

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: I am here with John Land and today is September 26, 2008. We are here to resume our conversations about his time as mayor. We have covered up to about 1945. You were elected mayor in 1949, is that correct?

L: That's correct; our election at that time was on the first Monday of December every three years. There were only three of us on the city council; a mayor and two commissioners. Of course that changed later on. All three of us were sworn in to take office on the last few days of December of that year. January first of 1950 was when our term started.

D: Can you try to remember what Apopka was like, what kind of place it was, how many people lived here, what were the major economic pursuits, and what was the ratio between whites and Blacks in 1949?

L: In '49, Apopka was still a farming community. Apopka is about the same age as Orlando. Both cities were settled about the same time prior to the Civil War and after the second Indian war which ended in 1842. Before the Civil War, we had a lodge here and the upper room is still here in Apopka; it was constructed in 1859. After the Civil War we started growing to the extent that the leaders of the community wanted to have an incorporated city. In 1882 they incorporated and met in the lodge hall to hold the vote. When they incorporated, the city limits went one mile north, south, east, and west from the lodge hall. Apopka was about the size of Orlando at that time, but Orlando grew due to other reasons because they were the central community for the area and Apopka remained, pretty much, a farming community. Although farming in the outer areas and cattle ranching in certain areas in the central part of the state really made Orlando, we continued to be more of a farming community. In 1949, when I was elected, there were about 2,254 people and we were still a small community. The surrounding area was, pretty much, undeveloped except for citrus groves and other farming industries in the area. The general make-up of the races, as best I can tell, I'm not sure when I was aware the population make-up, but I think later on it pretty much stayed around seventeen or eighteen percent Black. Later on, when we had the new high school, which was in the 70s, I think I heard at one time was about thirty-six or thirty-seven percent minorities, mostly Hispanics, the biggest minority, I guess, now. We, pretty much, followed that still in the city. Of course, the high school was the total area of northwest Orange County, so it was not just the city. I don't think the city had that large of a Hispanic population. We have a little bit of everything though; we have some

Ukrainian people that live in Apopka, American Indians, and many different ethnic groups. I think that the Black population has stayed around seventeen or eighteen percent. At the time I was elected mayor, Apopka was still dependent upon citrus and the muck farms, which became popular during the Second World War for food for America, and then the indoor foliage for which Apopka was named the Indoor Foliage Capital of the World. At one time Apopka was the fern city with the Boston fern; that started about 1912 when the [blight] came to Apopka and started the industry until it changed in the 30s to many different kinds of indoor foliage. That is where we were when I took office in 1950.

D: When you were considering running for mayor, your brother was already in the state legislature, is that correct?

L: No, Henry did not get in until a couple of years after I was elected mayor. Henry had been in politics, though, in 1940, before World War Two, when I was still not even twenty-one yet and in college. I would come home on the weekend and campaign for him and knock on doors when Henry ran for District Two county commissioner. He was elected and served until his army reserve unit was called into action after Pearl Harbor, which he joined in 1933 when he graduated from college, so he did not run in 1942. At that time they had the primaries in May and winning the primaries, at that time, was tantamount to winning the election. He was called into service about June 1, 1942 and he had to resign. When Governor Spessard Holland asked him who he wanted to replace him, Governor Holland offered to let Henry's wife, my sister-in-law, Abbey Joe, fill out the last six months. Henry stated that he wanted the guy who won the primary, Guillen McClure, to replace him. So Governor Holland appointed Guillen McClure to replace Henry. Henry returned from World War Two before I did and ran again for county commissioner and lost in a three or four way run. So he was not in office in '49 when I ran, but he ran for the state legislature in '52 and won. We sort of leap-frogged each other in politics.

D: When you took office as mayor what were the immediate issues, once the dust settled, that you had to confront?

L: Well, there wasn't anything that I didn't predict. I guess anything was fair game back in those days. Local government, pretty much, was handled at the local level. In 1882, Apopka didn't go to the legislature to get our charter; we chartered under the general laws of the state of Florida and just organized here in Apopka. Some of the cities at that time could get under an oak tree and have a vote and they would have a charter. In 1950, we were still in that mode where the state and federal government let you run things at the local levels. So we could have a hands-on deal and move forward or we could stay stagnant and not change any. I saw the opportunity for the city to change. Our family was in the manufacturing business and we had a payroll of about three hundred at various times and sometimes, when we had big orders during the war, up to six-hundred people. We had the privilege of making the payroll every Friday and paying people off and making things work in a business-like manner. So, I went in to the city and I wanted to run the city as a business and make sure that we handled our tax money in a frugal manner and make the best return for the tax dollar that we could have. With that mindset, we set in to do some things that hadn't been done that I saw the need for. Of course, the country was changing; this wasn't long after the Second World War and a lot places were changing fast and we didn't want to be left behind. When I began in 1950, we had a budget of \$30,700.00 and we

had a millage rate of about 10 mil for the operation of that \$30,000.00 and then we had about another \$9,000.00 for paying off the street bonds. So, about 15 mil was the millage rate. Of course you apply that to whatever the property is appraised at, which is your tax base, and that was very low. Most houses were under \$5,000.00 and you had the \$5,000.00 homestead. It was not a burden for the city dwellers, although, they paid county tax too, but that was our budget. We had a city clerk and, I think, about five or six people on the payroll: two police officers, and a police chief when you could keep one for about \$180 a month; it was a long time between pay raises in those days. We paid them on the first and fifteenth of each month. When people would get better jobs, the second police officer was quite often looking for another police officer and would operate with just the police chief. Crime was not as bad then. People respected police officers and when they saw them on the street they weren't trying to give them problems. There was enough crime that you needed police officers, but usually you handled the small things and only every now and then a big thing would happen.

So we had two police officers when we could keep them and a street crew that would pick up the garbage and work a mower, and they had a flatbed truck to pick up the garbage with. They took the garbage maybe a mile out into the county to an old clay pit and dumped it there. It wasn't very efficient with a flatbed truck; paper flew off and everything and they had to go to the dump about four or five times a day or whatever to unload. So one of the first things I tackled was trying to get a modern garbage truck, a Packer, which we would load from the back end and pack it all in. That was \$12,000. Now the \$12,000 and you only had a \$30,000 budget, you had to make payroll and everything, I don't think that all the old timers ever thought of going into debt, but I checked with the people that sold them and asked if we could have three years to pay for that and we signed a note and they gave us a garbage truck. We paid for it in three years; \$4,000 each year, and saved many trips to the dump because we cut it down to one trip a day. It was cleaner because we didn't have all the paper and things flying off the back of the truck while it was going to the road. So that was the first business like thing that I tackled. The previous mayor had bought a street sweeper for \$5,000 and he was very much criticized because the streets were the old brick streets, maybe one or two were county roads or state roads like 441 that were paved, but most of the city streets were the old original brick roads. So I realized the public was watching us, so I said that if I buy any of those big pieces of equipment they better pay something in return, which the garbage trucks did.

D: What were some of the innovations you made in the '50s?

L: Well, when I ran in '49, I said that we could have a sewer plant if the people wanted it and I said we could have a water plant, if the people wanted it. I was idealistic at that time and thought, you know, we'll go with what the people want. So we had an election and they voted to have a sewer plant, which was about \$300,000 to \$350,000, I would have to look up the exact amount. The city started a water plant in 1905, a water, light, and ice company, but it went into private ownership from some of the people that had been on the city council. But they offered the water plant back to the city for \$150,000, but it was not a very good plant; however, there was tremendous opportunity to become a great service to the community. But the public voted that down because they said it was a bunch of junk and they did not want to spend \$150,000 for it. But they did vote in the sewer plant, except the sewer plant is not a money maker like water. And then you can't turn the water off if you don't own the water plant. So we had a number of

years there that we didn't honor the election and spent about \$350,000 to put in all the sewer and operated that with some subsidy from the general fund, which made it tough to do other things. Around 1958, the people that owned the water plant were also in the bond business in Orlando, so they asked us to take another look at buying the water plant because we would work with them to try to cut off water when people did not pay their sewer bill. So we were using them a lot and paying them for billing and stuff like that. They offered it to us then for \$310,000, almost double what the price was in the early '50s. What they wanted was for us to give them bonds, revenue and certificate bonds, which did not have to be voted on by the people, and they also included \$30,000 for capitalizing their operation, payroll and stuff like that, so the total sale price was \$340,000 in bonds. We gave them the paper and they gave us the old water plant, which wasn't that good, but we put all the money back into it, and today that is 40 to 50 percent of the reason we have an ISO rating of 1, which is an Insurance Service Organization that tells the insurance companies how to rate their insurance. Those that have a 1, which is only about 46 in the whole country, I think there are five in Florida, most of them in south Florida; Orlando just got 1, we were several years ahead of them. Buying the water plant and being able to put all the money back in it for 20 inch water lines, big water wells, and all of the things you would have with a modern water plant, a lot of them in 1950 couldn't see that. So I decided not to be so idealistic in leaving it up to the public. I'd go with them if they were well educated. From then on, I made sure that when you throw it to the public you need to make sure they understand what is happening as well as the public operators do. That was one of the big things we did in the '50s with the infrastructure.

As I mentioned earlier, our clay roads were a big problem. One of our biggest budgets at that time wasn't the police and wasn't the fire, the fire at that time was volunteer and we had to provide all the trucks and equipment, but it was the issue of building streets. Around 1960, or the early 60s, we floated a big bond issue to build streets. We pretty much covered most, not all of them, but most of the streets by charging a \$110 fee for a 100 foot lot and they had five years to pay for it; about \$1.10 a running foot. Then the other side paid \$1.10 on the street and the city paid the difference in the middle. Of course we had public hearings and some people said they couldn't afford it and not to do their street, so you had to juggle it. One cantankerous guy wanted his street off so we took it off, but I said before we get through you'll be wanting it, and he did. We were about to the finish of the project, about a year later, and he said his wife was tired of the dust getting on her clothes when she hung them out on a Monday morning and asked for his street to be put back on the project. I told him we had already spent all the money but would keep him in mind; some years later we did do that road, but it didn't get on that first project. In the early 50s and on into the 60s we were pretty busy. Just to give you an idea, from 1950 to 1970 the population grew by a little under 2,000 people to around 4,000 people and we are now at around 40,208 people. We set the stage in the early years for the growth that happened and, pretty much, did it with the support of the community. I can't say it all went smooth, but it didn't split the town.

Along with that, in the early 50s, one of the first things that happened was to try to annex more property. We were surrounded with people getting out of the town and, sometimes, substandard areas wanted to dodge the city tax base. People did not want to be annexed, so we had to find a way to do it. First, we went out to the schools and some houses, we needed new houses in the city in the early 50s. We had a right-of-way of about sixty feet and I asked the city attorney if

we could annex the county road, actually it was the state secondary road at that time, Rock Springs Road and 435, can we go past the house in our way and branch out to the six houses outside of that to get much needed housing in the community. He stated that he thought we could because there was no law against it, so we did it. So we kept going to about 150 feet; one city went out three miles and, of course, that blew everything up and the state wanted to pass laws that stated you could not do it in a serpentine fashion and all that. From that point we annexed on out to taking several schools and some property that the city owned, an old airport which was no longer in service because it was too close to the city, so, needing the housing, we sold some acreage to a builder in Orlando, Doctor Phillips, who developed the park on the east side of Orlando with a lot of mass housing, which was popular after the war. He came out and built the first six and said that he would experiment with that and if they sold really well, he would take some more. They all sold quickly and we went on out past the old airport, about past Green Lake, and we did it all within the state law and everything. We built a lot of houses there which sold really fast as well and made some housing for the city. At that time people were moving out of the city because there were no more lots in the city. People that graduated high school wanted to work and live here and they had to live outside of the city; so this gave housing for the citizens that were raised here.

In the 60s, one of the big things was, old city hall, we're in the third city hall, the one I first occupied was done by government grant during the "New Deal," I think it was W.P.A. or one of those grants, but it was pretty dilapidated when I first took office, so we thought we should have a better city hall. Around 1966 they wanted to build a new school off the highway, so we acquired this old school site. They were able to build another school for about \$150,000 so we were able to give them about two-thirds of what it would take for a new school and they sold us this whole block. I think had to get the o.k. from the state legislature, my brother was up there then, so we bought the whole block and the block south of us and almost a block past that was all part of the city complex. We remodeled the school and occupied it in '67 with a new firehouse, which is still there. That was a big step forward to get station one and meet a lot of growth. We had a forty person, maximum security jail in the 60s and a modern police department that joined the fire department; now it's all fire department because we moved the police department a block to the south. Then in the 70s, after we had a good modern jail and our own court, the state demanded more and more over how the cities operated. With the new state constitution in 1968, and even a little before that, things started to change where there was more state oversight, which, I think, is probably detrimental to the local operations today.

D: Did you say that came along about 1970?

L: Well, yeah, 1968 was the new constitution and they utilized that. Before, unless we really wanted something, we didn't hear from the state much. Normally I didn't worry if they were in session, now I worry the whole time. But that's where it all started. The new complex we built in the 60s really modernized us in all respects and the fire department was still voluntary although we usually hired one person to be on duty and have all the trucks ready and everything, but it was still voluntary until '72. When they changed the constitution they did away with city courts, justices of the peace, they did away with our jails, and for years they did not have enough jails in the state or enough courts. It's too bad that we didn't handle all those things locally. They are coming back to having local control. They've restored committees where they have

kids with their first offense can go before this committee if the offender and offende agree to go to that committee they can let people in the community mentor them and give them community action and not make a criminal out of them. The old city courts did a lot of that and handled in right quick on Monday mornings; if a kid acted up over the weekend at a football game or something he had to come before the judge on Monday morning and the parents would be there and things like that. But the state, during that era, started taking it all away, although we spent all that money modernizing. They had a slogan that, if you wanted to change something call it reform. They said the cities were doing cash-register justice, so we had \$10 fines or if it was bad it might have been \$25, now you get \$173 for running a red light and, with some of those, the city only gets about 21 to 22 percent of those; so, I say, that's reverse cash-register justice because the state's taking all the money even though we do all the work. We had our grand opening here in April of '67 and have occupied this complex ever since.

In the fall of 1965, I was hunting and they sent word to ask me if I could come back and attend a meeting at Cherry Plaza hotel for Walt Disney. I guess I'm one of the few left in public office that attended that meeting with Walt Disney and Governor Hayden Burns, and all the big-wigs in central Florida. Walt Disney told us to get ready because everything would never be the same. I took him seriously and we started beefing up our infrastructure even more. In '67 I lost the election and some of the things Walt Disney was still building did not get put in place until about three years later. I was reelected in 1970 and, of course, Walt Disney World opened in October of 1971. We started doing a lot of things then, like impact fees to beef-up our infrastructure if new people came in. We still weren't growing that fast, but we grew about 124 percent in the 1980s. We were kind of on the fringe of the Walt Disney growth and it caught us in the 80s. We put in the impact fees so we would have the funds to stay ahead of all the growth, which really paid off. We said if growth comes that's fine, but they're going to pay their way and that really worked. A lot of the builders and everybody scoffed at it and said it would stop growth, but by building the infrastructure we gave them something to build on when people came into the state. We were the fastest growing town in Orange County at that time with 124 percent. So, it kind of disproved people that fought making those payments up-front. I feel we worked as partners with the developers. Some of the builders still try to go to the state to fight impact fees.

In '69, my last [term], we had just occupied the old school and we had rooms upstairs. I always had a vision of having a museum or a collection of things upstairs and wanted to set a room aside. I asked for that as a lame duck mayor and I was turned down. The incoming mayor was on the council at that time and he prevailed so they didn't let me have a room up there. However, I wanted to start a historical museum. The next year, when I was out of office, we had an organizational meeting for the museum, but it wasn't until I got back in office in June of 1970 that we got a charter for a historical society. They asked the president to come before the council. I didn't do it myself, I had them do it. The council authorized a museum upstairs for three rooms, so that was the start of our museum. Then, you brought up Dr. Jerrell Shofner, which was '78, when we had him out and we talked about doing the history and taking over the museum. We've had three other museums since the one upstairs.

D: One of the things I wanted to ask about is Civil Rights and about how you, as mayor in '49 and as things progressed in '54 after the *Brown* decision, and the people of Apopka reacted to

that? How were race relations from the time you were mayor throughout desegregation and what was the thinking in the community about all that?

L: A lot of the Black area was south of town and the city limits ended at Tenth Street. I mentioned earlier about the tax and people trying to dodge city taxes. All cities in central Florida complained about substandard developments around the edge to dodge city taxes. We had some of that, but in the city we had a good group of people in the south part of town. I'm in the south part of town, so I guess I'm in a minority area myself and have been all my life. Where I live was one block from the lodge hall, which was the center of town until the railroads came in the 1880s and then the town shifted from where I live. Just adjoining us, kind of down the hill and over on the other hill, was an area called Meads Bottom and it developed with Black people in those early days when the city was located around the lodge hall. So I was raised around a lot of Blacks; one of the families, the Chisholm family, there were two families, Mingo Chisholm and Morris Chisholm. Morris was a preacher and in the early days was visiting and playing in that area. Gradually the people moved from that area over to the south end of the town around where my family had the crate mill. Many of them worked at the crate mill; probably half of the work force, I never figured the exact percentage, but a lot of the work force was Black. So, in my early days, I was around people of all races. Mingo Chisholm worked in the crate mill when I was young and his brother took over his property later on.

D: So you would say they were one of the pioneering families in the community?

L: Yeah. There were several Chisholms in the community, some around our age, and there are still several Chisholms in the community. I remember that the whole family called them Mr. and Mrs. Chisholm. One of my friends asked me why I called him Mr. and that was one of the first times I realized that some approached it a little bit different. They had a garden across the street from us and I think that is where his son started his little route selling vegetables. Later he sold all kinds of things, soda pop and everything, on his truck and he made a successful living from that his entire life, but it all started right across from our family garden.

D: As the 60s came along with the Civil Rights Act in '64 and the Voting Rights Act in '65, how did the electoral process and your campaigning and your thinking with regard to how the Democratic Party was changing? How did things change in terms of the Civil Rights issue?

L: Well, I had a good relationship with African Americans in Apopka.

D: And, increasingly, it was probably pretty important for you to maintain that relationship?

L: In the early days not too many of them were registered, but some of them were. I remember when I was home on leave in late 1942 and they were having an election, Mr. Michael Gladden came over there to vote, he was a Black man that operated his own grocery store on Ninth Street, now the street is named for him, Michael Gladden Boulevard, he and his wife were leaders in the community. When I first ran he and his family were registered voters and he was a Republican; but city elections were pretty much non-partisan. During the 60s elections, I was able to get somebody who operated one of those early computers to give me the electorate breakdown and that is when I started using voter registration rolls to run an election. There were quite a few

registered to vote between '64 and '67 by that time and I still had a strong following. One of the fellas that supported me through many elections ended up being the head of the N.A.A.C.P. We were asked to purchase some property on that end of town and work on some housing projects which probably did not help me on the other end of town.

D: Would you say your opponents used that against you in the next election?

L: That could have been. With me having a lot of friends in that area, which I've maintained all my life, and friends on the other end, it was a pretty good mixture that made it work. There was a place out on Park Avenue, out in the county that wanted a big housing project in the mid-60s and water and sewer. I received a lot of pressure from people that did not want to put our sewer out in the county, but I did it anyway. That is better than having septic tanks that overrun. This whole area has a high water table, so to keep run-off from being too bad we needed to put sewer service in the area. Anyway, there was some scuttlebutt there but only undercurrents that I knew of. It never flared up. I figured that guy that came down and got my picture with the head of the N.A.A.C.P., . . .

D: Well, in 1968, you remember and I was going to ask you this, Leroy Collins ran against Ed Gurney and they pulled some interesting things on Governor Collins and they used a lot of that subliminal with Governor Collins.

L: Well, my brother and I, of course he was in the legislature, supported Leroy Collins.

D: What I'd like to do now is talk to you a little bit about some of the state governors who you may have interacted with. I'll name them as we go along and I'd like for you to reflect a little bit on what you thought about them at the time and if you remember anything specific about them. We can start with Governor Collins if you'd like?

L: Well, the first one was Fuller Warren.

D: Fuller Warren, o.k.

L: He went in around 1948. I wasn't in office but that was one of the first campaigns . . .

D: So we can start with Fuller Warren.

L: Before I was elected in '49, we were pulling for Daniel McCarty against Fuller Warren and, of course, Fuller beat him in '48 and then I was elected in '49. So he was the first Governor that I had to serve with. Fuller was quite an orator; of course that was when the only opposition was within the Democratic Party. The first one I pulled for that got elected was Dan McCarty who ran and was elected in '52, but died shortly after taking office. Charlie Johns, who was president of the Senate, took over and we didn't think much of him. He was an old school politician and tried to spread money around to get votes. We were working getting the Rock Springs Road resurfaced, it was a state secondary road at that time, and I remember the county commissioner was pulling for him and trying to get the project and, all of a sudden, they came and with a bunch of equipment and started resurfacing with lime rock and tar and everything, it was just a poor

deal but they were trying to spread money around. But we were pulling for Leroy Collins and thought he should follow Dan McCarty in office. Leroy won the next election in '54 and he served six years. Then, the one from Ocala . . .

D: Farris Bryant; Farris Bryant ran against Doyle Carlton, Jr. Who were you for in that election?

L: We pulled for Farris Bryant. I think it is mostly because he was speaker when Henry first went up to the legislature and they were close. Farris Bryant left in 1960. I didn't have too much with him, but Henry was able to get a lot of those folks to come here for Rotary speeches. I remember Farris was in town a lot, but we didn't ask much from a city standpoint. Then we pulled for George Smathers against Claude Pepper. The next one was '64 with Hayden Burns, and I supported him because I had worked with him in the League of Cities when he was the mayor of Jacksonville. He was president of the League when I first attended. He ran a little bit of a different kind of a campaign. He contacted a lot of the grassroots supporters before he contacted the mayors so I heard a lot of the people around here pulling for Hayden Burns. I liked Hayden. When he was Governor, he thought enough of our little old city to come here for our first foliage festival which the Jaycees sponsored. That was a big thing for Apopka to have the Governor here. He was only in two years.

D: Right. What happened was there was a decision to have gubernatorial elections staggered from the Presidential election so it was a two year term, which meant he had to run again in '66. All hell broke loose in '66.

L: Right. That was Robert King High and . . .

D: Scott Kelly.

L: Yeah, Scott Kelly.

D: Scott Kelly, Robert King High, Hayden Burns.

L: But, anyway, Governor Burns came here and that was big thing. The Jaycees went down and I went with them as mayor, and we picked him up at the old airport when you could drive out with a couple limousines and pick him up and bring him back. He spoke at a luncheon. That was a big thing for Apopka during the middle of our foliage festival, so it kind of drew attention to that. So when he ran again in '66 we supported him even though he lost. One of the things he also did while he was in office was float a bond issue for \$300 million to do all the roads in the state to get ready for Walt Disney.

D: It was a big controversy.

L: So he was with us down at Walt Disney that night in '65 and he wanted to get out in front of it all. Lawton Chiles, a state senator or whatever he was, walked the state against it and won the vote because they had to amend the constitution to authorize the bond.

D: As I have been told, and I've read, there was a major fault-line that developed between Burns and his opponents who were convinced that Burns's road board was not exactly that straight. As I recall, Scott Kelly, as a state senator, did various investigations and showed that there was a lot of funny business in Burns's road crew.

L: Well, they checked back to Jacksonville with all the improvements up there, and thought all his cronies were getting it or whatever.

D: Anyway, as I recall, there was group in the legislature and I would really love to talk to your brother about this actually, because he would have been quite knowledgeable about all that.

L: Yeah, I think he was, and I'm not too sure he was that sold on Burns. Of course, then they had the group up there, well, the big thing now is the Florida Crackers. Bill Clinton is coming down to get the Cracker vote, what Lawton Chiles used to call get the Cracker vote. But really, what the whole thing was in the Democratic Party at that time, was what they called the "pork choppers" and they grew up in West Florida and they controlled the state until . . .

D: Right, Charlie Johns . . .

L: All those old guys up there, they were entrenched up there from the early days of Florida.

D: Now, was Burns on that side?

L: Well, I suspect he worked them and probably did, but . . .

D: And I would imagine they got a lot of that road money?

L: Yeah, around Jacksonville and west Florida because they were the big controllers and they were going against that "one person, one vote" and all that instead of allowing the control up there; and they redistricted and broke up that "pork chop" gang. They were really conservative. I remember . . .

D: Would you call the delegation that represented Apopka, your brother and that delegation, were they a "pork chop" or were they "one man, one vote" reformers?

L: Well, they were far enough south they wanted to break it away but they still had a lot of contracts.

D: But it is a lot more complicated than that based upon what I've learned, and that is that it's not just the panhandle, there are counties like Collier county or De Soto county or some of those south Florida counties that are really, really rural. Obviously, they are in south Florida but, yet, they vote with the "pork chop" gang because the "pork chop" gang is the rural county's set.

L: So we are right in the middle. We can go each way and Henry had a lot of friends up there. I remember when some of them started dying off he go to the funerals. You're right, that "pork chop" went down to the southern counties, but they're changing now. But some of those are still

up there and they're registered Democrat. And can't figure out, during the last election, they couldn't understand why Florida, up in that area, were voting for Bush, but they're old conservative Democrats from the old "pork chop" gang. I remember Raymond McGuire telling me one time, and he was conservative, and he said the smaller the government is the more conservative they are; he was talking about and defending the old "pork choppers" because they were more conservative and remained that way. I realized he was right because a little old city like Apopka is more conservative with money and everything.

D: Well, you just have to break it down to fiscal conservative versus social conservative and you have to recognize that there are two different conservatives. Even the Democratic Party now have officially recognized "blue dog" Democrats, which have a caucus and everything in Washington, D.C. They are real Democrats but, yet, they are real fiscal conservatives.

L: Yeah, around here we call them "yellow dog" Democrats.

D: "Yellow dogs" and "blue dogs" are different in that "yellow dogs" vote for any Democrat no matter what- but "blue dogs" hang together because they believe in strong fiscal responsibility, like Lawton Chiles, he is a really good example. There are still, particularly in the House of Representatives, twenty-five or thirty of them that really are Democrats but they really believe in balanced budgets, fiscal responsibility, tax and spend, and not no-tax and spend; in other words, pay for what you spend.

L: Lawton, he came back when the state was in bad shape, if you remember, under Governor Bob Martinez and all that right-sizing and down-sizing, and somebody said they were going to capsized. But he came back and got them in good shape within a few years. Then they went to a Republican legislature and they took a lot of the credit, but Lawton brought it back and returned the state to a sound fiscal basis.

D: Walk us through your devastating election loss and decision to run again.

L: I lost the election in '67, right after the city council voted down my idea for a museum, and I left office kind of down. I think it was about three days before I could sleep. I finally went to the woods, where I like to hunt, and dozed off in the hunting vehicle there. I was kind of out of sorts for the first few months or first year and a half or so. But I was watching the operation of the city and when I left, we'd left it really good shape and set aside about a \$27,000 c.d. which we didn't tell too many people about, but the money was going out really fast in the utilities and the general fund. Along with that, one of the commissioners got into a scandal trying to contact people for a new sewer plant, or an improvement, so he was removed from office and that got a new person into the city council. So there was a lot of turmoil going on with things like that in the administration during those three years. About a year and a half out people started to ask for the good old days to come back. Little by little, some of my opponents in '67 were siding with me and decided things were not as quite as bad as they had thought at that time and wanted to return to that. I guess I learned in '67 that you have to brag a little bit if you're going to run for office, which I'm reluctant to do all the time. I don't know if you realize that I kind of give credit to a lot of people here and "we" instead of "I" when I can and "the city" instead of "me." But I realized that we were doing a lot of good things the first eighteen years and I thought the

people recognized that but people could twist it. So I realized that in campaigns they can take a good thing and turn it into something that sounds bad. Like, we did this big paving program which was really big for our community in the early 60s, but we still had some clay roads so they would take a picture of a clay road and say "this one hasn't been fixed," like that was the end of the world, and just things like that. So I realized that when I ran again for re-election in 1970 that I'd better get out and do a little politicking and take some credit for some things. By that time the people realized it, so I think I beat them, maybe I could go back and check it, but I think it was about three to one.

When we took the city back and the funds were all spent. We would write checks at the end of the month and hold them. We wouldn't send them out for our bills and wait to see who hollered the first; we might get by three for four weeks, maybe even a month, before they came in and then we'd go through the stack and pull their check out and pay them. We had to do a lot of things like that. We did have that one CD that they didn't know about, so we were able to cash it in and do some things there. We sold some of the former city property for about \$50,000. It took about a year or so to really get back to a good operation fiscally. That is when we started taking Walt Disney at his word and started getting ready for the growth that was going to come. Walt Disney opened in October of '71 and from then on there was growth in Central Florida. We were still a farming community until the 80s when we lost our citrus industry. That opened up a lot of territory here.

D: That first really bad freeze was when?

L: It was in '83, at Christmas time. The next winter we got through until the first part of '85 and we had another big freeze and then another one in '89. In '83 people started growing back and it knocked them back down and it broke some of their spirits. Some that really wanted to stay in the Citrus Industry from early '85 had a few years to re-plant and try to make something of it, but the '89 freeze broke their spirit and was sort of a coup de grace. During that time though, Apopka was growing at 124%, which is fast growth, and when some of the properties opened up some of those families that were in the Citrus business since the 1800s were getting about \$25,000 an acre for housing.

D: What were some of the major families in the Citrus Industry in this community?

L: The Miner family, a Swedish settlement, . . . Miner was a Larson, so the Larsons, the Olsons, and the Jacksons, and all of those people came in the 1800s after the Civil War and settled in what we called Piedmont. They had a post office on the edge of Apopka; of course, it's all incorporated into Apopka now. When the price of properties after the freezes went to \$25,000, they, well you know, back at that time you could grow an orange grove on \$2,000 property if you could get property for that and be a farmer, but with \$25,000 they could put the money in the bank and get more interest on it than they could take in fruit. So, some of the families let the family properties go. At the same time we had the muck farms and a lot of those were having up and downs with cold and wind and hurricanes, but, in general, they were fairly prosperous, hard-working people. But the Plymouth Citrus Growers and Minute Maid Citrus Products Cooperative hired a lot of people with big payrolls. Citrus, during the 70s and even after some of the freezes, if the grower wasn't making any money, he was putting his fruit up there and the big

payroll when he sold the juice and everything, was making payroll. So, even though they were bad years for the farmer, the product made jobs for so many people and circulated in the community, as well as the muck farms, circulated close to \$110 million dollars a year in product in the community. This changed fast in the 80s and at the same time, population wise, we were growing fast; the fastest growth in Orange County and a lot of it was due to the property being available. The canning plants and the Plymouth Citrus Grower Association and all their big payrolls and everything are all gone. Of course, we still have some industry taking place up there and we are now trying to get good, clean industry in that same area and keep it as an industrial site. But, back in the 80s, the freezes of that era really changed the whole situation. We are more in central Florida, Orlando metropolitan area; the beltway is on the west side of us so we are included in the general downtown area rather than a more distant farming community now. When the '73 oil embargo and everything stopped tourism and hurt Orlando, it didn't affect our economy that much. In fact, about 60% of the building permits in Orange County were in this area. A lot of it was for the indoor foliage business, but our economy wasn't dependent on tourism like Orlando's. I think that now they want to diversify and go into more things, but we already had that little diversification away from tourism. We still like to maintain our own identity though and keep a separate economy from Orlando. We want to do that somewhat with the indoor foliage industry, but also with some other light industry up around where we used to have Plymouth Citrus Growers and Minute Maid. That area is where they developed the concentrate.

D: From '68 and into the 70s, revenue sharing with federal dollars began to come in, federal grants, and federal support for infrastructure; how did you tie into that and how did it affect you? Can you reflect a little bit on a project or two in which you may have taken advantage of that?

L: Well, any of that funding helps a lot, but, actually, we wanted to have our own operation and it's hard for us to get any grants or anything because you have to have matching funds, it was hard to get any help. We had to wait and wait and wait. One example was there was a matching fund for fallout shelters when we did our city hall here. We were building ours for about \$40,000 and the engineers were waiting and waiting and waiting; it took so long we just quit trying to get it and just spent \$40,000 to build our own shelter. It's still there; in fact, that is where our communication center is and that's where we meet for hurricanes and things and it would take care of fallout and things like that. After they burnt out a muck farm we wanted some help to build a community center out there next to [?], which is tied into the muck farms and everything, we owned some property there for a spray field which we went away from and went to reuse water; we never got the help so we finally just built one downtown for about \$4 million.

The revenue sharing I mentioned earlier, I think about trying to get the cigarette tax and that was in the 50s. The bigger cities got together and wanted to put all the cigarette tax in the revenue sharing at the state level to have a multiplier; if you had people at 5,000 or under you just got the population, if you went to 10,000 you get to multiply that by a certain percentage, if you're at 50,000 or over you could count everybody as 1.87 or something like that, so it almost doubled their population. So the big cities over 55,000 were getting a bigger chunk of that revenue sharing. We haven't broken it yet.

D: So you really haven't been able to take advantage of much of that?

L: Well, we've grown to it; our next jump will be 50,000. The argument was that the big cities have all the crime and they need more police per thousand and need the ladder trucks and everything else. All that time we had a big ladder truck, in fact we have two of them now, and we have the same police per thousand as the big cities. I checked that one time when I was arguing with a guy over there in Daytona. The reason is that they are tourists, but when we're growing, everyone in northwest Orange County comes through the city, so we've got more exposure to outsiders probably than they do per capita. I'd go to people like the Lieutenant Governor from Orlando, Toni Jennings, and talk to her and nobody could do anything to help us. . . . During the cigarette tax deal, I mentioned that we were aggressive in going out and getting annexation and Mr. Friedland was going to put his big store out here just out past the city limits. I happened to know the guy that worked for him at, what was it, Food Fair, and so I met him on the tarmac down in Orlando and asked him if we could annex his store and talked with him for about two or three minutes and he told the guy to annex it and he got back on the plane and left and I haven't seen him since. We annexed it and it brought in about \$40,000 in cigarette tax that we wouldn't have had if we had left it because we were selling all the cigarettes in northwest Orange County. We got up to about \$178,000 when they did that road and they said "We're going to hold you harmless." But when you get bigger and get the multiplier I was talking about, so they were getting all the funnel off the top, and it took us ten years to get over our hold harmless of \$178,000. That's where revenue sharing, if you don't watch it, you won't get your share.

Another thing they came up with was the gas tax in the 80s; I think it was '83. They said you could have a local gas tax, but it was controlled by the county; they set it up and then distributed it to the cities. So Orlando got the county to . . . the gas tax and base it on the 1980 population; remember I told you we were growing the fastest in the 80s and Orlando was losing ground because they were getting people to move out to Pine Hills and were losing population. So finally, in the late 80s, the county was losing on that too, they were losing several million dollars, it cost us about \$1 million; I got with Winter Garden and Ocoee and we hired a lobbyist to go up there and they got in on about the last day of the legislature and tied it to a bill and said you had to use the population count the state does every April. Orlando about had a fit and they went to the county and moaned and the county gave them their two or three million and made it for a couple years because Linda Chaffin gave it to Glenda Hood, she was scared of Glenda; so, anyway, we got our money out of that. So when you talk about revenue sharing, you got our state and gas tax and everything out of the state, so you have got to be real careful because they'll figure some way to eat your lunch up there with the bigger cities. Those two cases we just lost a lot of money because the legislature was not looking out for the smaller cities.

The one from the federal lasted only a short period of time. We would buy things that we thought helped the total community like fire trucks and garbage trucks. That was their method to get into the federal court government, which we didn't realize when we started taking that but that allowed them to go to a federal court and say we weren't spending that money appropriately because it wasn't helping the low-income people. They started a court case and the theory they used, which caught us at a time when we trying to do all the infrastructure that I mentioned earlier with the impact fees and things like that. Those who couldn't afford to pay the impact

fees you felt sorry for but you had to just go on. They used that to say you had 17% in the minority area, or let's say 20%, and only half of them have water and sewer. Over here, you got the other 80%, but 95% of them have water and sewer; so they were able to show a lack of parity. If they had given us just a little more time we would have had all the stuff in because we were moving fast to try to get it all in. We settled it by saying we would do all these things and showed that we could do all of them in a certain length of time. They even looked if you didn't have curbs or if you didn't have sidewalks. So, if we got extra money, we'd make sure they got all the sidewalks even if some of them . . . I didn't get sidewalks in front of me until this year. The federal revenue sharing made it available for David Litman who did that everywhere he could go with some group that supported him for taking all these lawsuits and he ended up getting \$150,000 out of us and we decided to settle. We lived through that, but it was kind of disappointing to me. Actually, the guy, the case was *Dowdell v. City of Apopka*, he was my old N.A.A.C.P. buddy that supported me for all those years and did after that. But, it was kind of funny that . . . but he kind of took it on because some of the commissioners had made statements about, they ought to be happy we're spending this on them and that on this, but, anyway, he and I remained friends and we lived through it.

It makes me kind of have a theory that, when they have all these good things you can do, maybe they ought to have a sunset for them. Because they started C.E.T.A., which is the Community Education Training Act or something like that, and it was a federal education program we thought it was worth looking into so we did. I think they would, in the first year, pay the whole fee I believe and then the second year you'd have to . . . and the city would fund it, then the third year you'd pay a little bit more, and the fourth year you'd had to put him on your payroll. I figured that since we were growing pretty fast during that time we were going to need more and more police and fire, so let's let them pay for it the first year and we should have enough to pick up half of it the second year and it worked pretty good. We had people that worked under that. The five years were up and they extended the Act, the federal government did, but they added to it that all these people could hire people to do social work and things. Then, before they got through, they found that when they checked them, they'd be in Sanford where this group is getting C.E.T.A. money for hiring somebody and the person they hired lived up in New York City or somewhere. People figured a way to misuse it. We were proud of what we were doing by training people and getting firefighters and police officers for the community and, yet, when they extended it, they extended it to some of these non-profit groups that were supposed to be doing public things but it was misused.

D: In other words, privatizing the oversight?

L: Yeah; there were so many stories that somebody said, "You got C.E.T.A.," and I felt kind of embarrassed that they thought we were using C.E.T.A. because the general deal was that you were clipping the federal government, but we weren't. So, when it went out, I was kind of glad to get away from it.

D: But, probably back in the early days you were the ones who were responsible to oversee the program and make sure people had the payroll correct, but then, probably in order to save money, they figured out a way to sell off the oversight perhaps to a private company?

L: Well, yeah, but they'd get these non-profit companies that had lobbyists that would go up there and say, "Hey, we're doing all these good things," which might be, but it's all on paper and they would agree and hire people and give them money and they'd get the money back, and then when maybe four or five years went by and maybe some of those were doing it well to start with. You don't know how it evolved that way, but then about the second it ran out its ten years we were hearing all kinds of bad stories about when they audited them and came down and checked where all these people were because they were on the payroll and didn't find them. They would check it out and they were living up in New York City or something and somebody was getting the money. You don't know if they were padding the payroll and putting it in their pocket or if they sent it to them or what. That was always a big thing when you were running a business, that you didn't have an unscrupulous foreman and everything. They might pad the payroll and you'd go down and check and somebody wasn't there, you don't know who gets the money but somebody was paid. I know some of our people, when we operated the crate mill, every now and then you'd find a foreman who was unscrupulous and find out he'd padded the payroll and pocketed the money. You know back then \$10 or \$20 was a pretty good pay day for somebody. Anyway, I guess that's what happened to C.E.T.A. That was two Federal things that we had experience with. Both of them helped us along the way but then, eventually, we were kind of glad we were doing it local again.

D: Well, I think we're probably out of time based on your schedule today.