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Interviewee: Ben Hill Griffin

Interviewer: Vernon Peebles

Date: June 15, 2000

[W: stands for unidentified woman's voice.]

G: Where were we?

P: Well, we had talked about the Ben Hill Griffin Enterprises in some degree. We want to go into that in a little bit more detail. So, today, I am going to start with that. It might be a little bit repetitious but at the same time, give you an opportunity to expand some on what you said before. Ready?

This is a continuation of the interviews of Ben Hill Griffin, III. It is at the Peace River Ranch which is south of Zolfo Springs and includes a good bit of the Peach river and extends to the east to US 17. The date is August 15, 2000. Well, I am not sure exactly where we left off but where I want to start is to ask you some questions about the overall operation of the Ben Hill Griffin Enterprises. I think that there were or are, at least in 1957, Ben Hill Griffin, Inc., Griffin Cannery, Inc., Griffin Groves, Inc., Griffin Citrus Service Company and Orange Co. Is that correct?

G: [It is] to a degree. Dad had about eleven corporations that he was operating at the end of the 1950s, which included a number of different entities. He found that very difficult to manage cash flows and so forth and so he merged them all together. So, at that point, it all became Ben Hill Griffin, Inc., which included the fertilizer plant, the concentrate plant, the grove care-taking, the fresh fruit packing house. He had a cannery; we called it hot pack. That is just plain, packing juice in a can. That was in Bartow, FL. We also packed quite a bit of sections. We would **sectionize** oranges and grapefruit and put them in a can and distribute them, basically around the United States. The government would buy some, of course, which would go to the Armed Forces. As labor moved along and so forth, we had to cancel that portion of our business. It became too expensive to operate and the profitability had pretty much gone to a blank level. So went Ben Griffin, Inc. Cannery. So went the Florida Citrus Industry. The industry, itself, cancelled out.

P: Was the enterprise ever involved in the retail side of the citrus production?

G: Yes, sir, very much, so. We had our own labels that we sold in the New York markets, Chicago. Back in those days, the basic product was what they call the Cinderella product, which was concentrated orange juice. Now, we have a lot of chilled [juice] because of the convenience, primarily. So, there is not as much concentrate per se, put up for the retail trading. We packed six, twelve, [or]

thirty-two ounce [cans] and then we put the different labels, called a private label.

We were a private, label packer. So, somebody like Winn-Dixie or A&P, they would contract with our company for so many hundreds of thousands of cases per year. And then, when we would pack that, and have that product to them and then they would take it out of our inventory. [That would] Pretty much clear up that inventory before the next season started. Along with that, we had our own labels that kind of fit with Publix and A&P's and the Winn-Dixie and at one time, there was a chain in New York called **Bohack**. We would take their branded product but they would also want a private label like ours to also be in their consumers' selection. And of course, they would price ours at a lower price than they would price their own label. So, we had quite a significant business in people who would buy our labels. Our labels were like Sunsip Orange Juice, Sunsip Grapefruit Juice. We wanted to go national but we were not that successful. Chicago, New York and the eastern seaboard, we had a product called **Orangenip**. **Orangenip** was a product probably before its time. It was packed under a formula which had more of a taste preference for an all day drink rather than orange juice. Orange juice sometimes can be heavy tasting to someone at noon or at three o'clock in the afternoon. So, **Orangenip** was a product that my Dad and our processing group came up that was pleasing all day long. You know, you could pour it over ice. It was a generation jumper. It had the young people, the older people. Whoever. Late in the afternoon, they might want to mix something in with that. I don't know. I wasn't there to observe. I know that they liked the lighter taste which we called Orangenip. We advertized it. It cost us a lot of money -- several millions of dollars each year. But we never could break into the big time. I guess you might think of it like a movie star or some entertainer. We had certain hot spots that we did really well like Chicago and Atlanta. Of course, going into the New York market, that was a *biggie* and we didn't quite have enough advertizing budget to be able to make an impact on the New York market. We moved that product for -- oh, some ten or eleven years. We made enough on it to pay for the advertizing and return something back to us as growers. Like I said, we were never able to break into the big time.

P: In those areas where you were successful -- were those where you spent more money advertizing?

G: I don't know. There was something about the Midwest. They identified with it. We had all kinds of promotional materials. Do you remember the old lemonade stand where the kids are out there? We would send six of these wrappers off of our product and we would send the young folks a very fine, built-up carton -- a stand, already printed up and so forth to sell Orangenip on the street corners or in their neighborhood and that sort of thing. And so that was very successful and helped to get our advertizing message out. The parents appreciated it. I think we called it like free enterprise. We would send a little packet along to

show them what their cost was going to be; what they needed to add to their cost to make a profit but don't gouge the public. Be successful but be successful and don't be over eager on the profit side. You will stay in business longer that way.

P: Good advice. When did concentrate become a major factor in the citrus business and how critical was that to the overall success of citrus production?

G: 1950 was when concentrate was born. Prior to that, to be able to pack orange juice, you had to heat it up to the point to make it safe [from] bacteria, etc. and to make it last. But when you put it through that heat process, it didn't taste as good. So, the scientists at the citrus scientific group, IFAS, [Institute of Food and Agricultural Science] out of Lake Alfred, (there were two professors there), they were the ones who invented Florida orange juice. And the way they invented it was that they discovered how they could take fresh orange juice, put it in an evaporator so that it would lower the heat process, they could put the heat to it in this evaporator and the end product – it was safe; it had been through the heat treatment. However, it did not lose its flavor. So, boy, when that hit, the Florida citrus industry was a boon. That is why they call it a Cinderella product. And Cinderella hasn't lost her slippers, yet. She is still running. Prior to that the Florida citrus industry was primarily fresh packed and the juice was kind of a byproduct. It was okay. It was good. It didn't taste as well. Quality concerns were not adhered to as much as they are now. I am not talking about quality as far as health, I am talking about quality as far as something enjoyable to drink. So, like grapefruit juice, today, in our business, the ratio is everything. Basically when you buy Tropicana or Florida's Natural or something, that product is generally an orange juice that is running about a fourteen ratio -- fourteen and a half ratio. So, the higher the ratio, the sweeter the product. And the same is true in grapefruit juice. However, back then, they would be packing like seven or seven and a half ratio on grapefruit and gosh, that stuff tastes like battery acid. Today, we pack it at eight and a half to nine, sometimes ten ratio. It is much more palatable; that is why grapefruit juice has done well. The industry, itself, had put in regulations to assure a certain quality would be packed. Of course the marketers have found that they are not getting ahead by packing a lower ratio of grapefruit. They need to get into the tastebuds of, I would say, nine ratio to ten. If you like grapefruit, you would love it at that point.

P: How big a factor was the citrus concentrate in providing a market that was more constant, for instance for the grower and for the marketers?

G: Florida concentrate, actually was a fantastic invention for the Florida industry. It took us, not only to a higher level (there is no limit). I remember in the late 1950s, I was at a citrus seminar up in Ocala. Basically, it was a grower's...they would bring in these great CEO's and so forth. There was a guy named Jack Fox. He was President of Minute Maid. I will never forget it because our

industry at that time was reaching 100,000,000 boxes and everybody was scared to death that if we ever produced 100,000,000, everybody would go broke. You know, prices would go in the gutter and stay there. Well, his topic was we need 200,000,000 boxes. And that blew everybody's mind. They were worried and scared about 100,000,000. Now, you see that this was the late 1950s. So, concentrate hadn't been there but, what, seven years. Well, Jack Fox got up there and he opened the eyes of the grower. They are not marketers; they are growers. And he says, here is why we need 200,000,000. We are not in the hotels. We are not in the hospitals. We are not in the schools, vending machines, etc. We are just packing to go in the grocery store. So, expand your vision. Understand that the opportunities are there. And of course, he was right. He helped lead Minute Maid to be the success that it is today. And of course, today, we are not only thinking about the United States; we are thinking about international markets. So we are an international product now rather than just something for the United States. It is a big industry. We just got a report yesterday – we have a lady, by the way, her name is **Stigert**. She runs a private estimating opportunity. You have to be a member of her group. Her group reported 247,000,000 boxes for what she has predicted for this coming year. USDA will come out October 10. They will have their own estimate, which is taken from samples and sizing fruits, stripping trees, etc. Putting the whole matrix together – and, of course, they have been doing this for many years and it is great service to the industry. Their estimate is generally very good, within three percent or four percent. So, that helps the industry to know how many boxes that we have, how to approach the marketing, what kind of advertising the Florida Department of Citrus needs to put forward to help market our product. It helps our government, our state as well as federal to see the opportunities for export. So, it reaches a lot of different corners.

P: How sophisticated is foreign competition in production and marketing? How critical is that to the success of the domestic producers?

G: Primarily, our foreign production is basically Brazil. Brazil got into the citrus business about the early 1960s. That particular industry has grown extensively since that time and they are now the world leaders in total production. Brazil is. Brazil is blessed and yet they are hampered. They are blessed that their orange grove acreage area does not freeze. They just don't have freezes. We are subtropical in Florida, as we all know. But in Brazil, they don't have to worry about cold weather. But that is a problem to them because, in my opinion, they will never equal the quality of the Florida citrus industry because they don't come in bloom all at one time. They will have a bloom and then a month later, they will get a rain and it will bloom again. I have been down there several times. As a matter of fact, I am going [to Brazil] the twenty-third of this month. I need to get down there to Brazil and see some of my friends and kind of take a look-see for myself. It is a big industry. So, I am not kidding myself. I am not going to be

estimating their crop or anything. But it is good to keep up with your competition. And a lot of times it is good to sit at their home base rather than talking on the phone. Or they come up here. So, I'll spend about four days down there. I try to do that about every three to four years. They cannot produce the quality of juice that we can. They have got like five to six blooms on a given row at the same time. Some of it is early maturity; [at] other [times, it] is way beyond maturity. We call that senility. If an orange gets too high in ratio, over twenty or twenty-two, the taste is not acceptable to you. It is an old taste. They have to harvest all of their fruit all at one time. So, when they do, they are blending right off their given trees. And thus, they don't have the opportunity that Florida has [since] it is subtropical. However, we are susceptible to freezes. But when spring comes – March – bam! That is when you smell the orange blossoms and that is a fine time of year. So, we have a uniform crop that we can work with. We can grow and care-take, properly to bring that particular variety to maturity, and harvest it at the proper time. Once that fruit is harvested, basically, we want to make sure that load of fruit is juiced probably within twenty-four and no more than thirty-five hours. So it is fresh delivered; it is fresh packed.

P: There have been some efforts in Central America to produce citrus.

G: Yes.

P: And some Florida growers have tried to produce citrus in Central America, particularly in Belize. That doesn't seem to work out. Is there any particular reason?

G: I just have my opinion. I don't know whether I am right or not. They are burdened by the same thing that Brazil is burdened with. That area of the country gets a tremendous amount of rain. The trees become very, very vigorous. However, that does something to the fruit. So, that brings down their quality. Are they going to stay there? I think so. Are they going to expand? I don't think they are going to expand greatly. But there will continue to be a product coming out of those areas, those countries.

W: I am wondering if you have any opinion on the impact of NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] on Florida citrus?

G: I certainly do. NAFTA was a really rough thing for the Florida citrus industry. Actually, the agriculture communities of Florida took a big, big hit with NAFTA and still do. NAFTA has taken away our.... We were known as the breadbasket of America around the southern end, particularly Lake Okeechobee and that rich soil down there, producing lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers and all kinds of row crops. We are no longer there, as an industry. That is gone.

There is a little resemblance of it left, Naples area, Collier County used to be a big county. But when NAFTA came along, we did not have a fair playing field. We were promised, but that never happened. Somewhere in the big picture, the federal government tells us that as Mexico -- their economy grows, etc. they will be self-consuming their production. But they are able to go over there and produce all of their tomatoes, lettuce, all of your vegetables -- they are entirely on a different playing field than we are. They have child labor. They don't have OSHA [Occupational Safety and Hazards Administration]. They don't have government inspection. They are able to use chemicals that would be unheard of to be able to be use in the state of Florida. But it is legal for them to and so they are able to produce it, ship it across the border and a tomato is a tomato. It is red and people eat it. But not much comes from Florida anymore. [There is a] very narrow window, today. And tomatoes, steak tomatoes -- our companies have never grown any of that, Vernon. We have delivered fertilizer and had customers that were in the vegetable growing business but that was never our forte. A given crop of steak tomatoes is a tremendous investment. For one crop, I have been informed that you can have \$1500 per acre in production costs. So, somewhere at the end, when you pick those tomatoes, you better have something that will return, at least your cost of production. NAFTA, Mexico -- that is not possible, anymore.

P: What is the situation with the potential opening of the market in China?

G: It is a wonderful opportunity. It is just like the Japanese market, those people (obviously, there are millions in China) -- orange juice and grapefruit juice attracts and supports the tastebuds of anybody. You can go into some place where they have never had any orange juice and give them an orange or some orange juice, and they can't get enough of it. So, hopefully China will continue to open its doors and I think that those consumers over there will -- not that China doesn't produce any citrus. They do. But they don't have the ability, apparently, to produce the quality and get it to the consumer. So, as those opportunities move forward, fresh as well as processed juice, I think that we are going to have a lot of export into that market.

P: A couple of questions about problems in the Florida citrus industry -- first of all, related to the Mediterranean Fruit Fly. How significant has that problem been in the last few years?

G: Well, it is always something that we have a watchful eye out for. We can have the Mediterranean Fruit Fly -- there are a number of flies that can get into Florida through our different ports of entry. Florida is an international state. We have people coming from all over the world who want to come to Florida. They want to see the beaches; they want to see the birds; they want to see Disney World. So, all of your major airports, including Fort Myers, they are just booming.

Orlando is booming; Tampa's airport is booming. They just can't seem to keep pace with the number of passengers that are coming in. Each one of those passengers presents a potential problem that the Mediterranean Fruit Fly or some other foreign disease could get into Florida. We also have, at this point in time, Asian Canker, which is a bacterial disease that pretty much -- it doesn't necessarily kill the trees but it takes them out of competitive production. It will reduce your production, probably to 15% of what it should be to be profitable. So, the state and the federal government you know, they are our lines of defense, as an industry. We can't police that. We must depend on Florida Department of Agriculture, Bob Crawford, who is the Commissioner of Agriculture, now, and Doyle Conner, prior to him. They have their own inspection programs that help to greatly protect our industry, not just citrus, everything. So, if we do have an outbreak of something like Mediterranean Fruit Fly, they have got traps around. You will notice and reflect back, most of those finds are within five miles of an international airport. They don't pop up in northwest Florida. They are right there from the tourists. They don't realize it but they will say, do you have anything to claim? No. But they are coming to see their daughter or their daddy or momma and they have brought a little tree from home that everybody loves. It is in the purse or it is in the suitcase, all packed up neatly. And they don't realize the potential that particular plant -- maybe it is an orchid -- who knows. But any of those items represent a great threat to our industry, not only citrus; it could be strawberries; it could be anything. So, we depend upon the state as well as the federal government to put forth the effort and the protection at these ports of entry. We have got a tremendous business in Florida, now, in these cruise ships. They are going all over the tropics. They just go everywhere. Those trips basically, you know, you have so many nights in port that you pick up something and you get it on the ship. The first thing you know you are getting off of the cruise ship. You have got a plant for Aunt Susie.

- P: Aerial spraying is becoming more and more controversial, particularly in urban areas. Do you see any other solution anytime, soon?
- G: Currently, our Commissioner of Agriculture, Bob Crawford has his department, as well as the state of Florida's government, spending a lot of money through IFAS to find alternatives to spraying. As Florida's population builds, we are spraying in an area that used to be agricultural. Of course, I don't hear people complain in Naples about the mosquito flying -- that is okay, because people don't like to get bitten by a mosquito. But it is a different thing when you are fighting Mediterranean Fruit Fly. The public doesn't see it; they don't understand it. We know it is there. Scientists know how to eliminate it. But currently, the most effective way is the aerial spraying. That is not accepted by the general by the public. There is some effort being made to inform the public of why this is necessary. I don't think that the public realizes that the Florida citrus industry is

the second biggest industry of the state with tourism being number one. Citrus is number two and has been for many years. So, citrus is important to the state of Florida. It is important to our country. But getting that information and that education off into the urban areas is a very difficult task.

P: Citrus canker -- how big a problem is that?

G: It is a great threat. There are several different forms of canker. The Asian Canker is the one we are currently spending a lot of money and trying to control. If it were to spread throughout the industry -- currently, it is just in the very southern tip of the Florida citrus production. Were it to move into the greater volume of citrus production of citrus, it would tremendously hamper our ability to pack fresh fruit. Other states would not accept it. Other countries are always looking for an opportunity to not accept some import so they can better protect their own small industry. So, canker is not acceptable to the general growers, today, under the current conditions that we have to deal with. Canker spreads rapidly. The wind carries it. It is bacteria. I don't know why the scientists haven't figured out something that the growers could spray and kill bacteria with. But they have not at this point. Hopefully, they will. But, canker is currently something that the Florida Citrus Industry cannot live with. It takes those groves out of production. You can have a grove that is producing eight hundred boxes, five hundred boxes per acre. If canker gets in there, you are down one hundred or one hundred and fifty boxes per acre. You can't live with that. It costs just as much on a seven hundred boxes an acre as it does a two hundred [acre]. But at two hundred, you can't make a profit. But at seven hundred, you are not going to get rich but you are going to be in a profitable area where you can continue if that is your choice of what you would like to do. So, canker is very, very serious. That brings up an interesting point. This is not the first time that Florida has been exposed to Asian Canker. In the mid-thirties, of course the industry was not as big as it is today, but in the mid- to late thirties we had Asian canker. It was eradicated using the same efforts that we are using today. So, here we are in the new century using the same eradication procedures that were used. I guess we failed to keep pace with the times. Hopefully, they will come up with a more effective control to eliminate versus the only thing we know now is to -- if it is discovered, is to slash and burn. That is pretty drastic.

P: Transportation -- we have an interstate system; we have an intrastate system; we have local roads. I know that in the agricultural industry, it is critical to be able to have an adequate transportation system and that it be functional at the time that you need it. Now, what is your opinion as to how the state is meeting its obligations in that regard and what would be needed that doesn't seem to be available or in the plans for the future?

G: Well, you are right. Transportation is our life's blood. What happens to

agriculture is that you look around here -- how many people are here? Not many. You go to Punta Gorda, you look around and see how many people are there. Now, government obviously is going to listen to the loudest voice and the most voices. I am not saying that government is wrong there, but transportation in the state of Florida needs to be highly elevated from where it currently is. I have observed and believed that the state is responding to a better transportation system. I think they are recognizing the importance of it. It is ironic that the transportation is coming as a result of the urban areas where the people are. Out here in the rural areas, if we run into a red light, when it turns green, we get through it. In the rural [urban] areas, you may sit there and have three cycles of a red light before you can progress to the point that you are. So, a lot of our transportation is going to the metropolitan areas, urban areas. Some is flowing to the counties that are in agricultural areas -- that is a wonderful help. But transportation needs to have a higher priority in my opinion, particularly in the state. It is being responded to but it needs to have a higher priority than what it has. Even though I guess, it is probably the second or third highest priority that there is. But I want to kick it up more.

P: How about the port facilities? Are they significant to the citrus business?

G: Yeah. They are. We are obviously involved with export, both fresh and concentrate. We ship a lot of product to Europe, a lot of product to Korea, Pacific basin, if you will, including Japan, is a major port that we ship to. The Japanese palate loves grapefruit. They just love grapefruit. The Japanese require top quality, so-called blemish-free. They will pay forty bucks for a little water melon. That is a great gift to a friend or whatever to take a Honeydew melon to them. They will pay a big amount of money, which I don't think the US market would ever do. But they do, over there. So, when they get grapefruit, it is a wonderful item to them. Grapefruit is not produced in Japan. Japan produces what they call a **mekon**, which is an orange that basically is consumed fresh. It is consumed fresh because in the processed form, the juice does not taste very good. But the average grower in Japan had about three and a half acres -- three and a half acres. And it might be up a mountain side. You won't even see a goat get up there. They will produce it and get it down in baskets or whatever. They sell them on the street corners; they sell them on their bullet trains. It is rather expected in a business meeting over there, you will sit down at a table and you will have fresh fruit - many times, that is grapefruit and oranges from Florida. That is a part of their system of living.

P: **Alico** is still a separate entity and it does some things that aren't done by any other phase of your overall operation. I don't know just what businesses that they are involved in but certainly there are a number of them. Can you tell us a little bit about **Alico** organized and functions?

G: **Alico** is a public corporation. It is basically an agricultural-based company. We are heavily involved in citrus production, and cattle production. We raise calves to be sent out west to be in the feed lots to meet the needs, primarily of the United States' consumer. People don't realize it but Florida is the number one cattle producer east of the Mississippi [River]. Nationally, we are probably like the fifth or sixth state range. At one time, Florida was bigger than Texas in cattle production. You have to go back in history to see that. Obviously, we know our ancestors came from the east. They settled in the east. Then later on, they moved west. So, the Florida cattle industry, at one time, was tremendously higher relative to other states. **Alico** is in citrus, cattle, sugar cane. We are strongly involved with the row crop element of farmers. However, we do not grow that ourselves. We rent that land to farmers and then they pay us on an annual basis. **Alico** also has a long established rock mining operation down in Lee County. We don't operate it. At one time, we were under contract with Florida Rock, headquartered out of Jacksonville. That particular contract and agreement, now has moved to Rinker. And they are responsible for mining that rock, crushing it and primarily, delivering it to I would say to Lee and Collier Counties. There is so much growth down there. Concrete -- anywhere rock can be used, that is their business. I don't know a lot about it but I know they take small, medium -- they have all kinds of different criteria and then they deliver that size rock to those who want to make cement out of it or crush it and use it for highway construction, home construction, fill or what have you. It is an important element to Alico. It is a public company so I can tell you it has been producing a million dollars worth of revenue per year for many years. That is a significant contribution to our bottom line.

P: Does it still own quite a lot of undeveloped land?

G: Yes, Alico owns a lot of undeveloped land, primarily adjacent to I-75, just south of International Airport there at Fort Myers. Also, situated relative to Alico's property, Florida Gulf Coast University is sited on Alico's land which Alico gave to, really to the people of the state of Florida for the establishment -- which really might be the last big University that the state will consider. That makes it the tenth university. For years there, we didn't have a name. As you well know -- you were there from the beginning of Gulf Coast University. Before it was named, I, as President of Alico, had a bunch of pens made up. I think I gave you one. Number ten on it, it didn't have a name, so we were just the tenth. It has been very exciting to see the growth of that university and the response of the community and the response of the legislature in funding that university. For some reason, I have my opinion, it was long needed. I know that you worked for many years to help bring that to fruition to southwest Florida. When it happened, there was just a great outpouring of support for Florida Gulf Coast University and that continues, today. I believe that under the leadership of our

new president, **Bill Merwin**, that university has a great future.

[End of side A1]

P: I want to ask you a couple of questions about another subject. Then, we will get back to the University. Alico, are they in the developing business, at all?

G: Alico, under my father's leadership, Ben Hill Griffin, Inc., purchased control of Alico in 1972. Since then, it has been under the leadership of my father through March of 1990, when he passed away. And then, it has been my responsibility. When he passed away, then I became Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Board, etc. It has basically been a labor of love, really. In 1960, Alico was spun off from the Seaboard Coastline Railroad from a share per share basis. This is excess land to the railroad business. Basically, it was not developed, at all. There was some - probably more than two hundred thousand acres at that particular time. Primarily, what the railroad was doing was just leasing it out for cattle grazing or something like that. They weren't utilizing the land to its own potential. So, when it was spun out, then it became a separate, public corporation. They had responsibility for profitability. That is how my father got involved with Alico. He was on the very early board of Alico in 1960. Alico sought him out because of his experience in citrus and cattle to be a board member and contribute to the decision making that they were going in that direction. So, from 1960 to here we are in 2000, you might say that Alico was zero in 1960. In this period of time, we are looking at now, we have got some fourteen thousand acres of sugar cane; we have got a little more than thirteen thousand acres of citrus. I can talk about this thing because we are a public company. If you were asking me my own family corporation, I wouldn't be able to respond. But, we ran between fifteen and eighteen thousand head of cattle. All of these are of major significance within those particular industries. I don't say that braggadocios. I am just telling you the facts. Timber, we have timber, however Alico land holdings are a situation in such a location and the soil conditions, etc. are not particularly inclined to production of pine trees. It is too slow. So, the railroads left us, gosh, the railroads left down there around 1985 or 1986 -- about 1985. Alico has had, on its board, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Atlantic Coast Line for many years, Tom Rice, originally. Then we moved, Atlantic Coast Line merged and it is existing today, under CSX [railroad], I believe is their banner, now. So, we have had a lot of input from the railroad companies on the board of directors. Apparently, we do not have anybody that represents CSX but Tom Rice is retired. He lives up in Virginia. I invited him and I flew him down last winter -- he and a buddy of his. He was in good shape. Of course, he remembers the birth of Alico. He is a great quail hunter. He is amazed at seeing what was and what is. So, we had a great day together. I invited a lot of the early men who helped **enter** Alico in the different divisions and most of those, well, they are all retired, now. I had them all come in for lunch and they had a great time, remembering different things. The name

of that bird dog and how many quail they killed and remembering when we had the governor down here, and he missed that big old turkey and you know, all that kind of things, good stories.

P: Are there any plans for Alico to be involved in developing land, itself?

G: No, sir. We have decided that is not Alico's forte. The land we have for sale in Lee County for development, I pretty much have carried on the policy of making sure that if we are going to sell any of that land, first think I want to know (surprising to many people) we will talk price, later -- I want to know something about them. Who are you? Show me what you have done. I don't want to just take price and let some fly-by-night developer come in there and create a mess with bankrupted development. A piece of property sitting there and it looks bad; it is not helping anybody. So, but we sell some land down there and hopefully we will continue to be successful in that regard. We check them out really close. Some I just decide I don't want to negotiate or discuss any further. I have flown all the way to Arizona to look at a development. These people that I might be talking to in Canada or wherever, I want to go see what they have done. I don't want them to show me a brochure. I want to go see it. I am kind of a hands-on guy, so it has been working pretty well. I think I am going to stick with it.

P: What counties does Alico own land in?

G: Alico, surprisingly, gosh, we are one hundred and twenty five-thousand acres or thereabouts, now, but we are basically in Hendry, Lee, and Collier Counties. So, we are pretty well concentrated. Pardon me, Polk County, we have got about twenty thousand acres in Polk County, about forty five-hundred acres of that is in orange groves. So, we do have a county that is separated from the others. But Polk County has been there a long time. We are still raising citrus successfully, on land that was planted in 1960, 1961, 1962.

P: I would assume that I need to ask the question, because I could be wrong, that much of the land the railroad would have owned would have been acquired in land grants from the state at the time that they were building railroads in southwest Florida.

G: I agree. I have looked at a number of those deeds. There were land grants involved; there were communities, as you well know, being a historian like when Atlantic Coastline came through Wauchula, Arcadia, Fort Ogden, heading on down to Fort Myers and Punta Gorda, the cities would give land to the railroad. There is a lot of history there where they would have very serious discussions with the leaders of that community and many times they would halt construction so it would be the end of the line. I think that is how Arcadia became the county seat. There was a time[when] I think a lot of people thought that Fort Ogden was going to be there. But something happened in Arcadia and the railroad

stayed there -- that was the end of the line -- and everybody coming from up north, they got off at the end of the line and they bought and found land and built houses and all of a sudden, Arcadia became the biggest vote-getter.

P: The railroad was a tough negotiator in acquiring land in exchange for location of the tracks. But I am sure that some of it does go back that far - for the railroad to have had vacant land and had it for a long, long time.

G: And they still do. A lot of this land that you see, each community had a railroad station, and of course, the railroad right of way, which we are now seeing acquired by the state or whatever like to put in four lanes like **Zolpho** Springs. If I had a railroad right of way coming through my ranch, I would want to go to that railroad and try to buy that land before they put a bike trail in there or something. I'll be on the bike trail. I'll run the bike trail.

P: Let's get back into Florida Gulf Coast University. How did you become active in this project, originally?

G: Originally, Alico looked at their Lee County tract and knew that was very valuable property. We had a cattle lease on it. We never ran cattle as our own corporate interest, over there. But, we leased it to ranchers and cattlemen. And we also leased and rented land to the farmers. That was a very rich soil and warm, well located, close to the major markets. So, that worked out very well. We are actually farming there, today. We have continued that. That was about the mid 1980s that we became really serious about what to do with that Lee County property. So we made plans to present to the regulators, for a city to be built out there. I think in the old plans we just called it the new town, _____, New Town. And that was the name that was carried to the county and to the state, etc. to get the proper permitting to establish this yet-to-be-named, new city. In those permits, I think it came from the company (Dad was the leader and he was a hands-on executive, also) there was a university planned for that new city. Obviously, it had plans for high-schools and elementary schools and art centers and all of those things that bind a community. So, that was kind of ongoing when the state announced that it was going to locate a new university, Alico said, why don't we see if the state wants any of our property. Of course, we started off thinking we were going to sell it to the state. We ended up giving it to them. There was quite a competition. Alico looked at its land. This is what went on behind closed doors. We looked at our land and we said, where is the best -- what is the heart -- what is the best that we could offer? We kind of drew a circle or a square. We didn't know how many acres that the state wanted. That would be revealed, later. We felt like it should be adjacent to I-75 or in close proximity to it. We knew that we had two long existing lakes that had resulted from the early mining. We thought that would be a beautiful vista. So then we entered the competition, I guess you would say, to be considered by the state to be sited for this new university. And that was quite a competition. Do you want

to hear about that?

P: Yes.

G: My father has passed away, so it was my burden to carry on and carry the banner for Alico. So, we entered the competition and we were kind of the little guy on the block. We were up against Westinghouse and all of these big corporations that develop and have bottom lines that blow my mind. We knew we had to have some expertise so we didn't have it in staff. That is not what we do. We went out and acquired the services of a reputable real estate developer, in his own right, _____ Small. We brought on our team -- you know, any time you are dealing with the government, bureaucracy -- you have got to have an attorney or two around. So, we engaged the services of a couple of attorneys. Geologists, whatever was needed -- we acquired the services of professional organization that was known for their good reputation and quality. We hired their services which picked up several experts on their staff that then came on relative to our project. With that, we started going through the process of going before the Board of Regents. Obstacles occurred; we addressed them. It came to the point -- I forget how many -- but there was, maybe in the twenties, people who were originally talking to the Board of Regents and the state relative to their property. That kind of dwindled down to thirteen. I think we were headed toward the finals and maybe there were like twelve. Then we got in the final stages and there were four. I always figured that we were the team that was number two. We weren't number one. We were number two or three or four. So, we had to work harder. We weren't all that smart. We were in an arena that none of us had been in. Of course, I was familiar with state government with my father being in the house and in the senate, so I wasn't concerned about the capital and the Board of Regents. I was comfortable in that atmosphere. Was I nervous? You bet. Finally, it came down to just Westinghouse and Alico. And I never will forget, we had a committee of the Regents that were meeting in Fort Myers and of course, we had our team. We had our displays. Of course, going up against Westinghouse -- gosh, they had a theatrical performance. They even had a tape from their Chairman of the Board to speak. And here I am, representing Alico. And here is the Chairman of the Board on a big screen -- big as those two windows over there. And he is talking to the people, the regents, about what Westinghouse would do if their location was selected. So, you talk about tough competition, it was tough. Unfortunately, I guess I can say this, Westinghouse could have done a better job in selecting the property that they offered. Their offer was flawed because they picked a site that had some adverse impacts that, quite frankly, they didn't tell the state about. They didn't tell the Regents about it. We knew it. I could take our company helicopter and I would fly that land and I knew where the strong points were and I knew where the big, weak points were. So, we got in the final day, and the Board of Regents finally understood that there was a very large county

land disposal adjacent to the Westinghouse property. Westinghouse had toured them. Of course, we did, too. We toured the Board of Regents all over our property, asked any questions. Alico had offered the state whatever they needed, 800 acres, I think it was. [It was] pretty close to 800. And we told them that they could position 800 acres anywhere around that lake that they so chose. So, we allowed the state to pick out, in a given envelope, if you will, like this table: you can site, maybe there was 1400 acres there. You can pick out any 800 acres you want. It surprised us, after the selection process was over. I was in Tallahassee that night representing Alico. I have to be at the podium. I have to make decisions. Obviously, I had to support of my Board of Directors. That is the way public corporations operate. But that was another advantage that I had with Alico. When we were in these public meetings, if something came up that was needed -- let's say, they needed some right of way to be donated to the county. Westinghouse would say, yeah, we will consider that and we will get back to you in just a few days. I would get to the podium and say, it is a done deal. How much do you want? How wide? It is done. You ask; it is delivered. So, I was able to move much quicker than a big, huge organization like Westinghouse. I guess that fell to our favor; I hope it did. Of course, we ended up giving this 800 acres to the state of Florida for a new university. Alico even gave 200 additional acres to the foundation, that was very valuable property. That was probably worth \$8,000,000, then. It is worth a lot more now. We were in Tallahassee and before the regents and all of a sudden, they discovered that the campus would be adjacent to -- not that they hadn't been informed. It just never registered on them, see? And of course, Westinghouse never did point it out. Some of the people there that were involved, I knew them all, they said, it won't be but 250 feet tall. Of course, I had already checked with the records of the county. They were permitted to go even higher than that. So, then they discovered about the prevailing winds. They discovered through the hydrologists -- experts -- that the ground water would be coming under that big land disposal, right across the campus. [That brings up the issue] to have problems with a good source of clean water. And the incinerator east of Fort Myers, it was just cranking up. Westinghouse -- somebody didn't inform the Regents about that and the impact it might have. Very interesting. One of the proponents of the Westinghouse -- he was not employed by them, but he was very much in favor of the Westinghouse location....it was some nice land. I am not putting down that land. There is some nice development going on over there and they are going to be successful with it. But this official, public official, stood before the regents and said, well, you know, there are four different sections under this land fill, two of which had liners under them. What? What about those other two? Well, they weren't required when the permitting went on. That was fifteen or twenty years ago. So, they have a landfill out there with no liner under half of it. The regents started scratching their heads. And then, they started looking at me, more so. Not that they weren't. I don't know what went on in their minds. So, the motion

was made and it is part of public records, the motion was made by the attorney, Charlie Edwards. He was on the Board of Regents at that time and had been there for some time -- he moved that the Board of Regents approves the Westinghouse site. Being a parliamentarian, you know there are advantages and disadvantages. He got a second. Then, it came to the vote and it just wasn't there. Then, another motion was made to select the Alico site. And to the best of my recollection, it was like seven to four or seven to five, in favor of Alico. Then, Mr. Edwards, who is a good friend of mine -- of course, he prefaced his motion by saying, I guess he felt a responsibility because he was in Fort Myers to speak to the regents for some reason. He said, well, this motion is going to make some of my friends happy and some of my friends, not very happy. He was right. I was not very happy at that moment. At the conclusion of the vote, the records will show that Charlie Edwards then moved that the Alico site is voted unanimously for that other. The Florida Regents then, [would] be so registered. So, he had the leadership there to, at least get the record on that it was a unanimous decision by the Board of Regents of the state of Florida. But that was not his choice. That was his second choice. I think he is satisfied, now.

P: Along the line, did Alico make any other additional commitments as to what it would do for the university?

G: Yes, there were a lot of commitments. Alico was able to commit to and if I had it to do over again, I would do it again. We funded three chairs, immediately, recognizing that it was going to be 1997 before the university opened. This is 1991. February, the what of 1991 was when the actual action was taken. I showed you the picture in my board room. So, we contributed three chairs. We contributed, at no cost, the rights of way to access the university. We contributed the 200 acres to the foundation which really kicked the foundation off with a big boost, to start with. As a matter of fact, part of Gulf Coast University now has more [funded] chairs than most any other university in the state of Florida, amazingly. I think, probably, Gulf Coast has got seven or eight chairs, now. I can't quote you but I have read that many, many of the other universities don't have that and they have been in existence for years and years, decades. But here is Florida Gulf Coast -- we had our first, freshman class in September of 1997. I may have spoken on that before -- about how when the site was selected in 1991 and they projected the first freshman class would be 1997. They said that would never happen. At least, it will take ten to fifteen years, at least ten. Expect fifteen and it might take a little longer. Well, they didn't know Alico. So, we worked hand and hand with the university and with the state, assisting them in every way we could. See, Alico had owned that land for seventy years and we knew it backwards and forwards. It is a good, clean piece of property. It is there like it was originally with the acceptance of the rock mining that has been going on - by the way that will probably be over in about

five or six years and they will be out of there. Then, we will have a bunch of beautiful lakes out there. We had the right of way. We contributed significantly to, I guess you would call it, the impact fees, several million dollars. We didn't call it impact fees, we just said, here is money (not totally) but here is money to add to those funds that are needed to get the roads built in. We even committed to lighting along the parkway that led to the university. Then, on top of that, we gave the university a quarter of a mile beyond its border, that they had the right to either accept or reject whatever development was going on there. But that was Alico's commitment. I didn't hesitate in committing that and I still don't. But that was done to help protect the integrity of the university. I, nor anyone else, wanted to see some establishments that might impact the university. We don't have to go into those, but there are some that are not very acceptable to the general public. They might be accepted at eleven or twelve o'clock at night -- not all day long. So, we did that and we have worked really well with the university under Roy **McTardigan** and now, our new president. We have never had any problem with whatever we have presented. It was of the class and of the concept that we do nothing but enhance the university -- not to take away but to enhance.

P: Charlie Reed was the chancellor of the state university system. How significant was he in this process?

G: Well, as chancellor, of course, you were right there with him and would know more about the day to day responsibilities of the chancellor, but the chancellor, as I understand it, was very, very significant. The chancellor is the one who leads the Board of Regents. And obviously, they are appointed by the Governor. So the Chancellor and the Governor are very close, and education is very important. So, there is a direct relationship there. Certainly, Charlie Reed was very much in there. He treated us fair [ly]. He treated Westinghouse fair, I felt. He didn't show, to my knowledge, he didn't show any particular preference or prejudice. He knew both parties. I guess, you would have to ask Charlie, but I guess he was leaving it to the Board of Regents. They would make the decision. He never made a recommendation that I knew of. And of course, under the Sunshine Law, he shouldn't be making a recommendation unless the public knows about it. I trusted Charlie and got along good with Charlie. As chancellor, there were a number of things that he wanted to know about our site and we responded so that he could fill out all of his criteria that he was looking for. And I guess he was one of the ones that once the site was selected, he then, being chancellor, is the one that positioned the university on a given big envelope that would serve the university really well. It surprised me. Alico gave him the right to pick up a mile of frontage on that lake. It [may have been] a mile and a quarter. When they picked their land, it was like three quarters of a mile on the lake. I don't know why they would walk away from a quarter of a mile. Maybe it was more, three tenths of a mile. But I didn't argue with them. We

deeded them what they wanted. Of course, they knew more about establishing a university and so maybe they didn't need a mile but it was there for their taking. All they had to do was pick it up and say, I want it. They had it. Maybe they would like to have that quarter mile back. I don't know.

P: When **McTardigan** came on board and became their first president, in a sense, as the president of the university, he was a developer and he had a lot of tough problems to solve. How was he to work with at this stage of the development?

G: Well, you can't bank on my recollection of history that I know of Roy **McTarnigan**. But as I understood it, he was heavily involved in Tallahassee in the staff. I don't think that he had ever been president of a university or vice president or anything else. He was in the staff and he was charged with the responsibility of overlooking some engineering, maybe the University of North Florida and other universities that were popping up. I think he was involved in that process. I guess that is why they selected him.

P: He was also involved in planning for the university.

G: Yeah. He spent a lot of time in that. So, I first met Roy, actually before the selection was made. I was in Tallahassee and he was introduced. I never dreamed he would be president. He was a good man, been in service a long time. I liked him. All of a sudden, Bam, he was the first president of Florida Gulf Coast University. And he did a fine job. He worked hard. He made himself available to all groups. He was a good communicator. He kept a very close hand on the actual construction and development through his staff. I am sure he did a lot of other things that I am not privileged to. I do know this. He likes to play golf. But he didn't do that on the job. I will tell you. He did that on a Saturday or a Sunday. It was good to have a hobby like that. Roy did a really fine job and I think that when he decided to resign, I don't know -- of course, I was on the Foundation Board at that time. Matter of fact, I was in the meeting the day that he resigned. If I had known that he was going to resign that day, at the end of the meeting, I would not have stated some of the things I stated in that meeting. I was a little bit unhappy about some advertisements that we were going into. I was not happy with the Foundation setting such a low target for a goal for fund raising. I wasn't putting all that on Roy's plate but he was the President. So there were several things that I spoke to at the open meeting that I could have said at the next meeting, not the last meeting that Roy would be there. I got to thinking, dadgum, did I raise so much cane that he decided to resign this morning? Then, I learned that he had informed his staff prior to his leaving so I knew that I didn't contribute to his decision.

P: You mentioned about the three chairs that Alico contributed. What specifically, were they for?

G: Basically, they were named in the arena of business. I cannot give you the specific name. The university has that. Number one, it was Alico and I named it in honor of my father, Ben Hill Griffin, Jr. Bernie Lester, Chief Operating Officer. I felt like he needed to be recognized. So, there is an Alico chair that recognizes Bernie Lester - Dr. Bernard X. **Lester**, which he deserves. Then, as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Alico, I had better take some responsibility for giving away those assets of the _____, so one of them is named Ben Hill Griffin, III. But they are all given in the arena of business, business economics, business marketing.... There is one that is in the area of statistics or something like this. But being a business man and our board being of business people, I knew there would be other chairs and very other worthy chairs that would be donated, so being that we were business oriented, I felt like that we were business oriented, I felt like we would just name three chairs for the business. By the way, they have selected the professors in those three arenas and they are working today. They have wonderful credentials. I didn't pick them. That is not my job. But the people that picked them, which is their job and I was very pleased at their selection.

P: The selection of the name for the tenth state university?

G: The name? It was a public selection. Gosh, that was under Roy **McTarnigan**. He put out the call that, hey, we need to name this new university. It went to the Capitol. It went to the five counties. I don't know the inside detail of it but there were literally hundreds of suggestions for a name. I observed that process. I didn't take an active part in it but I was particularly interested in the naming of that university. Some of the names that were suggested scared me to death - that possibly they would be chosen. In the final analysis, all of those other names were eliminated and Florida Gulf Coast was selected and I have always been pleased with their process. I didn't name it. I could have gotten out there and lobbied or something for a name. Hopefully, I would have come up with Florida Gulf Coast University. I don't know that I would have. But I like the name. I think it speaks well of our state. It speaks well of the university. It locates our university. As our school builds and there are sports and so forth, that is coming forth out of the school - we now have an Athletic Director. I found out they didn't have the funding to fully support an Athletic Director. Well, I solved their problem. So, we now have an Athletic Director, hopefully, [he is] properly salaried to give the university the leadership. I felt -- are we out of time [on the tape].

[End of side ___]

P: In your opinion, where is Florida Gulf Coast University now, and what do you think that it should be doing that it may not be doing?

- G: It should be more aggressive in seeking additional students. Being that it is there, and we think everybody knows it, but they don't. So, there needs to be an advertisement. And I have talked President ____ on that. There needs to be a strong advertising program to let the populace know of this great university. I think there would be several-fold benefits. Number one. It would attract more students. We have the capacity, thanks to you and others. We have the capacity for more than 10,000 students, right now, and we are looking at 4,000, as this coming September arrives. The university has responded and they have now got an advertising program going. I don't know what students do today, but I know when I was going to college, some of them didn't make up their minds until late, you know. Of course, we have a great community down there, all through that five-county area where, let's say adults are seeking additional education. The university has done a very good job of setting up night classes, weekend classes, etc. to accommodate the needs of working people. Maybe, they are not working. Maybe they just want to expand their mind; they want to learn. And so they come in and take some classes. So, we need the additional students. They are coming; they are just not coming fast enough. We should be at 7,000 students; we are at 4,000. Why? I don't know. I am not an educator. I am in business. But I know in business, if you want something done, you had better get out there and go after it. A fella asked my father one time, he said, boy, you have been lucky. Dad says, do you know what? The harder I work, the luckier I get. So, there is some truth to that.
- P: I know you have been a strong promoter of intercollegiate athletics up there. What do you think the university should be doing in that area, right now, if anything, that it isn't doing?
- G: Well, frankly, I am currently pleased with the response that the university is now getting for athletics. I see athletics as a bond that student body needs to grow and feel a part. We just looked at the eagle. That eagle needs to be everywhere in those particular areas of draw that we have for our university. Somebody needs to be talking to the juniors in highschool, sophomores, something. That is what I would do. If you want to recruit somebody, you had better get out there in the trenches and hunt them up. Let them know we are there. Let them know what is available. The athletic program is now, finally getting on board. I have been very adamant about that since -- I thought at one time they were going to move me off of the Foundation Board so they wouldn't have to listen to me anymore. I just felt like we were missing the ball in Athletics. I am not talking about a football team; I am not talking about a stadium. I am talking about a golf team, a running team, a swimming team. Of course, we now have a beautiful, new swimming pool that is coming to the university. I think it will be here in two years. I don't know why it takes two years but that is what they tell me. But that is going to be a great addition. We

are looking forward to a gymnasium. These are things -- to exercise the body as they exercise their minds. There were two things that Mr. **McTardigan** and I differed -- not that we ever had words over them -- number one, I thought that he was living too far from the campus. He lived on a golf course about twenty-five miles over there. I said, Mr. President, why don't you move closer? Why don't we have a President's home? Well, a president's home on campus, you don't get that as a new university. I said, I don't believe that. If we put out the need for a President's house on campus, we will get it. I don't know when but we will start getting some contributions or something to the President's home. And who know, Westinghouse may come in and we will name it Westinghouse, home of the President of Florida Gulf Coast University. You come to visit the campus and look. There is the President's house. He is on campus. He is not twenty-five miles over there. Heck, you don't even know when it rains. It is sunshine at your house but they may be flooding over there at the campus. But, anyway, that wasn't a big contention with me but I did not like that and on a priority basis and I am not being critical of Roy but he did not have the athletics on the scope. He really didn't have student housing on the scope. Now, we are begging for more housing. Finally, Roy **McTardigan** woke up when we had 100% occupancy the first year and they had sent out these communications in the college -- what do you like, dislike, and so forth? [they got back responses such as] student housing. We want student housing on campus. And he starts off with a two-story building. Oh, I got hot about that. He said, well, we don't have but so many acres. I said, well, if we don't have but so many acres, what is wrong with four stories? Well, Ben Hill, you have got to know construction, etc. I said, Roy, I know one thing. There is rock under this university. The pilings don't have to go down there but about fifteen feet and you can go to twenty stories tall in student housing, but that would be a _____. But I thought it was a waste of land to be talking about two stories. At least kick it up to four. You know, if the electricity goes off, you can walk for it. I was in Tampa one time at a business meeting and they had a dinner than night and the elevator didn't work. I had to walk down twenty-six stories. I had an older gentleman who was a friend of mine. At the Board meeting the next day, he didn't make it. He came in late. And I am not going to say I wasn't a little bit sore, too. If you fill out a score card, a couple of things that I might mention are small relative to the big picture that he was working with. It was a big responsibility and he met it and I am happy for him. I wish him good retirement. I understand he is possibly writing his memoirs or something. I don't know. We will see.

P: Are you familiar with the changes that the legislature made in governments of the state university system last session?

G: Yeah, I am, relative to the regents?

P: Yes.

- G: I wouldn't consider myself as well informed as I should be. I need to know more of the details of that. However, it is quite clear that the Board of Regents is targeted to be gone in four years. That is my understanding. It will have a function but much less responsibilities. I don't think it is going to have much authority. The universities, themselves, as I understand it, all ten of them will be making their approach to the legislature as to their needs of the different universities. So, it is certainly going to be a very different atmosphere, regarding higher education. Right now, I don't like it. I think there could well be some needed changes, but to shut down the Board of Regents and what it can do for the state, I am basically opposed to it but I can't do anything about it. That is just my thought.
- P: If it should go through as planned, it could put Florida Gulf Coast University at a distinct disadvantage in competition with say, University of Florida and Florida State University. They are well established; they have strong alumni; they have many alumni that are members of the legislature. We might suffer as a result. Now, I know that is a parochial point of view.
- G: One has to be broad minded. When you are thinking about education, to me (and I am not a highly educated man) -- but when you think about education, you have to have broad vision. You can't think just specifically about just one thing. You have got to take in the needs of all of the universities and that takes strength, it takes wisdom, it takes investigation. I don't think that Gulf Coast University will fare as well because it will be at the bottom of the ladder, so to speak. It will get what is left and there won't be much. Hopefully, I am wrong. I pray, I am wrong. I am concerned about the future financial support of Florida Gulf Coast University from the legislature. I am very much concerned about that. I will do my part; I will lobby. I will go up there and talk to those fellas and gals, and the governor.
- P: The university has fared pretty well up to date, both with the legislature and certainly, with the governor, and certainly a good portion of that can be credited to the active support of the Board of Regents. Certainly, we should, I think, justifiably have some concern about any change that, at least on the surface appears to put Florida Gulf Coast University at a disadvantage.
- G: Of course, I support our governor, Jeb Bush. I plan to speak to him, personally, about this. I have waited, at this point in time because I didn't think that it had really jelled or settled out. I know it is in his direction but his direction was rather broad. That was my interpretation. I think, now, very soon, it will become more focused as to specifics and, for what it is worth, I plan to visit with the governor and whoever else I feel can be of assistance and hopefully add a little bit of input as to what the future of this revised Board of Regents -- of course, the legislature,

as you well know, they can change their minds next year. There are some universities that like it. The bigger ones like it. I am on the Foundation of the University of Florida. Some people don't understand how I can be on the Foundation of Florida Gulf Coast University. It is no problem to me. They are two separate entities. I think I really spend more time on Florida Gulf Coast University than I do on University of Florida.

P: Let us go back a little bit to Ben Hill Griffin Enterprises. What do you see as the future of Ben Hill Griffin Enterprises over the next five to ten years?

G: It should be noted that we don't refer to ourselves as Enterprises. We just refer to ourselves as Ben Hill Griffin, Inc. that handles all these different facets of our business. You are asking as to what I see in the future?

P: Yeah.

G: Our company is a well-founded company. I don't mind debt if it is properly managed. I don't mind risk. I take risk most every day. I try to think (and I am not always successful) but I try to think of the downside. If the downside risk tells me that it is low than I will take greater risk for the upside opportunity. That has been pretty much my philosophy. My father took bigger risks than I take. He could afford to -- not financially but it was all his, see. He could go out and buy something and borrow money. He would have it analyzed and fortunately it all worked out for him. Sometimes, there were some downside risks that he didn't really figure that downside risk, percentage wise, would really happen. But it did. It did. I told you that. In 1960, I told you about that hurricane that came through Fort Myers and right up through here and I mean, just tore this ranch up. We had pine trees just laid down by the ten of thousands. They had to be harvested. Of course, that was at salvage prices which -- anytime you have got that, you are not going to get the real price.

P: Everybody, who is successful, makes some mistakes along the way. And the critical part is what they do once they discover they made a mistake. You can make some of your mistakes turn out OK or you can cut your losses or you can just sit there and suffer.

G: That is true. I have done it all. I have done it all. But relative to our future and how I am leading Alico and leading Ben Hill Griffin, Inc., I think my challenge is to continue to lead these companies on a very sound financial basis, to look for opportunities. I am not focused on just one spot. I hope I am looking all around. I look at kinds of things. Many of them I know I am not going to do but I will still talk to that person about it. You want to start up this company. I don't like that but tell me why I should. Here is why you should do that. Most of the time I have a pretty good idea whether I want to pursue some idea or not because my responsibility is different from my father's. I have a responsibility to

all these stockholders of Alico. I have a responsibility to all of my family that is stockholders of Ben Hill Griffin, Inc., my children, included. So, I look at myself, yes, I can take risk. Yes, I can look at new opportunities. And I have. But I tend not to risk to the point that it would be damaging to any of our stockholders. If I am wrong, it is not going to hurt anybody. I will bail out; I'll invest deeper and make it work. Or if I have to take a walk, I can walk out that door and say that was just a very bad decision, Ben Hill. You should have never gone there.

P: It is a matter of public knowledge that there is a difference between your sisters and you about some of the issues concerning Ben Hill Griffin properties and businesses. Do you visualize that having any negative impact on the operation of the company?

G: I don't think so. It is noted in the press all over the state of Florida that my sisters have a difference of opinion with me regarding some things that I have been involved with. Currently, I am working diligently to satisfy my sisters [so] that their interpretations should be revisited. The process that we are going through right now, you know, you are with attorneys -- does it take away? Yes. Is it a distraction? Yes. Does it effect my decisions? No. I have got to work, right on. I have got to continue to lead Alico. I have got to continue to lead Ben Hill Griffin, Inc. They have a right to their opinion. They are my sisters. I love them. They have a general tendency not to understand business. They have not been in that arena in their life. That is unfortunate, right now, because that clouds their thinking as to what is proper and what is not proper in the business world. One of the things -- it is in the press; it is no secret -- is that I have a consulting and non compete agreement with the people that bought out **Orangeco** Inc. another public company that I lead our company into. I did that. With my leadership, we bought controlling interest in **Orangeco**, Inc., in 1992, I believe it was in May. We ran it successfully for seven years but I could feel it. I could see it. I could see our industry. We made a lot of money in that company and we strengthened that company. It was to the benefit of the stockholders. But I saw things happening in our industry -- the processing industry, marketing inside of our business -- that we either had to put a bunch more capital in there, which I didn't want to risk, see. I had already put in millions of dollars into buying this and I would have to come up with some more, borrowing or whatever, to take us to a higher lever to be able to compete. I did not know how high was high. So, when I saw what was happening and felt what was happening in the citrus industry -- processing, particularly -- I decided to sell it and get out. It had been a success and the investment was good. If I had stayed, I knew it wasn't anywhere but downhill. I don't even think my secretary knew that I had made the decision until about three months after I had made it and already had things in order, working. Thankfully, we were able to find a buyer for that asset. This new buyer, they could handle it. They would be good for the company; they would be good for the stockholder. So, I guess some

eight months later, I think within four months, I had a contract. [It was] A very complicated sale of some varying assets, particularly when you are trying to merge them in with other like assets. So, we consummated the deal in September. During that period of time I thought it was a long time, but looking back, it really wasn't all that long -- about seven months from the time I pulled the trigger. And we had a deal within four months but it took three months for them to work out all of their things that they had to work out that they had to work out that I couldn't help them with. They were the ones over there saying, this goes here, this goes there. Until that deal was consummated, finalized, I am always nervous. Until a contract closes, I am nervous, if I am buying or selling. Alico had a prime example of that, just in the last month. We had a major piece of property that was in the press that we had come to terms and I thought it was fair to Alico. Apparently, the buyer was satisfied with it. We were up to closing -- about ten or something to closing -- and the buyer takes a walk. I mean that is like the ball is going to fall in your hand and it is right there and then, all of a sudden, it is not there. So, what do you do? You go on. Am I mad with those people? No. I don't know why. Maybe they will be back. They are good people or I wouldn't have contracted with them. For whatever reason, they were very forthright business men -- the ones that I talked with. When the deal was gone, the deal was gone. I didn't beg them. Maybe it is going to do us a favor. Maybe it is going to help the stockholders. Maybe six months from now, I'll come back and somebody will pay me twenty percent more -- pay our company. I say me a lot of times. I am not talking about me. You know that. I talk about our university or my university. Florida Gulf Coast University is not my university. I just happen to love it.

P: Your father trained you over a period of years to run this business and you have been training Hill along the same lines. Are you doing anything different in bringing him along than your father?

G: Yeah. I guess these things change generation to generation. My father was training me when I was very young -- seven or eight year's old. He would take me to the dove field at five and I would go out there and pick the doves up and bring them back to him, you know. He was one -- I wasn't squeamish or anything but some people don't like to have blood on their hands. Well, when you are messing with game, sometimes you get a little blood on you. It washes off. So, he was training me, then. Cleaning the birds and don't kill any more than what you are going to eat. Don't just go shoot something for the fun of shooting it. If you are going to do that, shoot at a target. Then, you have something to record and see how close you came to the center. But I don't mean this derogatorily, but my father, I guess from his father, he was fairly stern. Loving and forgiving -- maybe at times, we would be buddies -- but there would be times that he was the boss. When he spoke, he was the kind of man that

you had better start jumping before he even speaks because he wants you to go do something so you might as well get started. You know the door is down there so go ahead and head to the door; he will tell you what to do when you get there. He was a fun guy; I miss him. He taught me a lot of things, thankfully. He exposed me to a lot of business. He exposed me to the legislature. He exposed me to the President of the United States. As a kid -- I guess I was ten years old -- Fuller Warren (I think I told you about Fuller Warren). Fuller Warren came to Frostproof. How big was Frostproof? I don't know. In 1950, There might have been about 500 people there. He introduced me and somewhere in my collection I have a Fuller Warren button. We talked about getting the cows off the road and that sort of thing. He has taught me a lot. Now, I have a son. He is Ben Hill Griffin, IV. He prefers to be called Hill, which we do. We call him Hill. We have for a long time. He is a worker. He probably works, he probably works a little bit different than I do. Probably, [he is] smarter. He handles people really well. I have him in a position of growth, expanding him opportunities within the company to build on in a logical, hopefully, methodical measure so that he doesn't miss a step. I don't want him to have a blank. You know, like he jumps three steps and leaves.... That is what I did. And it has helped me. So, I am trying to help him. Is it different? Yes. I give him a lot more space than my father gave me. I recognize he needs some private like weekends or whatever. If I am going to the ranches or going to the grove, I'll ask him. He knows it is -- if it works, it works. If it doesn't work, I am not going to get mad at him. Being a young man, well, he has got some commitments and plans that I am not aware of but I stay out of his private life. That is his. If he wants to invite me in, I am there. When he does, I find he is doing a darn, good job of his private life. He thinks and he is doing fine in his private life as well as working for Ben Hill Griffin, Inc. He represents our company really well. He might be doing too good a job because more and more people are asking him to give service to the Department of Citrus and be on this committee and that committee. I have had to have a heart to heart talk with him about that. I said, you know, when you ___ up something like that.... You know, he was on the Tampa (or still is) the Tampa Fair. He has been on that for three or four years, now. **Steinbrenner** is the Chairman, now. He has announced that he is going to be coming off of there. I have met with **Steinbrenner** many times, about other things, not about my son's position on there. And maybe he is just telling me something because I am his father but he has reported to me that he has been a good board member, he is a contributor. I have seen the committees that he had put him on. Very responsible. But, you get on those things -- who is running your schedule? They are. If I want him to do something, boss, I am sorry. I have to be at the Department of Citrus. Florida Citrus Commission, we have a meeting over there on fresh fruit. I am on that committee. Well, what am I going to tell him. Sometimes, I tell him, cancel. You are going to _____. I need you. Most of the time, if he has a commitment like that, I honor it and he will go on. But he understands those type things. He understands priorities. I

think he understands me, what I am trying to accomplish and how he can help me get there, and how I can help him to help me get there. So, I don't know how all of that works but it just works -- it just happens. Did I write it down? No. Did I write down some criteria for his responsibility? No. Nobody that works for me has got a contract, you know. I don't have a contract. Nobody in Alico has got an employment contract. We have to trust one another. If I find an employee that is not doing their job, I sit down and talk to them and tell them -- not tell them, inform them -- how they need to change their ways or I will have someone else sit down and talk with them. And one time, that is not necessarily the limit. I have talked to two, three times. I had a man who I was terribly disappointed with. We had to let him go. I worked -- or the company worked -- with that man for two and one-half years, trying to change him to meet our criteria. He said he understood but he never got it. But I stayed with him for two and one-half years and finally, I said, well, I can't go, anymore. He has been informed, again and again, professionally, quietly, privately. We couldn't turn his head. He was an older gentleman and he had his way and we were doing some new things and it did not fit with the old way. But he stayed with the old way. Now, he is hopefully working for someone else, using his old way. And he will do a good job, but he wasn't meeting the criteria for us.

P: We have one more question for you. We don't want to leave out the rest of your family. Could you tell us a little bit about your wife and children and grandchildren?

G: My personal family...I have been married for thirty-six years. I married, I guess, my childhood sweetheart. She lived a block away. I was on one street and she was on the other. We dated off and on in highschool and did those usual things. In the senior year, I guess we were [going] steady. We went to college. She went to FSU [Florida State University] and I went to University of Florida. We decided that it was best for us to separate -- I say, separate. You date. I date. Nobody has got any commitments, here. And that went on for, I guess, a couple of years. She dated and I dated. I would see her and so forth. Then, all of a sudden I found myself going back and forth to Tallahassee quite a bit. And that is when we got engaged. So, we were married in...we have four children, one of which is married. My oldest girl, she is married. Her name is Kitty. I think I have mentioned -- but not necessarily on the tape -- Kitty and her husband, John L. Rogers, have five children, all of which are girls. Believe me. They have been wanting a boy. But they had a girl. They had another girl. Then, they had twins. And then here recently, about two and one-half months ago, she had another girl. So, that gave them five girls. I think they are going out of the baby business. I think they have gotten the message that a boy is not in their future. Maybe they will have a grandson or something. I am sure they will. But, they are all darling girls and all loved. We spend a lot of time and that sort of thing. My second child was Ben Hill Griffin, IV. He is not married. I don't know how to

say this but I know he is looking for the right lady. He just hasn't found her, yet. I will leave that up to him. All that he has brought, I thought they were beautiful and smart. Father to son, [I would say] dadgum, boy, that is a nice girl. He would bring them by to meet and have dinner or whatever. [He would say] Dad, that is not the one. I am just dating. So, after Hill, we had another son. His name was Brett. Brett Thomas Griffin. We named him Thomas in recognition of my father-in-law. His name was Tom Brown, so we named him Brett Thomas. I think I mentioned to you [that] he is a very seriously handicapped child. He is twenty-six, now. He has the mental and physical capabilities of possibly a one year old or possibly an eight-month-old. He is happy. And I am glad he is happy because that makes me happy. He doesn't recognize his mother and father. He doesn't recognize the nurses or any attendants that work with him. He just recognizes attention. If you talk to him and speak nicely to him, he is happy and he will smile and giggle. Of course, he doesn't talk. That gives me a lot of comfort that he is happy. [It is] Just an unfortunate situation that happened. Could it have been controlled? Yes. Was it an error? Yes. Did I sue anybody? No. It is just one of those things that happened. That the way it goes. I don't know how long he is going to live. They told me he wouldn't live to be thirteen years old. Here is he, twenty-six. He will live as long as - the Lord calls him home.

[Pause in tape.]

G: My youngest child is Candace **Loray**. She is not married. So, as you see, I've got -- she is about twenty-six, I think. She graduated from University of Florida. She was Miss Citrus. She is a very attractive person, inside and out. So, she went one semester -- and this is, that is my baby girl. She is not married and I think she is trying to be a little bit of a professional student. She calls her on a sabbatical. I found out what that is. That means that she is still on Daddy's payroll. I tease her about that a little bit. She has worked hard and she deserves a few months off. She does a good job for the Florida Citrus Industry all over the country and into Europe and Paris and Japan. [This will be] A great experience for a young lady and I am sure that she will be able to use that some time in the future. I don't know if she wants to go into business or not. I think she is working, possibly on her Mrs. Degree. If that is what she wants then, I am for anything that any of my children want. They are all very good children. I don't take credit for it. Their mother, Dorothy, she is the one who gets the credit. Looking back, I could have spent more time with them. I spent a lot of time with them. But, nowadays I think people put a little bit higher priority on their children than when I was coming through the world. I think the priorities are better now than they were thirty years ago. But, you can't go back. You have to go forward. So, I guess I am, now, spending more time with my grandchildren. That is a fun thing to do. So, I try to stay involved in their lives. I have got a granddaughter that I just got informed of, today, that she has a new barrel-racing

horse that she just acquired and she is going to be exercising and working him tomorrow evening at a friend of our's place. So, I am anxious to get down there and see that new horse and become a part of that purchase and hopefully the horse will perform. Many times they don't. I have bought a number of horses for my girls in this barrel racing deal from a highschool rodeo to a junior high rodeo and even after they get out of highschool. There have been a couple of good horses but there have been a number of them that should have been sent to the cannery. There is one thing about horses, you become attached to them, you love them. I found out you don't ever sell a horse. Once you buy it, particularly with these girls, that horse is going to stay there. Dad, I am never going to sell that horse. Honey, you are not riding him. You know that we can get x number of bucks. We can put that in another one. Dad, I don't even want to think about selling that horse. I love that horse. So, you know what happened. I keep him.

P: Is there anything else we should have asked you that we haven't?

[End of the interview]