## CENTER FOR FLORIDA HISTORY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: EDGAR H. PRICE, JR.

INTERVIEWER: JAMES M. DENHAM

PLACE: BRADENTON, FLORIDA

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M= James M. Denham (Mike) E= Ed Price

E: [Resume discussion of 1968 senatorial race between Leroy Collins and Ed Gurney] Well, it was a trying and difficult time because it was very hard to raise money, for one thing, and you had people all over the state who had never voted Republican in their OLYHV DQG\HW WKH RQfffyeld still of the state the hally of the state of

was nominated, and then I was a delegate at Atlantic City when Lyndon was nominated after Jack Kennedy was gone. I got to know Jack Kennedy when he came down to speak to Gator Growl. George Smathers was his best man when he got married, you know. And, of course, Kennedy and Smathers were good friends forever. When I went to the Kennedy nomination out there as a district delegate, Governor Collins was the chairman. He did a magnificent job out there.

M: That was 1960.

E: Yeah.

M: You can see the newsreels and you can see Governor Collins up there.

governor Florida has ever had, and probably Reubin Askew, Lawton, and Bob Graham, followed in his footsteps. Reubin Askew looked upon Roy Collins as a father; I mean he was his mentor. More young people went into politics in this state because of Roy & ROOLD MID ADMINISTRY APPROVED WITH A ROUTH AND STRUCTURE AND WITH A ROUTH AND STRUCTURE AND WITH A ROUTH AND STRUCTURE AND WITH ADDITIONAL ASSETTION ASSE

- 0 : HOO OHW¶V FXW LW KHUH DQG WKH QH[W WLPH ZH PHH you got the hankering to run for office.
- ( 7KDW¶VZKHQ, ttbHLabwobol\Belfore\Mhaff, Ohfad/khrlown him through 6HQDWRU+ROODQGEXWGLGQ¶WUHDOO\GHYHORSDQ\FOR Legislature at the same time in 1958.

M: This is James Denham once again at the office of Ed Price in Bradenton, Florida.

To G D \ L V \$ X J X V W D Q G , ¶ P Z L W K (G 3 U L F H R Q F H D J D L C of his life and his memories of Lawton Chiles. The last day we were together, you discussed your early childhood and military service, and your business life up to about

ZKHQ\RX GHFLGHG WR UXQ IRU SXEOLF RIILFH 7RGD\,¶ and get some of your memories of Lawton Chiles. But before I do that, there are three SHRSOH WKDW ZRXOG KDYH FRPH LQWR WKdHas& you WXUH EHIRU about. Ed Ball is one, and I think we discussed a little bit about him. And two African Americans that had a very important impact in Florida; Robert Saunders and, of course, +DUU\ 7 ORRUH /HW¶V VWDUW ZLWKKQQJ%DPDPDDDAXWWWLDM¶GLVFXVVLRQ WKDW \RX¶G OLNH WR JR RYHU"

, GRQ¶W UHPHPEHU H[DFWO\ ZKDW ZH WDONHG DERXW had known him well in the early days and I met Mr. Ball when I was fairly young. I was born in Jacksonville and lived there from time to time but I guess it was only after I became involved in business after World War II that I really called upon him to be helpful in some ways. I think one of the things I remember most about him during the war, and I might have told you this, was when I was stationed at Apalachicola, in the old Army Air Corps. Mr. Ball gave us his suite at Wakulla Springs so anybody from Florida could use his suite any weekend we wanted to go down there. He provided us with meals and everything else, which we thought was great. After the war, when I first started working back in Manatee County as manager of the Florida Gladiolus Growers Association, I was trying to develop some packaging to handle every size glad. Mr. Ball, through DuPont in Jacksonville, owned the big St. Joe Paper Company, and he invited me to come to St. , ZHQW XŠ DQG VWD\HG ZLWK KLP DW WKH FKDWHDX V there. Mr. Ball, notwithstanding all the stories you hear about him, was the most courteous man, a real gentleman to be around. He always liked to have a little touch of %RXUERQ DQG, GRQ¶W GULQN EXW KH GLGQ¶W OHW WKDW up there. And they helped us in the St. Joe Paper Company to develop this box, which we later used in the business. Then, after I became Executive Vice President of

GLGQ¶W KDYH DQ\ FDVK DYDLODEOH 2XU FDV KablyORZ ZDV W inversed 1:2. I went to see Ed Ball at the Florida Bank in Jacksonville. He had just built the new bank building and was so proud of it he took me all over the building. The elevators were big enough to drive a truck onto, and he had all this beautiful marble from Italy. He set up a financing plan for me with all of the Ball banks throughout Florida. 7 KH\ KDG D EXQFK RI  $\mu$ HP LQ WKRVH GD\V ZKHUH ZH FRXOG financing without having to put any funds in the bank. They became our primary source

a commitment from all of the newspapers, daily and weekly, so when it came time for qualifying, nobody qualified against me, nor did they qualify against Jim Haley, and they wrote it up in the papers that Jim Haley and I both were elected unopposed.

M: Wow.

E: It was fantastic to me, in the biggest senatorial district in Florida at that time, to be elected unopposed. It was a real honor, and I appreciate it.

M: That was 1958. So your first session would have been right after Christmas.

Ε

E: Reubin and I were elected at the same time. They were elected to the House and I was elected to the Senate. Reubin came over to the Senate in time for me to serve with KLP /DZWRQ GLGQ $\P$ W FRPH RYHU  $\mu$ WLO , JRW RXW LQ  $\P$ 

M: I know that both Houses met pretty well separately most of the time but did you have a chance to interact socially?

E: Oh, definitely. I had interacted politically because much of the legislature, a lot of people or at least some of the media wanted to have, felt like we only needed one House in the legislature. I always felt you needed two. Where you might not win in the Senate, you could make it public and it could get down to the House and, at that time, get a chance to get it killed. Lawton was one of those we always depended on to do that. We met together as Senators and House members. Sometimes we had joint committee meetings. I can recall very definitely when I was trying so hard as Chairman of Higher Education to get the Johns Committee killed. I got Lawton to help me out at the House down there and Wilbur Bo \ G \ / D Z W R Q \ V E H V W I U L H Q G Z D V L Q W join together. Wilbur was in my legislative delegation so we had a lot of things in common. Whatever legislation came up, it was not unusual for us to get together in a social atmosphere and discuss what was going on.

E: Many of the lobbyists and a large number of legislators lbyi9

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M: Any kin to Mallory Horne?

KH ZDVQ¶W 7KH 3UHVV &RUSV VDW ULJKW DERYH XV a little glass enclosure up there, and when Verle got ready to make his speech that he JDYH HYHU\\HDU 5DHEXUQ ZRXOG KHDU DERXW LW DQG KH supporting in the gallery up there. Verle would go up to the water cooler by the well of the Senate, turn around and look to be sure the press was all in place up there, and then KH¶G JHW XS DQG JLYH WKLV VSHHFK +H¶G WDON DERXW W VKDUNV ZLWK WKHLU 3WHHWK RI GLDPRQGV´ DQG 3YHLQV RI drain the gold and every piece of change RXW RI DOO WKHVH OLWWOH SHRSO just give a tremendous array. He was a great orator, really was. And oratory was still a EXVLQHVV LQ WKRVH GD\V \$QG KH¶G SRLQW XS LQ WKH JD great battle that went on between some senators and lobbyists, and that type of thing. \$QG 9HUOH ZDV DJDLQ KH ZDV RQH RI WKH PRVW NQRZOHG fine legislator. Like Jack Matthews was known as a constitutional lawyer; he knew the Constitution backwards and forwards and one thing you had to know in the Senate, of ZHUH WKH UXOHV RI WKH 6HQDWH \$QG 7XUQHU 'D of my real good friends; he knew the rules better than anybody in there. And by getting up in the Chair, why t KH\ FRXOG WXUQ WKH FUDQN RQ VRPH RI WKRVI WKURXJK OLNH WKDW LI \RX GLGQ¶W NQRZ WKH UXOHV DQG

0 : HOO WKH QH[W\HDU ZDV D YHU\ LPSRUWDQW JRYH the big Kennedy/Nixon presidential election.

E: I was a district delegate to the Kennedy nomination in Los Angeles.

M: In 1960, Doyle Carlton ran against Farris Bryant, or at least that was the runoff. Can \RX FRPHQW D OLWWOH ELW RQ WKDW UDFH RU 'R\OH¶V FD

E: Well, I gave the kickoff speech for Doyle in Wauchula. We had more people there for DQ\ NLFNRII WKDW¶V HYHU EHHQ KDG LQ )ORULGD :H EURX County over here. I introduced Doyle and, as I say I had known his father, Governor Carlton, VR ZHOO DQG , ¶G NQRZQ 'R\OH VLQFH KH ZDV D ER\ W WKH OHJLVODWXUH ZDV D UHDO MR\ µFDXVH 'R\OH ZDV D VW We had a lot of things in common. We both were old Army Air Corps, and both Baptist deacons, and just good friends. I believed in the things that he believed in. TV had become popular then. Politics were changing. When I ran, it was door to door and meet the people and that type of thing, ads in the newspaper and so forth. But politics had EHHQ FRPLQJ DORQJ 79 KDG FRPH LQWR EHLQJ DQG 'R\OH come across good. He got the support of probably 90% of the daily newspapers in the 6WDWH RI)ORULGD DQG VWLOO JRW EHDW Ithan BOULV KDG RC VHFRQGV WKDW¶V DOO LW ZDV DQG KH MXVW UDQ LW RYHU 6RPH RI 'R\OH¶V DGV ZHUH QRW JRRG DQG KH KD in the campaign that were not good. A lot of people worked hard for him, including me, and I was a member of the Senate. When you go and work hard for another candidate,

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0 , WKLQN LW PLJKW KDYH EHHQ ¶ EHFDXVH LW ZDV WKH because Burns had to run again and High was in the picture again.

E: Well, Burns ran against, let me see, Hayden. What was the relationship between Hayden and Doyle Carlton?

M: , GRQ¶W WKLQN 'R\OH & DUOWRQ UDQ DJDLQ DIWHU

E: Oh, I remember now, what I was thinking about. Hayden definitely ran against Bob High, Robert King High.

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E: Well, we helped him lose.

M: And then Kirk, of course, comes in.

E: Representative Wilbur Boyd in the House and me in the Senate, I wrote a story that

E: Spessard Holland, Governor Holland, was a good friend, and I think he introduced Lawton to me, before Lawton went into the legislature, when I was serving on an DJULFXOWXUH FRPPLWWHH , ¶ PhdS by what Weithher Walkellahld brW ZDV LQ /DI:LQWHU +DYHQ , FDQ¶W UHPHPEHU ZKLFK \$QG KH LQWURG got to meet Rhea at that time. That was my first chance.

0 6R WKDW ZRXOG KDYH EHHQ SUREDEO\ LQ WKH PLGGOH μ

E: Yeah.

M: Okay. Do you remember when you heard that he was going to run for office, were you surprised by that, and did you know Roy Searles who he challenged?

E: Yeah, I knew Roy.

M: Can you comment a little bit on him?

E: Roy was a lobbyist and one that I did no W DJUHH ZLWK DW DOO < ¶ NQRZ WUHPHQGRXV OREE\ LQ WKH 6WDWH RI )ORULGD«

M: He was a lobbyist turned legislator.

( 7KDW¶V ULJKW \$QG HYHU\WKLQJ ZH KDG HYHU KHDUG D that back during the Dan McCarty campaign Lawton was involved in that along with us

E: Well, Malcolm, you know, is the editor of The Tallahassee Democrat DQG, ¶PJRLQJWRJLYH KLPFUHGLW ZKHUHFUHGLW LVRCOXPH¶V,SBVGWQ¶RWQDVJU, GREHOLHYH WKDW KHZDV KLV RZQ SHUVRQ \$QG KHWRO always agree with that because he joined hands many times with some of the legislation that we thought was some of the worse legislation.

M: Were there any other people like him, say that wrote for The Herald or The St. Pete Times?

E: Well, Jack McDermott wrote for The Miami Herald and did a good job. He was fair.

2 I FRXUVH KH DOVR VXSSRUWHG VRPH RI WHKCHI w ScRni© LFLHV RI privilege as a newsman. But I think Allen Morris, again in his columns, did a lot to talk about the people involved and I know he wrote several columns that I treasure to this day.

M: When was the first time you met Rhea? Do you remember the first time you met Rhea?

- ( , WKLQN , PHW 5KHD MXVW DERXW WKH VDPH WLPH , PHW know her until they were up in the legislature. And, of course, I knew her brother in Miami who was an architect. I was involved on the Board of Control when we were trying to get Shands Hospital built and all that kind of stuff, and looking at architects and builders and everything else.
- 0 1RZ LI\RX¶YH DOUHDG\ PHQWLRQHG WKLV LQ WKH FRQW but, can you remember anything that you and Lawton worked personally on together in terms of legislation during the years you were in the Senate?

E: I think the most important things we worked together on were education bills at the Board of Regents, that type of thing, and also the tremendous support and help he gave us in combating what we felt was an evil Burns Bond Bill. But all of the legislation having WR GR ZLWK DJULFXOWXUH ZKLFK ZDV DV IDU DV ,¶P FRQFF

VXSHULQWHQGHQW¶V RIILFH DQG WKH VFKolkReRitDatERDUG XQWL they wanted resolved.

M: It was almost a George Wallace standing in the schoolhouse door kind of thing, right?

E: Exactly.

M: Okay. In 1970, were you surprised when you heard that Lawton Chiles was going to run for the United States Senate?

E: As I recall, when Lawton was a younger man, he really admired Senator Holland tremendously. And Senator Holland was very good to Lawton, was kind to him, helped him, and Lawton really felt strongly about what was happening in the country, as he did in the State of Florida. And so I felt that, more than anything else, when he decided to run, he had discussed this thing pretty thoroughly with Senator Holland, with Chesterfield Smith, with some others like Burke Kibler and people like that, and they all felt a little dubious as to whether or not he could get elected, but they felt that certainly he was entitled to run, and they ended up supporting him.

M: Yes. Oh, Farris! Farris Bryant, of course.

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E: Charlie. Charles Canady, probably more than anybody else. And we all knew Charley. As I recall, when Lawton first decided on this, I heard from Charles Canady, I think, before I did from Lawton. But I think he was the one who put together all of the staff and everything else. And Rhea, of course, had family relationships in Dade County with her brother. She knew a lot of people. And Lawton, after all, had served with OHJLVODWRUVIURP DOORYHU WKH 6WDWH RI)ORULGD VR on them. And so many of his strong campaign supporters who were doing the nuts and bolts work were legislators or former legislators.

M: Now, Jack Pridgen is another name that comes up. Do you have any memory of him, working with him or talking to him?

E: Not too much. Knew him but that was all.

M: Now, who would you say, in Bradenton/Manatee County, besides yourself, would have been really behind him?

E: Well, I think the strongest person behind him was Wilbur Boyd. I mean, because of their close friendship and, I mean they were like brothers more than anything else, and after that, why, we had Joe Bill Rood former State Senator, and Bill Grimes, former State Representative, and outstanding lawyers here. We had different people; anybody that had served with him and anybody who had supported him in his state races supported him here. I had a list of 250 women in Manatee County that I contacted and that many of them were highly supportive of him because one of the things I worked on in the legislature strongly was to support the junior college system in Florida, helped Roy & ROOLQVZLWK μHP 8 O Wattons Φasset Cor capitaRow and Superasions for Manatee Junior College from the Senate Appropriations Committee, and Lawton worked strongly with us in the House on that to help get those through. Well, we had the support of education folks here, both K through 12 and junior college, and people from the University of Florida. The Gators here, they got out and supported him. So, I mean, he just had a whole raft of people here that were helping him in that way.

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0 \$QGZKDW, ¶YH UHDG DERXW WKH FDPSDLJQ WKH WKHPH government is out of touch with the people and my goal here is to meet the people WKURXJK ZDONLQJ WKH VWDWH DQG WR VRPHKRZ EULQJ:DV

E: : HOO KH KDG D MRE WR GR WKHUH DQG WKDW ZDV WR EH insult the memory of Senator Holland. And he was clear about that, when he said that they are not dealing with issue people and they are not taking care of the people and so forth. He defined it as to who was not doing it and he put the burden on certain people, and certainly put Spessard Holland into the category of one who had tried to help the people, like when he got rid of the poll tax. Why, Spessard Holland did something that was very difficult to do in those days and helped the African American people more than anybody else.

M: So obviously the teachers were really for Lawton and they had been a real supporter of his all along. Do you remember the campaigns that Fred Schulz and Farris Bryant were running at the same time in the primary? Do you remember anything specifically about their campaigns?

E: Well, I think Farris stuck pretty well to some of the positions he had previously taken.

M: Experience.

E: Yeah. And Fred just ran on his track record as being a Speaker of the House and that type of thing, and being a successful businessman in Jacksonville, which he was and is, and Farris, I think, had pretty well used up a lot of his popularity with some of the folks that had heard him before.

M: You mentioned the walk here in Manatee County and meeting him at the bridge and all that. Can you remember any other specific highlights of the walk, any of the places that you would have gone to out of Manatee County with the walk?

( : HOO \¶ NQRZ ZH¶G FRPH WKURXJK D OLWWOH VHFWLRQ EDVLFDOO\ EODFN DUHD 7KHUH¶V D IHOOD¶ RXW WKHUH QI the Mayor of Rubonia on the filling station out there. When Lawton came through, well then all the people gathered around and the Mayor of Rubonia would come and speak for him, and that type of thing. And he was looked upon by people in minorities as someone who would stand up for them and would try to help them arrive at equality, and those types of things. So I think that he was able to get votes from people who normally GLGQ¶W YRWH DQG DEOH WR HQFRXUDJH WKHP WR UHJLVW

Nixon canned Ehrlichman and Haldeman, so I called a recess of the dinner and went up in Sam Gibbons hotel room upstairs with others and we sat up there and listened to it on TV and, when they got through with it, when Nixon got through with his speech, then we went back down, reconvened, and finished out our dinner.

M: Wow.

E: \$QG WKDW ZDV DQ LQWHUHVWLQJ H[SHULHQFH /RFDOO\

M: Do you remember working with him on issues that were important for the Citrus Industry? Do you remember talking to him from time to time?

E: Yes, we had trouble with tariffs and that type of thing. We always called on Lawton to be helpful to us, and he always was.

M: I was reading press clippings again yesterday, and there was OPIC, O-P-I-C, off RYHUVHDV LW¶VVRPH NLQG RI RUJDQL]DWLRQ WKDW ZDV S overseas or something, and they were funding orange citrus overseas, and he raised a ruckus about that, I think. Was that something that you remember, those kinds of things?

( , GRQ¶W UHPHPEHU WKDW WRR PXFK WR WHOO \RX WKH were trying to find ways to create markets throughout Europe, that he was very helpful. And of course the Citrus Commission was involved in all of this, and the Florida Department of Citrus, and he always helped us on anything having to do with agriculture, it was important. And then of course, the great work that he did in the Senate started there with the children, with infant mortality and helping the children, but later on he just, like his last session as governor, he did a tremendous job to set up things that would go on for our lifetime, and these were in regard to children.

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E: Well, I went to Washington a number of other times. I served on the board while I was with Tropicana. I served on the boards of the Florida Power tiSacjANExuOaDKRQ

M: Now, Lawton was never one, as far as I can tell, to campaign for people or against people very much, or to bring people in to campaign for him. In 1976, when Jimmy Carter ran against President Ford, do you remember if he was active at all in that campaign?

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take out of there is, he became a national champion for children, and that was the JUHDWHVW OHJDF\ DV IDU DV , ¶P FRQFHUQHG

M: Even at the national level.

E: Oh yeah, while he was there he helped create the National Commission on Infant Mortality while he was in the United States Senate, and that was just a precursor of the things he would do as he later had an opportunity to serve as Governor of the State.

M: Were you surprised when you first learned that he was not going to run again in 1988?

( :HOO \RX NQRZ KH ZDV JRLQJ WR UXQ \$QG ,¶G DOUHD (and had raised quite a bit, then he made the decision not to run, so I wrote a letter, put him really on the spot. He kidded me about it later. I wrote a letter to all the people that ,¶G UDLVHG PRQH\IURP DQG , VDLG ³, WKLQN \RX NQRZ 6H that the last thing he would do would be to take money on false pretenses and I know WKDW DV VRRQ DV WKH\ VHWWOH XS WKHVH OLWWOH H[SHQPLQLPXP WKDW KH¶OO JLYH HYHU\ERG\ D VKDUH RI WKHLU to Lois and Charles Canady. I WKLQN &DQDG\ OLNHG WR EOHZ D IXVH EX Lawton. And he did, he sent all the money back to the people and what not. So it did VXUSULVH PH WKDW KH ZDVQ¶W JRLQJ WR UXQ DJDLQ %XW him. He called me and I WDONHG WR KLP DQG KH VDLG ³, MXVW UHD (ZKHUH,¶P VR XSVHW DERXW WKH LQDELOLW\ WR GR DQ\WKL FRXQWU\ µWLO ´KH VDLG ³, MXVW GRQ¶W ZDQW DQ\PRUH R you.

M: Sure. Sure did.

E: « when he and Rhea first went up there. But it surprised me.

) ,W MXVW FRQVXPHG KLP ,W MXVW EDVLFDOO\ ZRUH KLP

M: Yeah.

E: And Rhea probably had somethin J WR GR ZLWK LW  $\mu$ FDXVH DQ\ DFWLRQ VRPHWKLQJ WR GR ZLWK LW \$QG VKH¶V JHWWLQJ TXLWH D down here in our county.

M: Obviously, that speaks to his frustration with the budget process. Did he ever express any opinions of Ronald Reagan? Did he hold Ronald Reagan responsible for those kinds of problems? Did he like Reagan on a personal level and not like his policies?

E: Lawton was not one, at any time in the State legislature or as United States Senator RU DV \*RYHUQRU WR PDNH WRR PDQ\ SXEOLF SURQRXQFHPH OLNH  $\mu$ HP RU WKH UHDVRQ KH GLGQ¶W OLNH  $\mu$ HP RU DQ\WK would work against them and do everything he could, but as far as Reagan was

0 2 N D \ & D Q \ R X H Y D O X D W H K L V I L U V W W H U P  $^{"}$ , Q R W K H U Z Initiative come into full force within the first term as governor?

E: Well, he started working on it when he was governor the first time.

M: And the tobacco?

E: No, that was his last term that the tobacco issue really surfaced, and he felt like one of the greatest things that happened to him was the Florida Kid Care Act. He did that in the 1998 legislature, and that expanded to a Florida kids program statewide and provided healthcare coverage to nearly 256,000 Florida children. And ever sinc,000 Fl(a)8(k)-10(i)5-Rf

blemish on his reputation of any kind, so I think he was a good governor, a good United States Senator, and a good human being.

0 \*UHDW , WKLQN WKDW¶V SUREDEO\ D JRRG ZD\ WR HQG tape)