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INTERVIEW WITH: **D. BURKE KIBLER**

INTERVIEWER: **JAMES M. DENHAM**

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D= DENHAM, JAMES M.
K=KIBLER, BURKE

2nd session with Mr. Burke Kibler

D: I'd like to try to bring us back to where we left off. If you could, reflect a little bit about coming home from Europe and what you saw when you got here.

K: Well, I was only in Europe a year, 11 months to be exact. So, the change that I noticed was more in me than in the country. War and combat, I was in combat most of the time I was there, does make changes and when you're young, I had my 21st birthday in Europe, it made me realize that the world had changed but really you had changed. The eyes that you saw the world with were different eyes than you'd gone over there with. Of course, there is no question, when you're over in another country in a war, there are lots of people trying to kill you and you're forced to use the skills that they trained you to have. My instance, adjusting artillery fire. You can't withdraw from that. From time to time it had an impact. I'd hear noises that would sound like shellfire and I'd find sometime that without thinking I'd look for cover and jump on the ground, things like that. But for the most part, you're young and resilient and I was fortunate that though I'd been wounded a couple of times, they were very superficial wounds and I wasn't hospitalized for any of them. I don' think much about it now but war changes everyone.

D: Did you have friends in the war who were not as easy to recover from the experience as you were or had difficulty living with it?

K: Well, I had some that were killed. A forward observer, an infantryman, was a dangerous assignment because you had to expose yourself in order to adjust fire and that meant that you were a target from time to time. You were always in that balance of trying to survive and doing what you were supposed to do. I didn't have some of the combat situations that they had in assault landings like we were talking about *"Saving Private Ryan."* Beach assaults and things of that sort where the casualty rate in incredibly high, those were things where I was fortunate and didn't get exposed to. Whenever you were in an offensive situation you'd move and try to take enemy ground that was being contested and you were facing automatic weapons fire and shellfire. It's something that made you think because a lot do get wounded and killed.

D: Are there any other people in Lakeland that may have served in other places? Not right along side you, that you knew or kept in contact with and had a chance to talk about your experience with?

K: Homer Hooks. Homer has been a close friend of mine. We were in college together. We didn't really know each other well then, he was a couple or three years ahead of me. But Homer was an Infantry Platoon Leader and he served in the 102nd Infantry Division and I was in the 103rd. No relation between them, just pointing out the Divisions. He saw a good bit of combat. He did kind of the same thing I did. We were there in contact with the enemy and he had some narrow circumstances. He was wounded. Homer and I from time to time talked about the war and war experiences. There is a bonding, I guess, of sorts that you have when you go through combat and you feel that those that have not been exposed to that similar circumstance don't ever quite understand what it's like. When you were young there, you had strange feelings. You didn't want to be doing that because you knew that very likely would get badly wounded or perhaps get killed. At the same time, when you were away from it and it was still going on you felt almost a duty and obligation to get back and be there. It was something I never did quite understand but, I had a great belief, someone once told me, do your job but don't volunteer, the volunteers always end up getting killed. But you found yourself sometimes volunteering without realizing that you, what you'd done. The war is something that I thought I'd write about but I never have. I never did sort out all the way I felt.

D: Well, when I get these transcripts back to you, which I hope to do in a timely fashion. That will give you the chance to read them and maybe think through some things you'd like to write about this. These things have a way of jogging your memories and getting you thinking about things. How were you treated when you got home? I imagine that you were treated a lot differently than you were as a college student at University of Florida or as a high school graduate by the community and by your parents.

K: Well, the war, WWII, was a total involvement of the nation and as a college student I was in ROTC and you almost wanted to wear you ROTC uniform when you went home. Because you had the feeling, that all young men who were of age to be serving, felt like you wanted to explain to everyone that I am really going to serve, I am really in ROTC and I'll be going in next year. Whether the looks were accusing you of not doing your part, you had that feeling. And, of course, when you came home from wherever you were there was just an outpouring of appreciation and the contrast between that and what happened in Viet Nam was so marked because it was total support for this war and it wasn't for the Vietnamese war.

D: I would imagine it wasn't too hard to get a date when you got back.

K: Oh, no, no! Of course, I had my wife she was waiting for me.

D: But you weren't married at that time?

K: No, but we had gone together since the 10th grade.

D: I want to pursue your courtship pretty much in depth in a minute. So, what I always hear is about the unity of the nation. In your lifetime, do you think there had ever been a period of time in which the nation as a whole, not only Florida, but the nation as a whole was more together, more on the same page, more unified than those years?

K: Oh, no, I think it was very clear that probably in the history of the nation has it been more unified than in the effort of WWII. WWI was not the total and complete involvement to the extent it was in WWII. During WWII it was really felt that the world was at risk and we were the last hope to save the world from going through the tyranny and domination of the Axis powers.

D: Now one of the things, in this regard, that I haven't talked to you about is the role of African Americans and black people that perhaps we can go back to a little bit, in Lakeland. Do you remember what the role of African Americans was? Do you remember seeing African Americans in the service at all and what kind of things they were doing?

K: Of course, we were still a segregated service. Generally, in the army the Afro-Americans were in more service capacities. When I say service, I'm thinking in the terms of, quartermaster, and truck driving, doing logistical things. There were some combat units and, in fact, I had involvement, I can't think of the name of it, with one that was a black tank destroyer outfit and they had high morale. They had white officers and that for the most part was true. There was one black infantry division that was called "The Black Buffalo" and they fought in. . .

D: Kind of a kin to the Buffalo Soldiers?

K: I don't know, they had a patch and it was a black division and they didn't really have success using it as a division, it was broken up. It was in the Korean War, I read something about this, where they discovered, a lot of just the biases I guess, that were there, and there were feelings that the black soldiers individually would not do as well as white soldiers and they were trying to put them in units that would, billed as "free" and that sort of thing. For the most part, there were some exceptions, I would say to that. But it was the attitude about segregation, from history, that still tended to have segregation in the armed services. We had a couple of black kids in my officer candidate school class, though. So the army in some ways attempted to integrate. The navy was, they put them in basically waiting on tables--they were mess boys, things of that sort. But the army had a mixed record on it. We had, in the air force, a couple of combat units, fighter pilots that were black.

D: Tuskegee Airmen are the ones that always stand out.

K: Yes, but those were the exception. But the black soldiers, the ones that I saw were mostly quartermasters. One group called themselves the Red Ball Express. They were servicing Patton's army in the last great thrust of the war. They were truck drivers but they were, they did a marvelous job.

D: Now, this is giving us an opportunity for you to go back a little and reflect on African Americans that you knew in Lakeland or as a child that you remember. Any specific ones that you can remember? Or anything that you'd like to say about the role of African American that you can remember growing up?

K: In my family, when I grew up in Dunnellon FL, which was until I was 8 years old, I can remember my father ran a phosphate mine and almost all the employees in the mine were black people. All the supervisory employees all the way up to the superintendent

and the chemist and a couple others, I'd say that a great number of people were black. And we had some black people, our cook, who sort of raised me, in that way she was sort of a member of the family. And when we moved to Lakeland from Dunellon, she moved with us.

D: Do you remember her name?

K: Elvira Simpkins. Her family lived in Dunellon; she had a brother, Booker T. Simpkins. Booker had gone to Edward Waters College in Jacksonville and then gone to Bethune-Cookman on a football scholarship.

D: He was about your age?

K: No, he was probably, 15 years older than I was. He sort of raised me, he worked, he was a handy man and then he worked for the railroad. During the war he started working for the railroad. After he retired from the railroad he came back and worked for the family for a number of years and died of cancer. Elvira, both of them, were very close to our family and they were sort of part of our family. The community, of course, was pretty much segregated and growing up I accepted that as one of the . . . I guess, in the service was the first time I recognized that blacks were treated generally as different. I traveled more than most of my age, I had been to Europe a few times, and I never seen any particular abuse of blacks. Segregation was something that was somewhat accepted, it was a fact, a way of life. Black people that I was in contact with, I played with black children in Dunellon. We played baseball together, other sports and all. When we went to school we had separated schools so you didn't come in contact, you didn't have the same social interaction with those your age, growing up, that later kids had. But like a lot of things, it was not until in the 50's when the unrest came that you realized, a white kid growing up like myself, that black people were somewhat mistreated, they were very unhappy. And even those that there wasn't any mistreatment, in a sense, but the opportunities, we know, weren't equal, and they felt this. The thing I'm trying to say is, there was not an awareness growing up that there was this difference that was so resented generally by the black community. My exposure to blacks was. . .

D: Even though there might have been.

K: Yeah, I'm sure, any black person felt . . .Elvira, that sort of raised me, she loved our family and she died right after my youngest daughter was born. She was very sick and the thing she wanted more than anything was to see the baby, the youngest girl. My children still remember Booker and Elvira. They were very close to them. They helped raise them, in effect. Though Elvira died when Nancy, who is 46 or 47 now, was just a few weeks old.

D: One thing that people say about WWII, particularly the service and the army, is that it brought all these different regions of the country together and threw all these young men together. You're a southerner and did you ever have a sense that you were a Southerner in an American army? Or what was it like as a Southerner to meet someone for the first time perhaps from New England or . . . Did you feel any strange. . . stigma, let's say, did people have that you were dumb or stupid because you were from the south? Was there any sense of that?

K: In the army my ROTC unit was inducted and we went to Ft. Bragg in the summer of 1943 for basic training in field artillery at the replacement-training center. We stayed pretty much together; we went back to the University under the Specialized Training Program. This was something the government decided that the war might last a lot longer than they thought and so they had University programs so they would have those who would continue to be educated and you'd have engineers, doctors, what have you. And we got a semester there. They just weren't ready for us. We'd all qualified for officer candidate school and so they sent us back to the University until a place at Ft. Sill . . . the same thing happened to the infantry. Ft. Sill was the artillery school and in doing all of this I was in a group, the ROTC group, my officer candidate class and at basic training also, we sort of stayed together. So we were in the majority not the minority of those, the unit there. There were all sorts of folks in a mix there. We had a lot of draftees in basic training from Pennsylvania and we had them all the way from, there was a bookkeeper fellow named Kegan who had a cot next to mine and he was probably in his late 30's. I was 19 and that seemed pretty old, ancient, almost, to me. And he had a terrible time trying to keep up, trying to make his bed and do things like and then you saw a lot there that didn't have much education, so there was a big mixture thrust in. There was always a core group that we'd been sort of privileged. We'd been to college. Not everybody went to colleges much then as they do now. So, you had that sort of insulation from the harshness of what it could have been if you'd just been any draftee at war away from home, and they were all by themselves. I didn't have that. It was sort of all the way through. Even when I went to 103rd infantry after officer candidate school and went overseas, there was always a group that I had been in school with that I knew. I never was separate from that. In fact, one of my roommates, he was a forward observer, he's retired now. He comes and visits me. We were very close friends. We did the same thing in Europe. So, not too many, I think, had a similar sort of experience in the service.

D: Okay, did you serve in Italy at all?

K: No, we ended the war and we were, our division, went to Innsbruk, which was right there at the beginning, Brenner Pass, was right by Italy and the group was supposed to make connections with the forces that was coming up there.

D: The reason I ask you is because the Japanese-American unit that Senator [Daniel] Inouye was in, I was wondering if you had any contact or exposure to them. Or how they were treated.

K: Well, the Nissei they called them. They were in the 7th army had a unit, a combat team. There was total acceptance of them as near as I can tell. We had positions right next to them at one time. I never got to know any one of them particularly but there was no particular feeling of resentment or that they . . . I don't think it would have worked if they had gone to the Pacific perhaps. Here we were just happy to see them. It was the same with the Black units. If they did a good job, we were just happy to have them.

D: Okay, so you come home. What were some of the first things that went through your mind about, now that I'm home, now that I have survived this ordeal, what am I going to do now? Can you walk us through that thought process? Obviously, you were going to finish school.

K: I was prepared, of course, and we were going to the Pacific, and then the big event was the dropping of the atomic bomb. I remember nobody knew what the atomic bomb

was. They were trying to have answer sessions to try to educate the troops and tell them what was going on but it became pretty apparent that the dropping of the bomb ended the war. And that kept those of us who were combat units from making the assault on Japan. That was something you were briefed on, the casualty rates. The casualty rates were incredibly high.

D: And you were still in Europe when that happened.

K: Oh, yes, it must have been in August and I came back in September. We were in the outskirts of Rheims France, they had camps there that we were in the process of phasing out--we were going back to the states. What they did was work on a point system. There were ways to establish points. Those who were in the service for a long period of time, had a lot of time in combat, had a lot of points. You got a point for every month that you had been in the service. You got an extra point for being overseas or for a decoration. For wounded or Purple Heart you got 5 points. They added it all up and the high points got sent back to the states first and they were relieved. But most of the troops were going to be retrained for the mission in the Pacific so that's what we were prepared for. Then when they dropped the bomb, we knew that was going to change. Then when the surrender took place you knew that some of the units would go over and some did, the army of occupation. I got home and then had 15 days to report for duty in Texas to a 2nd infantry division. I'd been in the 103rd, that's the one that I fought with. Then we went to the 45th infantry, then back in the states, moved from the 45th to the 2nd infantry division. By that time I was aware that I was going to probably not have to go to the Pacific so I was going to go back to school. I had pretty well determined by then that I was going to go to law school. I went back to the University of Florida. My father-in-law was a lawyer and I decided I wanted to go to Harvard Law School. I could've gone to the University of Florida; you could go after 2 years if you were a veteran. But for Harvard, you had to have a baccalaureate degree so I went ahead and prepared to go to Harvard and was admitted to Harvard but by that time our first child was born. It just seemed like it would be better to stay in Florida.

D: Let's change course a little and talk about Mrs. Kibler. How did you meet?

K: We were in High School together. My parents lived on Lake Hollingsworth at the corner where Beacon Road and Lake Hollingsworth come together. Dr. Peacock owns the house. His estate sold him the house. It's a red brick Georgian house. About a block away on the lake, a brown house, Dr. Jack Stephens I think is in the house. It was walking distance from where I grew up and from where Nell grew up. We were in the same grade and from the 10th grade we were steadies, I guess they'd say. She went to Florida State College for Women one year and I went to University of Florida. I remember I gave her my fraternity pin when I was initiated in the ATO fraternity. She was Kappa Delta. We just knew that we would get married. She wanted us to get married before I went overseas and I knew that my chances of being wounded or killed were greater than lesser so that just didn't seem to be the thing to do. So we didn't get married. But when I came home on that 45-day leave, we did get married and when I went to Texas, she went with me. She was the only wife there.

D: So the 45 days were spent here in Lakeland.

K: Yes

D: And then she was an army wife in Texas for a brief period of time.

K: Well, basically, from end of October until the following June when I got out.

D: Were a lot of your friends married during that time frame?

K: No, most of them were not. There were a few that were but most were not. I was only 21 or 22 so most were not. They did get married along the way. One of my friends got married out in Texas. He went home and brought his wife there after we were there a couple of months. But most of my comrades were not married.

D: Can you tell a little bit about her family, where were they from and how long they lived in Lakeland, that kind of thing?

K: Well, Nell's family came from the Bryant family, came from Lake City, I think, back in the 1830's and they came up . . . .

K: The father's family came to the Kathleen area back about 1870, before Lakeland was established . . . they came to the Socrum/Kathleen area. Emory Bryant was her grandfather and he was a farmer, the cattle business and citrus and strawberries, all of the normal agricultural crops of the area. Back at the turn of the century they built a house on Lake Wire where my office is now. It's still there. There was a business school in it for some time. I'm not sure what is in it now. My father-in-law, Tom Bryant, was a very important part of the Lakeland community. He was one of the leaders, one of the great men in the area. He served in the legislature; he served on the Board of Control, which was the predecessor of the Board of Regents for 14 governors. Had a great interest in road building. In fact, the highway that goes to Polk City is named the Thomas Bryant Highway. He loved football; the football stadium is named for him, the Thomas Bryant Stadium. He was a Gator. He went to the University of Florida both for Baccalaureate degree and law degree. When he got out he started practicing law and then WWI came around and he volunteered, went overseas, came back and married Nell's mother right after he got out of the army. Nell was born same year I was, 1924. We didn't really know each other until about the 10th grade. Our families were friends. My father was a good friend of Tom Bryant's. Spessard Holland was probably his closest friend. They went to school together and he'd been active in all his campaigns. He probably had a greater influence, certainly professionally, on my life than any other one person.

D: You kind of saw him as a model that you'd like to follow along?

K: He was probably the wisest person I have ever known and we practiced law together from September 1949, when I got out of law school. I went with him and he had his partner then, Snow Martin. Snow is still living. He is in his 90's and he is still practicing law with his son, Mike Martin, a prominent trial lawyer here. Snow Jr., is the older son and in fact, practiced law with me and his daddy, Mr. Bryant. They left and formed their firms in the early 60's, 1962 probably. They formed the firm of Martin and Martin, which is still active in the community. Mr. Bryant and I continued on as Bryant and Kibler and then I joined with Chesterfield in the Holland, Bevis, Smith and Kibler in 1964 and I did my best to get Mr. Bryant to be part of that but at that time he was in his middle 70's and he just didn't want to undertake that venture. But we had a very close relationship for all his life. He was a wonderfully alert individual up until his middle 90's and he was a later

life diabetic and the last few years he would wander a little. Had marvelous recall and was a wonderful storyteller and just one of the great people I've known in my life.

D: So you and Mrs. Kibler decided to move to Gainesville after you got out?

K: Well, we moved there the summer I did get out. That would've been . . . Got back from overseas in '45 and got out in spring. June was official discharge date, but I was released earlier, I had some leave time. So in May I enrolled in the summer session at the University of Florida and lived at the Thomas Hotel for a couple of semesters and then found a house we rented and later an apartment. We were there from that time until I got out of law school.

D: Now, you can even go back to undergrad, but who were some your favorite teachers who made an impression on you, at University of Florida undergrad and also law school?

K: In no particular order of importance, I recall Bill Carlton, they called him Wild Bill, who was a brilliant teacher and a radical in many ways. He had wonderful forensic skills and I took all the courses he had. I took International Relations that was really renowned. He was on the Political Science faculty. Angus Laird was also was also a political scientist. The antithesis of Bill Carlton and I think they really hated each other. He was dry but he was a nice, nice person and he was a good student of political theory. We had Manning Dauer, who taught History of Political Theories, Fabian was his main text. He was thought provoking as any professor I had. I had a philosophy professor; his name will come to me. I was an English major, but I had an equal amount of credits in both English and Political Science to major in either but I ended up being and English major. A number of the English faculty, [Glick (?)] was one who impressed me that was a Shakespeare professor who impressed me. As always--your professors make a greater impact sometimes, than you realized at the time. And back at the University when I was a freshman and sophomore particularly in was small enough that professors would invite you to dinner. I would go, Angus Laird and I would go; he would have me, several of his students to his house for dinner. They had what they called University College and you took comprehensive courses, it was patterned after what they did at the University of Chicago , Maynard Hutchins, the theory being that during the depression education suffered in high schools. Many that would come to college did not have a good enough background and so they needed to be certain that they had those basic courses. They designed a curriculum that had comprehensive courses, science, humanities, English, biological sciences and physical sciences, mathematics, political science and history. These courses, I look back now and it seems kind of shocking but we just accepted what was there, 8 semester hours that you took 4 hours each semester, we were on a semester system. You took one comprehensive 6-hour exam at the end of the course and that was your entire grade for the course. They changed that later, but that grade was your grade for the entire course. You had a progress test every month. The University was a different creature then because of the smallness and because almost everybody worked.

D: Were there any law school professors that stand out in your memory?

K: I had one that was a . . . Professor Wilson, I remember him well because I played handball with him. He was a good professor, but he left and went into private practice after a few years. And then I had Professor Tisell, called Eminent; he'd been a former

prosecutor in Cook County, Illinois in Chicago. He was the greatest character probably than any school I'd been to. He had severe arthritis and had to use a cane and he could barely walk, wasn't real old, probably in his early 50's. He did not want to be called "Professor". If anyone called him "Professor" they incurred his wrath. He would take his cane and hit the desk to get attention and say, "Those that can, do, those that can't, teach." He aroused fear in every student. He would call on you at random and he expected you to be totally prepared. If you weren't, you almost, might as well drop out. He was a very hard grader. He did not believe in grading on the curve. Everybody ought to get what grade they got. He prided himself in the fact that he gave no A's. He could name the 3 or 4 students who got A's in the whole time he'd been teaching. He was the biggest character I had. Henry Finn, who later became Dean, was good. He wasn't real tall. He came from Yale and taught Trust and Estates. Bill McDonald was a professor who was absolutely one of the funniest fellows, he was a comedian and he was Scots. He came to teach just one summer but he was so popular that they petitioned to try to get him to stay and he did. Of course, there was a lot of competition for professors, especially right after WWII. The schools were all expanding needed for professors. And a Professor Stevens who, Rick Stevens, a law partner of mine, his father, was a tax professor and was a very good professor. It's been some time, you know. This September will be 54 years since I've graduated from law school.

D: One of the things that you have vivid memories of are your classmates. The folks that were produced in your class and also in the 3 or 4 years that you were there, turned out to be extremely important for the future state of Florida. Steven O'Connell, for example.

K: Steve graduated before WWII.
D: Oh okay, I am mistaken then.

K: Steve was one of my friends when I was a Senior in high school, I was being rushed by the ATO Fraternity. They would do that then. You'd go up for a football weekend and spend the weekend. Lakeland was kind of an ATO town and Steve was President of the student body as a senior in Law school. This was in 1940. So that's when I think Steve graduated. So Steve was probably 25, maybe 7 or 8 years older than me. He died 2 years ago and I think he was 84. I met him in the ATO Fraternity house. He was president of the student body. It was a homecoming type, football weekend and I was introduced to him in the morning and later that night there was a banquet at the Thomas Hotel and Steve saw me with a group of other young Freshmen and those want-to-be Freshman, but still Seniors in high school, and he introduced and the others there, and he remembered my name without any prompting. That was one of the most impressive things I'd ever seen. I was his disciple from that point on. Steve O'Connell was a very, very close friend of mine. I don't know that Florida has had many greater Floridians than Steve O'Connell. He was just a wonderful man.

D: I'm sure in the course of our discussions his name will come up again and again. Are there any other of the people that you went to school with that made a significant mark in Florida history or Florida politics?

K: There was a mixture, of course. There was Chesterfield, he was a year ahead, but we were friends in law school.

D: Is that where you first met him?

K: That's where I met him. He had been at the University before then, but when I first met him, I was in law school. Then there was Dewey Dye, a very prominent Bradenton lawyer. Dewey and I were very close friends, we studied together. He died recently. That's the trouble when you get to my age, Mike, so many of these that you are thinking of are gone. They've died. I really need to refresh my memory about my classmates in law school.

D: We can do that; we can come back to that next time.

K: Let's do that, because there were a lot of them that I'd really like to talk about and I just don't seem to come up with their names right now, but there were a bunch of them there that . . . Of course, Lawton, Lawton was younger than I was. Though I knew him, when I got to know him very well was when we were in the Army Reserve together

D: Well, I am certainly going to cover that ground a little bit later. Okay, so you finished law school and came right back here to Lakeland and practiced law with your father in law. Is that correct?

K: Yes.

D: What was the run of the mill business for lawyers in 1949? Would that have been 1947, 1949? Was that a general practice law firm?

K: Well, there were very few specialists, especially in Lakeland. The specialist law firms were in the larger cities, but there weren't really any large law firms anywhere then. The big law firm in Florida would have been in Tampa and had probably around 30 lawyers. Mine has about 25 lawyers.

D: What were some of the biggest law firms in Florida back then?

K: There was the Sawyer firm in Miami was a good-sized firm. Macfarlane Ferguson and in Tampa and the Fowler, White firm was a big firm. The Carlton & Fields firm. There were a number of firms in Jacksonville that have changed now. Those in Tampa I mentioned have been around for a long time. Here in Lakeland, there probably wasn't a law firm with more than 4 or 5 lawyers in it. Senator Holland's firm, then it was Holland, Bevis and McRea. Bill McRae was the first federal judicial appointment of Jack Kennedy in 1961. He was a brilliant lawyer. Chesterfield joined them, Holland, Bevis, McRea & Smith and that was the predecessor of the firm I am in now, Holland and Knight.

D: Sure, sure. Who would you say were the best lawyers in Florida in 1946, 1947, 1948. besides Tom Bryant.

K: He was clearly one of the best lawyers. Let's see, there was . . .

D: Let's say you went into a courtroom and you saw this other fellow in there and everybody said, "Oh my goodness", were there any stars like that?

K: None of them come to mind right now. I can probably come up with those when I think.
But in describing the law, the same law firm did not necessarily do both criminal and civil work. There would be some crossover, but there would be a civil law firm and if

someone needed a criminal lawyer, there would usually be sole practitioners that did criminal work. But you did whatever needed to be done. If you represented a business, you did their tax work, you formed their corporations, you represented them in reorganizing and if that had merged. If they had domestic relations problems, they expected you to handle them. Also, their divorces for their daughters and sons, too. Really, if they were your client, you did whatever was needed to be done. And, of course, real estate was an important part of your business practice. Real estate has now become a function of title companies and lawyers don't have the same role they once did. It is almost now done with title insurance, while back then, it was done by the lawyer's opinion examining the title. Our firm developed into sort of a specialist firm because we started representing the phosphate industry. This being a simple mining industry grew into the chemical industry with a heavy capitol investment and then their needs grew. Labor law became an important part, so you became labor lawyers. You did all these things that your clients needed to have done and that ultimately led to specializing. In smaller communities, the lawyers were one size fits all, but the law is so complicated that is hard to do.

D: What I want to do next time is look at you and Chesterfield's work and creating this law firm that we call Holland and Knight today. But what I'd like to do now with the time we have left is for you to reflect a little bit on the political structure of the state and politics in the 1950's when you left law school. For example, on the political leadership at the time. Millard Caldwell, Fuller Warren, Dan McCarty, Charley Johns. Do you remember any of them? Who was the first Governor that you ever voted for?

K: Oh Yeah, I remember them. Well, probably it was Dan McCarty. Spessard Holland was Governor from 1940- 1944/45. He served '41,'42,'43,'44.
D: First, would you like to reflect a little on him in those years? You came to know him a lot better later on.

K: Well, my father was a strong supporter of his, Spessard. Mr. Bryant was his best friend.

D: You would've seen him a lot growing up.

K: I did. In fact, he was a wartime governor. Nell was in Tallahassee at Florida State College for Women. She would occasionally catch a ride home with someone, perhaps the governor himself, but often maybe a highway patrol car, she would get a ride home for the weekend, if I'd be home from the service. A couple of times that would've happened. Spessard was followed by Millard Caldwell and Millard was Governor from '45 – '49. Then the election in "48 was when Dan McCarty ran against Fuller Warren. Governors could not succeed themselves then. And I voted for Dan, I did not vote for Fuller. And then Fuller served 4 years, so that would have been 1952, I guess, when Dan McCarty was elected. Dan died a few months after and was succeeded by Charley Johns because he was the president of the Senate then.

D: If we go to Fuller Warren's years [1949-1953], he was accused of corruption and graft leading to the [Estes] Kefauver Hearings, well they were about organized crime in general, but the focus was on Florida. Do you remember anything about that? What it was like to hear, [that the] Senate was to come down here and do these investigations in Tampa and then also in Ft. Lauderdale and Miami? Was that something people were talking about?

K: Oh Yeah, there clearly was a lot of tension. This was at the beginning of the media circuses that came later. I'm trying to put together that Scott Kelly was in the state senate and he became prominent and became a statewide figure who later became a gubernatorial candidate.

D: Judge Kelly's brother.

K: Yes, Scott was on the city commission, was mayor, and then he was in the legislature, in the state senate and he conducted some hearings that were related, I think. Hearings on the state level about scandals in the road [department]. Contractors being on the take, that sort of thing. This was about that era and he ran, seemed like he ran twice. Brailey Odham was another character.

D: My dad was a friend of Brailey in Orange County.

K: I liked Scott, but I never supported Scott. One time Scott offered, said, "if you'd supported me," meaning that if we were friends and all, Jim Wellman, Scott Leonard and some of those folks, "I'd probably gotten elected." And he was probably right. Scott would have made a pretty good Governor.

D: Did you ever hear him give a speech? They say that Fuller Warren was the greatest speaker.

K: Fuller was a good speaker but his political style was, I think he'd been influenced, had a lot more flamboyance than Bombast. Fuller was of that school, I guess.

D: Now did you go to Tampa very often? Was Tampa as crooked at the Kefauver Hearings seemed to indicate, Sheriff [Hugh] Culbreath and all that?

K: There wasn't much question, that Charlie Wall and all . . . . My impression was that organized crime was more organized on a local basis. They had folks in Orlando; Orlando back then wasn't any bigger than Lakeland. But it was clear that Tampa tolerated on all levels of gambling and prostitution and things of that sort. And it had gone on for years.

D: Now the Spencer family, which I have written a little bit about in my Sheriff book, were sheriff's during that time. There were three generations of Spencer Sheriffs. Do you remember a sheriff in the 30's by that name that would have been in Hillsborough County?

K: No.

D: No, okay. So, Fuller Warren, Dan McCarty, Charley Johns, do you have any reflection on him?

K: Charley was pretty much a small town politician who just happened to be there by the accident of death and he was the heyday of the pork choppers and he saw the opportunity for graft, which I assume was only petty grafting, but he saw he could do some pretty big time grafting,

D: Insurance sales? Trying to figure out a way to get state insurance or something?

K: I had a former football player I used to fish with, he was in law school, friendly fellow and he took up with Charley, he was one of his bag men and afterwards he was kind of open to me about it. He was going around making collections and he was flush as could be. Of course, Charley probably would've been elected, but it really became obvious what he was doing and it was a real turn against him. I never knew Charley Johns. But this was happening just about the time I was getting out of law school; it must have been '48 or '49?

D: Charley must have been in the state house at that time.

K: Well, he was president of the senate when Dan died and Dan died in 1949 [1953].

D: I think you're mistaken because what happened was, Charley Johns ultimately ran against Leroy Collins, correct? I think that election would have been in the middle 50's, the election between Johns and Collins.

K: Well Charley Johns became Governor when Dan McCarty died.

D: Yes

K: And Dan McCarty was elected in the fall of 1948 [1952]. And he served. . .

D: Maybe we are talking about the early '50's then, the very early 50's.

K: And he served as Governor until '52. From '49 he was acting Governor when Dan died in '49 and I thought it was in '50. It wasn't very long he was Governor. And then Roy Collins ran and beat him. Roy served actually 6 years because they changed the . . . , I think Roy served 6 years. . . am I correct in that?

D: Yes. He finished up McCarty's term. Now I remember, there was a general election soon after McCarty died, within a year or so.

K: After then, the next general election, general elections were always even years and gubernatorial elections were every 4 years and there had been a gubernatorial election in 1948 [1952]. That's when Dan McCarty was elected. He took office, was inaugurated in '49 [1952] and died in the fall of '49 [1953] and Charley Johns served the balance of that and served until the next general election which was 1950 [1954]. And then they were running for the balance of Dan McCarty's term. That's what happened. Then Roy Collins defeated him and served the remaining two years and then was allowed to run for a full 4-year term after that.

D: That's right. And he ran again against Johns.

K: Did Charley Johns then run again? I don't remember that.

D: Yes, I think so. In the interim period there he inaugurated the infamous Johns Committee. I think perhaps as a way. . .

K: The Johns Committee, I remember that quite well.

D: Can you reflect a little on that?

K: When he was accused of all sorts of things. Homosexuals were a big problem and he was .. . .he said there were a bunch of queers in our schools and they're contaminating our schools.

D: Particularly our universities.

K: Yes, I don't remember him attacking the high schools, too. He was after the universities, I know.

D: There was also a major attempt to investigate the NAACP and to destroy the NAACP primarily through finding the names of the financial supporters of the NAACP. I think that was another area, by claiming that the NAACP was under control of Communists. Again, if you look at what is going on in the nation you can kind of see that, as well. This is the same time as the McCarthy Hearings, generally the same time frame. Johns was the Florida angle to that, I imagine. It made McCarthy quite popular for a while and I would imagine that Korea and a lot of the things not going our way necessarily in the world did worry people about the Cold War, etc.

K: This was the beginning of the Cold War and it was clear that there was fear of Communism generally. McCarthy, at first, had pretty broad support and then he became sort of obsessive and really he destroyed himself, which was an interesting era. But Charley Johns was a much smaller fish in a smaller school.

D: Do you remember Leroy Collins?

K: Oh yes, I knew Leroy Collins fairly well. He was an outstanding person. He was a head of the state and showed incredible leadership. I remember when he came, Snow Martin, who I was practicing law with then, was a close friend of Roy Collins. John Germany who was a law partner of mine worked for him. I knew John, not real well, we'd been in the service together, ROTC and all. I campaigned for Roy, worked hard when I organized some of the students at FSC for him. I took him to some phosphate mines. My father, at the time, leased a great deal of pasture land that the phosphate companies owned in Polk County and I had known a number of phosphate company's managers and was able to set up meeting a with some of the organized labor leaders for Roy Collins.

D: Would that have been his first election, first time running?

K: This would have probably been his re-election. 1950 [1954] would've been the time of the election, right after I got out of law school.

D: How did you meet him first?

K: Well, the first way that I met him, I think Snow Martin introduced me to him. He was a candidate for governor and Snow wanted him to get help.

D: When he was elected did he appoint you to any positions? Did you work in his administration?

K: No, Snow was the person who knew him best. I took him around and introduced him to a lot of people and we were friends for most of our lives.

D: One of the elections or campaigns which is so infamous in Florida history, notable in Florida history that happened about this time is the Claude Pepper/George Smathers race in 1950. Do you have some memories of that race?

K: I was heavily involved in that, I have a lot of memories of that. My father and my father-in-law did not like Claude Pepper. I really, I got out of law school in Sept. of '49 and that was the primary race. The elections then were in the spring. So, the primary election was in April of 1950, I would guess. But the election cycle was a very bitter campaign. I remember all the things that were said, and some of it was quite true, they have been amplified by now. That George, who had been quite a good speaker, [charged that Pepper's sister was a very good Thespian.]

D: Was that really true or is that just a apocryphal **s**tatement? What do you think?

K: I did not hear it, but I think that at one of these little impromptu things, George was quick and he was talking . . .Some of this was not in a prepared speech but the press picked it up. So I think some of that actually happened.

D: Actually practicing celibacy, things like that. So you obviously were for George.

K: I was for George; I spent a great deal of time with him and got to know him. George was very charismatic and both Pepper and George Smathers were very good speakers. It was an exciting campaign. They were both, of course Democrats. This was the [situation] that existed in the Democratic Party. The liberal and conservative. Of course, Pepper was a big, big New Dealer and racial problems were not resolved in Florida then, in a political sense. They had pictures of Pepper hugging black leaders and I can't remember the names, maybe it was the President of the NAACP at the time. In Polk County particularly it was really still very segregationist oriented. Well, you know the history of Polk County because of your research; there were a lot of racial overtones. This was, most of the labor unions usually had the fear of the encroachment of the blacks coming in and taking over their prerogatives. It was a concern and you saw it in the phosphate and mine workers.

D: Was there a conscious effort to race-bait, in other words, to scare people in those years?

K: That wasn't the primary thing in the Smathers election; I was drifting off into Collins. But in the Smathers election, George wasn't a racist as such, but people by the standards then would qualify as racist in the sense that clearly they believed in segregation. George believed in segregation. Once after Brown vs. Board everybody rethought their positions. But most of your Southern politicians, if you look back, and there were varying kinds, but there were a few who always thought segregation had to go, but there were many who just accepted it.

D: This is 1950, Claude Pepper wasn't going around saying we needed to desegregate, I'm sure. So this is not really discussed but I am sure there were undertones or

overtones of it. In other words, Smathers is going to be safer when it comes to these issues.

K: Smathers's campaign in the 50s, Roosevelt's New Deal, and that was what the campaign was all about.

D: Are we going to go further or are we going to pull back? Are we going to go further with it [the New Deal] or move back a little bit?

K: Just like when Ollie Edmunds ran against Pepper the time before, during the war, I guess.

D: Yes, that would've been '44.

K: Yes, cause I was gone then, I just remember reading about it. And it was an extension of that. A lot of people in the business community had been involved with that. My father-in-law had been a strong Pepper supporter because he believed in the New Deal. My father never believed in the New Deal. He hated Franklin Roosevelt from the very beginning. I had to write him a letter when Roosevelt died. That was 1945 and wrote him that I was saddened by him dying. Roosevelt had been dying for a long time and really never should have run. But anyway, my father wrote me back, and of course, this was the only president I ever knew, he wrote back and said, "He was the only president you ever knew, I understand that, but he was bad from the beginning and he was bad the day he died." He didn't move an inch!

D: Do you remember Truman getting involved in that election?

K: You mean Pepper – Smathers? No, I don't remember any of that.

D: They didn't like each other very well, I think. He and Pepper. He should have been Vice President instead of Truman, probably, and yet, President, but that's my own thought here. We have covered a lot here today.