rich but we were turning over money. We had to borrow from the bank to make payroll and stuff like that. Mama did have an inheritance from the Hording family in Lancaster in '27 that helped a little, but then in '29 she lost it in the bank so . . . It was kind of disappointing when it went union, but I could understand it because some of them got upset with the manager. It wasn't the Land family anymore. Henry had put his brother-in-law in there and he was kind of a dictatorial type guy. We were kind of low key and made buddies with everybody and everybody got along. All of our employees, we were real close with them. Some of them, over the years, ended up in pretty good shape. A lot of people ended up owning their own home. I know one now that owns property that is worth several million dollars who used to work at the mill. He started out working there in the beginning and so . . . One fella' that did our logging for us, a very successful logger that lived over in Sanford, Henry McAlister, summed it up best when he said, "It put a lot bread in people's mouth when there wasn't much bread around." So it was kind of disappointing when we got back in the '40s, but we kept it going until things changed in the citrus business and raw materials were hard to get. So we finally sold out and sold the property, which is now the industrial park south of here.

D: So the whole process of making the things you made before with the materials you were using, increasingly became obsolete?

L: Yeah, of course, the big thing was the change in the citrus when they developed the concentrate. Even before that, juice was taking over, but it wasn't successful. But during the '40s, Fox came down and started Minute Maid to get the juice from Plymouth and you didn't need the crates then. We kept it going for a long time dealing with vegetables, which we hadn't had before. That was going strong during the early part of the war. The engineers dammed up the lake and made the mucks where you could do the farming, so it was very successful and we were able to sell crates for corn, celery, and all the other vegetables and drifted away from citrus. By the late '50s, when we finally closed . . . I worked with some of the other mills some and the one in Mississippi for a while till they were bought out by . . . I ended up working with a mill in Gainesville and then went into the bulk oil business about 1956 or '57. I went in with Standard Oil, who had a local plant here in Apopka. I was already married then for six or seven years.

D: Your brother was also in the state legislature, correct?

L: Yes, he ran again for County Commissioner in '46 before I got home from the service and did not get re-elected. I think he had resigned to go to war and did not complete his first term. He thought they would put him back in but they didn't. Then he waited until '52 and ran for the house and served. Off and on during the '50s and '60s he ran for the senate and lost and went back to the house. During the '50s and '60s he was active in state politics one way or another.

D: Did you assist in his campaigns in various ways?

L: Yeah, even when a lot of my friends were changing over to Republican I stayed Democrat, mostly for him. I still kind of do my own thing. Of course, we're non-partisan in the city so I don't have to declare for one party or the other, but I stayed Democrat. But, I very often vote for the person and not for the party. I think both parties are going overboard and it is getting more important about the party than about the country. I've always wanted to be non-partisan and do my own thing. That is one reason I didn't want to go up to higher politics, because you have to play and let some party hack tell you what to do or the head guy of the party, and be loyal and never vote for anybody else, and I just never did want to do that. Henry did, but he got out of it. I supported Martinez for governor because I'd worked with him as a Mayor. But, generally I supported Democrats in state, but, a lot of times, Federal I will go both ways. I guess I voted for more Republican Presidents than I have Democrat. I know I have.

Anyway, after the War, a lot of changes were happening in politics. In the 1940s, Spessard Holland was elected and he went on to be in the senate. He was an outgoing sort of fella'. [I] followed him, so in '44 when I got out of the service, the governor, he was kind of low key, that was kind of the trend at the time, I don't think governors got out as much as Crist does, flying all over and everything; so things had kind of changed. Then in '48, I got revved up pretty good with the governor's race. We supported Dan McCarty. Henry had been in Gainesville when Dan had served as president of the student body. I was up there when his brother John was president of the student body, so we knew the McCarty family and we supported him. He lost in '48, but then won in '52. Things were changing in politics; going from low-key like the old timers and getting into T.V. time. Fuller Warren was quite an orator, he could hold his own almost anywhere when he was speaking, but it was getting to where you had to put more of a spin on more of everything which was gradually changing the whole thing. Those things sort of happened, I think, starting after the war. Getting into politics made a big impression on me, not only with my brother, but, during the '20s, Governor Martin, I mentioned Albert Martin across the street, that was his Uncle . . .

D: Where was Martin from?

L: They originally came from Marion County, that's where the old families place was called Martin, and when he was governor that was called Martin County. They were old-school southern people and Marion County was still rural with little farms and everything. Their aunt lived up the street . . .

D: I tell my students the Old South ended on the border between Orange and Marion County.

L: Well, that's about right. But, Mr. Martin . . .

D: I guess it would be Lake County and Marion County.

L: Yeah. When I came down and hitch hiked back through Marion County, it was always picturesque to me. It still had those old home farms with the mules and the hog pens and everything and I always thought that was great. That's all changed, but that was in the late thirties.

D: Those are all horse farms now aren't they?

L: Yeah, they are all horse farms. Mr. Martin always had a close relation in his life to those old plantation days up there in Marion County. Of course, then he moved to Jacksonville and John Martin was elected, I think he was Mayor of Jacksonville or something, but, anyway, he was big in Jacksonville politics and got elected. In the meantime, in 1919, Mr. Martin moved and, I think he liked these rolling hills because he owned Martin's pond down there where . . . the cowboy is and he told us about coming in and, down that hill where our house was, he saw a little stream going into the lake and he had to have it. He started a dairy there, but he sold paper to citrus plants. Anyway, his brother would visit maybe once a year and he would come down as governor and he would come over and see daddy's bird dogs and they would talk bird dog hunting and stuff like that. That made a big impression on me as far as politics. Then, in '32, he ran against Dave Sholtz and we were gung-ho for John Martin against Dave Sholtz. That is when they would come around and have a loud speaker, which was great for us kids at eleven and twelve years old. I remember Dave Sholtz coming and saying, he made a nice speech and everything, he said, "If I'm governor, I'll be back in one year to see what ya'll want. If I'm not governor, I'll be back in four years to ask you to vote for me again." I thought, "Darn, that was pretty good." I was pulling for Mr. Martin, but I thought he was coming back in a year if he wins. He never did show back up. He made us a promise and I thought he was going to keep it. Anyway, he was from Daytona and the only other time I saw him was when Henry graduated. I think he made the speech. We went up to Gainesville to watch Henry graduate. But Dave Schultz won that election and that made a big impression on me as an eleven year old kid. That was politics. That was exciting. A lot of them would come through, even after the war that was the way they did it. I remember Fuller Warren would travel the state, stop his car, and go around town say I'll meet you up at the drug store, I'll meet you down at the hardware. You'd come down to the hardware and everybody gather and he'd get on there and . . .

D: So that was a form of entertainment?

L: Yeah! Anything like that, baseball or anything like that, before T.V. I was thinking too, you know one thing triggers another, but, I was thinking back, for every other week during the tick fever, they had these dipping baths all over the state . . . They had one down by the cemetery here in Apopka, so on Saturday, every two weeks, all the kids would go down there and watch the cowboys bring in all the cows and some of the cowboys would have fights with the cows. There was always a cow that wouldn't go in there. So you stayed down there all morning, meet

all your buddies and all the townspeople, watching the dipping baths you know. That's what you did before T.V. Things like that, people speaking when they are campaigning, dipping baths, anything to entertain you, you would go take advantage of it. I guess you learn something along the way about life. Running our own entertainment with scrub baseball, or scrub football or something, where you would settle your own arguments; if you felt somebody was over the line or didn't make a tackle or whatever, you'd settle it all yourself and learn how to deal with everybody rather than have somebody umpiring or some supervisor telling you what you had to do. You just got together in somebody's cow pasture or someplace else. It was kind of the same as when you were rambling around hunting or fishing or something like that. You just entertained yourself. It was a lot easier to do than you can now.

D: So in '49 you ran for Mayor? How did that happen? Did you just decide you wanted to be a Mayor or did people come up to you and say, "I think you'd be a good Mayor and why don't you look at it." How did that all come together?