

P: This interview is with Dr. E. T. York, who has played a very important role in the history of the University and the state of Florida from the 1960s to the present. We are here in the Florida Museum of Natural History, and this is Sam Proctor doing the interview. The date is August 5, 1993.

I guess the first thing I need to ask [of] you--and I hope there will be no hesitancy--is that you give me your real name.

Y: [laughter] I knew you were going to ask me that.

P: I already have it, but I just want you to say it.

Y: Well Sam, there is a little story behind that. I was presumably named for my father. Well, [I was] definitely [named for my father].

P: I was going to say, there is no presumption there.

Y: As I grew up, I was always called by the initials, E. T. When I joined the army and got ready to receive an officer's commission, I had to have my birth certificate. So I wrote to the Department of Vital Statistics in Montgomery and asked for a birth certificate. They wrote back, and said that they did not have one under that name. But they said, "We are sure that this is you." And they sent me a copy of a recorded birth certificate for a male child who was born to Mr. and Mrs. E. T. York of Mentone, Alabama, 4 July 1922. [It was] an unnamed male child. Apparently, the birth certificate had been filed before they decided on a name. They said "If this is you, fill in this form with your correct name, send it back, and we will issue the birth certificate." Well, I never liked my father's first name. And the army always called you by your first name, and I could not visualize my going through the army being called Elijah. It is a good old biblical name but I never cared for it. And since I had always been called E. T., I just filled in "E. T." So officially, I am E. T. York.

P: At least as far as the military is concerned.

Y: No, [it is] as far as the state and the vital statistics department [are concerned]. However, over the years I have been called Travis, which is my middle name. I have liked that--Elijah Travis--and sometimes I have even used that. But officially, my birth certificate shows E. T. only.

P: OK, that settles that.

Y: Now you know something that very few people know. Many people have asked me that, and I say, "I do not even tell my wife that." [laughter]

P: I saw that, where you did include the obituary on your father in the scrapbook. So that is how I got that.

Y: He was called "Lije" for Elijah. It is fine; it is a great old biblical name, but I never really cared for it.

P: And Lije is a name that is very common in the South; you hear it all over.

Y: I know it.

P: And you were born 4 July 1922--a real Fourth of July surprise. Where were you born?

Y: I was born in the country, about twelve, fifteen miles northeast of the post office in Fort Payne. But it was really out on the Lookout Mountain in DeKalb County, Alabama. That is up in the northeast corner of the state. It is about forty miles south of Chattanooga.

P: Where does the Mentone come in?

Y: It was named for a city or town in France. Mentone has historically been a sort of summer resort. It is up on top of the mountain and there are several summer camps there. Mentone is about six miles from where I was born, and it is the closest town. It is really just a crossroads with two or three stores. But that is where my father was a rural mail carrier for many years.

P: Tell me about your parents. When did the family get to Alabama?

Y: Well, we have been doing some genealogy work and we have traced the York family back quite thoroughly.

My great-grandfather moved to north Alabama just north of Valley Head, which is down in the Valley, about six miles north of Fort Payne. That is where I finished high school, incidentally. [My great-grandfather] moved there in about 1840. And then some time between then and the turn of the century, my grandfather moved out on Lookout Mountain, where our old home-place is, and where I was born. [He] homesteaded some land there. This would have been just before the turn of the century. I was born in a house that was built by him and his sons around 1905 or so.

P: Where did the family come from before they got to north Alabama?

Y: Well, there is a story that might be of interest. My wife is from Evergreen, Alabama. She had been very much involved in genealogy and studying her family history. A friend of hers here in Gainesville suggested that she should be a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the DAR. Since she was involved in genealogy, Vam checked on her family background and she qualified without any problems. Then the husband of this friend of hers who got her into DAR suggested that I should be in the SAR. Well, I did not know what SAR was. It is the Sons of the American Revolution. He called me and said, "You need to join that." He was president of the local chapter here. He is a member of the faculty, incidentally. I was not very interested in joining another organization, so I told him, "Well, I will consider it."

Then we got into our genealogy work and discovered that my great-great-great-grandfather had settled in central North Carolina, in what is now Guilford County. That is near Greensboro. He had settled there around 1750 with a grant of land from the King of England. His name was Seymour York. He donated the land for the first primitive Baptist Church on the North American continent, which is right there in Sandy Creek, North Carolina. [It is] right on Sandy Creek.

When the revolutionary war came along, he was a loyalist. He was arrested during the war by the revolutionaries. He was sent to prison after the war, because of his loyalty to the King of England. So I was able to call my friend back who wanted me to join the SAR and say, "I do not qualify. [laughter] My great-great-grandfather was on the wrong side." It turned out that there are others who were on the right side; I could have qualified. But that was my out for joining the SAR.

P: So was that the relative that comes to North Carolina? Or [was that] his son?

Y: That is the relative that came to North Carolina.

P: I meant from North Carolina to Alabama.

Y: No. They went to Tennessee. His son went to eastern Tennessee, and then moved on to central Tennessee, sort of east of Nashville. And then the offspring moved on to Alabama.

One other interesting story: In pursuing our genealogy work, we encountered the name of John York from California who was studying the family. He had been back to Alabama to check on the lines there. It turned out that his great- great-grandfather was the brother of my great-grandfather, and they both moved to Alabama around 1840. He decided to go West, and he went through Missouri. He stopped there for a year or two and married there. He then went on out West and settled in Napa Valley, California. At one time he owned most of what is Napa Valley today. There is a historical marker there that I went to see just a couple of years ago, that marks the site of John York's cabin, built in 1845.

P: So those Yorks have made their name all over, have they not?

Y: We got around.

P: What about your mother's family? Their name was Leila Hixon?

Y: Yes, they too moved out on the mountain there from up around Chattanooga and the northwest Georgia area. I do not know as much about their family lines. My mother's father, Millard Hixon, was elected sheriff of DeKalb County as a Republican in 1915. He was the first Republican elected in that county since Reconstruction days. [He was] a very fine man, apparently, [and] was very well liked by everyone. He died of typhoid in that great epidemic of 1917. So I never knew him, but people always spoke very highly of him.

My mother and dad married in the community. Both of them had gone to a one-teacher, one-room school there--that is all they had to offer. [The school] went up through about the sixth or seventh grade.

Mother was a remarkable person. She was a very unusual person in that she had some ambitions, certainly for herself. But after her two sons came along, [her ambitions were] perhaps more for them than for herself. At any rate, the marriage did not go well. Primarily, I think, [it was] because mother was never satisfied with [her position as a] wife there out in this rural community, [with] no opportunity for education and no good prospects for her children. So they separated when I was about a year and a half old. She moved down to Valley Head, where her mother was. Her father was dead at that time. My father built a house for her down there. I went with her. And my brother, who was five years older, went with my dad because the older brother was easier for him to [take care of]. So that is how I grew up (with my mother), although [I was] very close to my dad. One of the great things that I appreciated about the both of them is that I never heard a harsh word or a critical word said about either by the other.

P: Now, your father married again?

Y: Father married again several years later. And my mother married again several years later. In fact, she did not marry until the end of World War II.

P: So you had step-parents?

Y: I had step-parents, although I was not necessarily very close to them because I stayed with my dad at times during the summer and I was away at college by the time mother remarried.

P: I guess this was your father's second wife--Ida McCurdy--because she is in the obituary as one of the survivors.

Y: That is right; I had forgotten.

P: You say you have one brother?

Y: I had one brother. He was five years older than I. He died of emphysema in about 1979, I believe it was.

P: What was his name?

Y: Ted--Millard Theodore.

P: Tell me about growing up there on the mountain. Were there other kids?

Y: Let me tell you a little bit more about my mother. She moved to Valley Head, as I said, when I was just a year and a half, two years old. She went to high school; she had the equivalent of a sixth or seventh grade education in that one-teacher school. She went to high school, and in two years graduated from high school as valedictorian. She went ahead to college. And this was in 1928.

P: It was not usual for women to go.

Y: It was very unusual, particularly from that part of the country.

P: What school [did she go to]?

Y: Well, the first year she went to Berea. That was a college that was set up to serve the underprivileged people of the mountain areas throughout Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, and down into Alabama.

P: Where was it located?

Y: It was up in Kentucky. But then that was a little far away, and there was what used to be a normal college--a teacher's college originally. [It is] now Jacksonville State University. It is about eighty miles from home. She went there and got her degree in education and taught for the rest of her life until retirement. Of course, this is during the Depression. [It was] a very difficult time. She had no money. They had a little "This is Your Life" program for her here in Gainesville. She was here for a number of years before she died. So one of the organizations she belonged to had a "This is Your Life" program for her and they asked me to say a few words. In the course of my remarks, I said that she was probably the only coed in the history of higher education that went to college with a six year old son and a milk cow. She literally took a milk cow to college, because that was the primary source of nutrition.

She and I lived in a one room apartment in the old slave quarters of an old home that belonged to the president of the college, Dr. Clarence Daugette. The Daugettes treated us like family. Mrs. Daugette was a very gracious southern lady. When they had receptions, and things like that in the president's home, she would have me come. She said, "Little E. T., stand by me in the receiving line." Really, they were great people.

Mother got out of college in 1932 and taught in a rural school out on Sand Mountain, which is a parallel mountain to Lookout. She was principal of a two-teacher school, receiving \$75 a month. Except that first year, that \$75 was in scrip because the state had run out of money. Some of that scrip could be redeemed, but I do not think she ever got it all redeemed. So we were living right in a rural community. Afternoons after school and on weekends, she and I got out and picked cotton and pulled fodder for so much per bundle. Do you know what fodder is, Sam?

P: What?

Y: It is the leaves of a corn stalk. You pull it off, tie it up in bundles, and that becomes good forage for cattle. But that is some indication of the kind of woman she was; [she was] very frugal, but very dedicated to education. Of course, if she had not left the mountain, I am sure that Ted and I never would have gone to college.

P: Well, how about your brother? Was she close to him?

Y: Oh yes. In fact, when he got ready to go to high school, he came and lived with us and went to high school. We were all very close. It is just the circumstance of their divorce. But they were still very civil, and I always appreciated that. But Lookout Mountain, where we were born, was a very rural community. It was about twelve to fifteen miles to town, to Fort Payne. Roads were terrible. [There were] no school buses of course, so you could go to whatever school was there. And that was a six-grade school. [There were] very few cars, so there was not opportunity for people to run into town to go to school. I think my mother was the first person in that community to ever get a high school degree. Even when I was in high school, only those few who had moved away had ever gone to high school. But it was a very poor community. You have heard of economically-depressed Appalachia? Well, that was right in the heart of it. We were probably a little better off with my dad. I spent a lot of time with Dad during holidays and summers; I would go spend the summer with him. So I lived a lot in that community after I grew up.

But people did not have food stamps and they did not have welfare; they got by on what they had. It was farming, and mostly subsistence farming. I remember spending the night at a neighbor's home, and getting up for breakfast the next morning and having cornmeal gravy. They did not have flour; they had cornmeal that they raised. They raised their own lard from hogs. They had fatback, which was a very fat type of bacon that they cured. [They had] sorghum syrup. The only thing that was bought was coffee.

P: Nobody worried about cholesterol?

Y: Nobody worried about cholesterol. Now and then they had a few chickens, and they had some eggs. But that was what we had for breakfast. They would sweeten the coffee with sorghum syrup. But the people did not know that they were disadvantaged. They were generally happy.

P: That was the way of life.

Y: [It was] the way of life--absolutely. But it made me appreciate what life can offer.

P: Where did you go to high school?

Y: Valley Head, which is down in the Valley there from where we were born.

P: So you remember the Depression decade very vividly?

Y: Very vividly. We grew up in it. In fact, as I said, Mother finished college and started to work during that period.

P: So it was mainly an era of being without, rather than having anything?

Y: Absolutely.

P: What did you do for fun? You did not have movies. Were you too far away for radio, even?

Y: No, we began to have radio. In fact, the first radio in our home community out on the mountain there was an old battery crystal set that my dad bought. While Mother was in Berea I went with her for the first few months. And then she just did not have means of looking after me there. So I went back and stayed with Dad most of that year, and he bought a radio that year. I would have been about four at that time. And one of the first things I remember was the Grand Ole Opry coming in from Nashville. You have heard of the Grand Ole Opry? Everybody in the neighborhood would gather around to listen to the Grand Ole Opry on Saturday night.

It is also the first presidential election that I remember. That was Al Smith and Herbert Hoover in 1928. We listened to elements of the campaign. And of course Al Smith, in the South, was characterized as something with horns and a tail.

P: He was a Catholic.

Y: [It was] because he was a Catholic, and that is a great, primitive, very conservative Baptist community there. I remember we had a neighbor named James Peter Boozer. He was a short, very rotund fellow. He came over to find out about this radio. We had telephones in the community that were not hooked into a central switchboard, but they would just serve the people in that area. You know the old type that you would ring, and you would have one long and two short [rings] or three long [rings] for each family. So he [Boozer] knew telephones. But this radio he could not figure out. So he came over and got in back of the radio, and he saw this wire that went out to the back. Daddy had strung a big aerial out in a big oak tree. And he followed that wire out to the end of the aerial in the oak tree and it stopped there. That really baffled him. So he, like many of us, did not know much about radios and could not understand them.

P: Did you have kids to play with? Were you into that kind of thing?

Y: Oh yes, there were a lot of kids in the community.

P: A lot of children.

Y: Right.

P: Were you a good student in high school?

Y: I was reasonable; [I was] not the best, but I was in Beta Club, and a few things like that.

P: When did you graduate?

Y: 1939.

P: Did you have to work [while] going to school?

Y: Absolutely. I had as many as three jobs at times.

P: Doing what?

Y: Well I remember one year I lived in the Dairy Science Building, down in the bowels of the building. [It was] sort of like down here, [but] even further down; [it was] about the third floor down. I delivered milk for the college creamery. They had their own milk route, and I got up at about 5:00 in the morning and delivered milk. I also waited on tables at boarding houses for my food. You would wait on one table and you would get eight boys to come in and eat. And you would get free food if you would then wait on them. I had a job at the university. I worked in the Ag economics department part-time. My first year, they paid freshmen twenty cents an hour. However, I was

fortunate to get a job at the old NYA [National Youth Administration]. Do you remember that? And I worked over in the treasurer's office for thirty cents an hour. So I did all kinds of jobs.

P: Did you have to work when you were in high school?

Y: I did. I farmed. During the summer my dad helped me get a horse for cultivation. I made a cotton crop. I remember between my junior and senior year I made a bale of cotton. And I sold that bale and bought a typewriter which I carried all the way through college. In fact, we just disposed of it here the other day while we were cleaning out the attic.

P: So was your interest in or love of agriculture something, then, that goes all the way back to childhood? It has been the focus of your life.

Y: I think so. And of course, in high school I took vocational agriculture. I went to a state FFA [Future Farmers of America] convention once; my agriculture teacher took me down to Auburn for that. And that is where I got really interested in Auburn.

I first thought I would be a vocational agricultural teacher, like he was. I figured out, based upon his salary, that they got \$5 a day.

P: That was big time.

Y: I thought that was big money, and I thought if I could ever get that far, I would do great. When I got to college, I discovered that I had to take such things as various education courses and an educational psychology course, which turned me off. I switched over to agricultural science and went on to graduate school.

P: When did you enter Auburn?

Y: The first summer after high school in 1939 I went to Jacksonville where my mother had gone, and where my brother was going at the time. I took three quarters of freshman English and two quarters of freshman history in that one term because I wanted to get those off before I got to Auburn. And then I went to Auburn in the fall of 1939.

P: So you were there until when?

Y: I went to summer school every year and I got my degree in three years, which would have been in the spring of 1942. I was also in ROTC though, and was only a junior in ROTC because it is a four year program. So I stayed on until March 1943 when I went into the army, and started my master's work there.

P: You had already started your master's when you went into the service?

Y: Right, and I had done some teaching there. I think that influenced what I did in the service.

P: Tell me again what your major was as an undergraduate.

Y: Well, I had what you would call an "ag-science" major, which I was in. But I really was focusing on agronomy and soils. That is what I did my graduate work in.

P: Now you took a B.S. in 1942?

Y: Right.

P: The summer of 1942 was commencement.

Y: The spring of 1942, right.

P: And where were you in the graduating class?

Y: I do not know; they did not rank them. I do remember that I got the B.B. Comer award, which was given to the graduating senior having the highest scholastic average in natural sciences.

P: That is Comer.

Y: He was a former governor. But I do not think they rated the graduating class. I would not have been at the very top, but I had good grades in college.

P: Now by this time, of course, the war is going on. First in Europe, and then we become involved in it. Now, how did that begin to impact your academic work?

Y: As I said, I was in ROTC. As soon as we completed ROTC, we were expected to go into the service. In fact, I would have probably gone in earlier had I not been in ROTC. My brother volunteered as soon as the war started, even though he had a physical disability that could have kept him out if he had wanted it to. That is another thing about where I grew up: the people in that area were very patriotic. You had more volunteers for military service in that Appalachia area than in any other part of the country.

P: And of course that was also true of the whole South. [They had a higher] percentage of volunteers.

Y: But particularly in that area.

P: And so you went into service when?

Y: I went into the service in March 1943. Now normally, when you finish ROTC, you get your commission as an officer. However, in the normal program, I would have gone to summer ROTC camp between my junior and senior year. That would have been in the summer of 1942. But the camps at that time were filled with recruits in training, and they did not have room for college boys to go over and play for six weeks. So that meant that when we finished ROTC I had to go into OCS, the Officer's Candidate School, as though I had never had any previous training. So we were sent directly to Fort Sill, to the field artillery.

P: That is in Oklahoma?

Y: Yes. It is an interesting place. I do not know if you have ever been out there. I got out there in March and it was as cold as it could be. It had been raining, and it was muddy. They had a saying out there: "It is the only place in the world that you could be up to your ass in mud and be blinded by dust storms at the same time." [laughter]

P: They always have those training camps in the best places.

Y: That is right. But I was there for thirteen weeks, in OCS. Then they had me come back to an executive officer's school. And then I went to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to the field artillery placement training center. And my brother was there at the time. He had also gone through OCS--not through ROTC, but as an enlisted person. I had some experience in teaching; I taught a graduate lab or two. Well, they put me in the field artillery training school there. And I taught field artillery--gunnery--for a year. And I went back to [Fort] Sill to the officer's advanced course.

It was a little unusual for a first lieutenant to go to that course; it is usually majors and colonels that went to that. But they let me go to that. I spent three months [there] and then I got out and was given a new battery of eight-inch howitzers that was training to go to Europe. That would have been in the early fall of 1944. I had a bunch of noncoms [non-commissioned officers] that had been with a coastal artillery battalion in the Aleutian Islands for three years.

But at any rate, we took that battery through training and were all boxed up to go to Europe, [when] things began to fold up over there. The group headquarters went ahead in January and held the rest of us up. Of course things fell apart over there later in the spring. Then they began to train us to go to the Pacific.

P: All of this was before you ever left the United States? You never got there?

Y: I never got out. And then they switched us over to a 4.2 chemical mortar outfit. But before we got out of the country with that the war was over in Europe.

[There is] one thing that I might mention in passing: In the ROTC [program] at Auburn, they designate two people each year as distinguished military graduates. I received one of those distinctions. Normally, you would be given a regular army commission upon graduation, if you wanted it. Of course that was considered to be a prized thing, since it was the same thing that a West Point graduate had. Since I did not get a commission when I graduated, I just assumed that was out. But apparently it stayed in my record.

At Fort Sill, when I was in OCS, I thought the tack officers were picking on me a lot; they seemed to know my name and all. At a graduation party after the course was over, the tack officer came around smiling and he explained what was going on. They had that in my record and they were further testing me to see if the army would offer me a regular army commission, which I was offered shortly thereafter.

P: Did you jump over the second lieutenant rank, or did you get that somewhere along the line?

Y: No, I was promoted from second lieutenant.

P: So you started out as second lieutenant, and then you were promoted at [Fort] Sill?

Y: No, [I was promoted] while I was at [Fort] Bragg.

P: OK. That is when you came first. When you left the military, what rank did you hold?

Y: Well you know, they would advance you as you retired. I had a captain's rank.

P: Did you stay in the Reserves?

Y: No, that is the thing I was going to explain. I took a regular army commission and could have stayed in and made it a profession. But [because of] the fact that I did not get into combat and did not have overseas experience, I felt that I would be at a great disadvantage in the regular military. And I had an opportunity to get out--the war was over--and go back to graduate school, which I did in late 1945.

P: You were not enthralled with the military?

Y: I liked the military. I guess if I had military experience overseas I might have stayed in a while.

P: What did you like about it?

Y: I do not know. I just enjoyed it. In field artillery there was an opportunity to apply some of my training in mathematics and there was science involved with it. I did not mind the discipline. I enjoyed the military.

P: So you leave the service when?

Y: In November 1945 I went back to Auburn and finished my master's.

P: You had no problem getting back into Auburn?

Y: No. I finished my master's in the summer of 1946.

P: So you moved pretty quickly then, for your masters?

Y: Right.

P: What was your major, and your thesis?

Y: It was in soil chemistry.

P: You came back with that huge number of veterans moving back in.

Y: Oh yes, there was a tremendous number. And that is where I met my wife when I came back. She was a senior at Auburn at that time, and was president of the women's student government. They had a student government and they had a women's student government at that time. She was president of the women's student government. At any rate, that is where we met, and then married around Christmas of 1946.

P: You started to say something about the president of Auburn, and I interrupted you.

Y: No, the Dean of Agriculture was old Dean Funchess.

P: Do you remember his first name?

Y: Marion J. Funchess. He was a highly respected person nationally. He seemed to take a great interest in me, and he encouraged me to go on to graduate school. In fact, he contacted several schools. I had a chance to go to the top graduate programs in the country--any one of them that I wanted. [There was] California, Wisconsin, Iowa State ([which] had an excellent soils program), Cornell, and North Carolina State ([which] was developing well at that time). But I chose to go to Cornell, and never regretted it. I had probably the preeminent soil scientist in the world there: Dr. Richard Bradfield. He was chairman of the department and chaired my committee. It was a great experience at Cornell. It was through his influence that I became fascinated with the problems of world hunger and malnutrition. Bradfield had a great interest in international issues, and he did a lot of travelling. In fact, he was employed along with Dr. Manglesdorf from Harvard, a corn geneticist, and Dr. Stakeman from Minnesota, a plant pathologist. The Rockefeller foundation hired those three people to go down to Mexico to set up a research program to try to improve cereal production. That initial effort in the early 1940s led to the creation of one of the international agricultural research centers in Mexico at Cimmyt.

P: That is the name of the agency?

Y: Well that is the name of the center in Cimmyt. It is the International Center for Research on Wheat and Maize [corn] in Cimmyt. But that is one of the international centers that I later worked

with that was a major contributor and had major responsibility for the green revolution that you have heard about in Asia and all over the third world (except for Africa). At any rate, I became very interested. Bradfield would come back and give a seminar on some of his experiences. I was fascinated by this. That was my ambition: to get involved in that ultimately. But as we will discuss later, I became involved in some other things, and was so tied down by other responsibilities, that I never got to do it. That is why I set leaving some time as a goal for myself. When I went to Tallahassee as chancellor I said I would do it for five years, but no longer. And that is what I have done for the last twelve or thirteen years.

P: You finally got back to it?

Y: I really got back to it, and I would say it has been perhaps the most rewarding part of my life.

P: I want a break in this development here and get some personal information in. First of all, give me your wife's full name, and tell me a little bit about her.

Y: Vermelle C. Cardwell was her maiden name. She came from Evergreen, Alabama, which is a little town about midway between Montgomery and Mobile. Her father was a clerk in the post office there. She came from very modest means too.

P: She was born when?

Y: [She was] born 30 January 1925. But she went to Auburn, and that is where I met her. It was one of the best things I ever did. She has been a great companion.

P: How did you all meet?

Y: In college. Actually, we double dated once. She was with a fraternity brother of mine and I was with another girl. We just sort of hit it off, I guess.

P: What fraternity?

Y: Alpha Gamma Rho. That is the agricultural fraternity. I was president of that in my senior year.

P: Now, you were married at Christmastime, in December?

Y: Yes, it was 26 December. When I came home from Cornell at Christmastime we married, and she went back with me. She has been with me ever since.

P: And you have two children?

Y: [They were] adopted.

P: What are their names, and what are their dates of birth?

Y: Lisa Carol (Carol was Vam's other name--Vermelle Carol) was born 29 December 1961. Travis (from my family) Lofton (Vam's father's name) was born Christmas day in 1964. We adopted them both from the Seller's Baptist Home in New Orleans. And we have been greatly blessed by them.

P: Where are they now? Where is Lisa?

Y: Lisa is now living in Daytona Beach and working, and still going to school now and then. Travis graduated in history here, this past May.

P: Good man.

Y: He is. Travis is a good kid and a good student. But he liked to play more than he liked to go to school. So he played around. He first went over to Flagler [College] at St. Augustine, and liked the beach better than he liked the classroom. Finally, he decided he wanted to get serious, and he came back here. They let him into the history and political science program, and he really loved it. He found his love here. I told him what I was doing. He said, "Oh yes, I never got to take one of Dr. Proctor's courses, but if I get a chance, I am going to come back and do it."

P: So he is in school now?

Y: No he is finished.

P: But he did not go on to graduate work?

Y: Well, he thinks he wants to, but he wants to get out a while and work. That is fine with me. He has been helping us some, but he is planning to go to South Florida and perhaps work for a while.

P: Neither of your two children are married, so there is no use for me asking you about grandchildren?

Y: That we know of. We have a nephew that we treat as a son. He is my brother's only son, who has been with us since he got out of college in 1975. So while we were in Tallahassee, he lived in our home. And while Mother was still living, he helped to look after her. He is now married. He married Jim Stringfellow's daughter, Martha. They have three lovely children that we call our grandchildren, but they are in effect our family too.

P: So there are some Yorks.

Y: Oh yes, they are being perpetuated.

P: All right, let us go up here now to Cornell. I want to find out what you were doing there, and when you graduated.

Y: Well, I took a major in soil chemistry again with Dr. Bradfield, who was a wonderful individual and a marvelous tutor.

P: You were working on a Ph.D. there?

Y: Yes, I was working on a Ph.D. I took minors in inorganic chemistry and I took a sort of a joint minor over in plant breeding and plant physiology. I had a great experience at Cornell; I stayed there for two and one half years.

P: You were there as a married man?

Y: As a married man, right. I stayed there for two and one half years.

P: Did they have student housing?

Y: Well, the first year we were there housing was very difficult. That would have been the spring of 1946. We did not have anything right on the campus. So the university rented an old hotel at Watkins Glen, about thirty miles away, and I rode a bus back and forth that first term. Then we were able to find an apartment in a private home after that, where we lived close to the campus.

- P: So go back to your academic work there at Cornell. You were working. Did you do a dissertation under this program, like we would in history or political science?
- Y: I did not realize there was any option. Oh yes, that was a big part of it. I had a fellowship from the American Potash Institute there. The fellowship paid more than the normal assistantship did. Furthermore, I did not have to teach with a fellowship and I could concentrate on research. That is how I was able to complete my Ph.D. in two and one half years.
- P: I meant to ask you, did you have to do a thesis at Auburn for your M.A.?
- Y: Oh yes.
- P: What was it in?
- Y: It was in soil chemistry. It dealt with the interactions between calcium and potassium and soils and plants.
- P: And what did you do for your dissertation at Cornell?
- Y: It was more or less a follow-up to that study, in which we got much more deeply into the issue of reactions between lime and potassium and soils, [and] interactions with potassium and calcium.
- P: Has that been published?
- Y: Oh yes. [In] several papers.
- P: So when did you finish at Cornell?
- Y: [I finished] in February of 1949. I had an opportunity to go back to Auburn, but I decided it would be better to go somewhere else. In fact, I had several opportunities. I finally went to North Carolina State [University].
- P: During the time that you were at Cornell, Vam was working?
- Y: She worked for the treasurer of the university for a while. I guess she was down there all of the time.
- P: Was it all work and no play for a graduate student at Cornell then?
- Y: A lot of it was, although we did some fishing in some good trout streams around there. And [we] did some deer hunting and some pheasant hunting. I will have to tell you my story about pheasants. When I went up there, I bought Vam a birthday present. It was a twelve-gauge shotgun which she never fully appreciated. So she reciprocated the next year, and bought me a birthday present which was a Singer sewing machine. [laughter] But I took this new shotgun out and I was going to kill a pheasant. We were out somewhere from Ithaca. I was out there by myself, and here this beautiful cock pheasant came strolling by. And I stood there and watched it, and I could not shoot it. I could not shoot. So I have never killed a pheasant; [it is] such a beautiful bird.
- P: So both of you like the outdoor life, obviously.
- Y: Oh yes.
- P: There had to be a lot of camaraderie though, between students in your program; there were millions of them there.

Y: Right.

P: How large of a school was Cornell at the time? I know it is not huge--even today.

Y: No, I think there were around 9,000 or 10,000 students.

P: It was a first class school then?

Y: Oh yes. In fact, that is why I went there.

P: And it was a strong program in what you were taking?

Y: [It was] probably the strongest in the country.

P: And you held a fellowship all of the time that you were in school?

Y: Yes.

P: How did it happen that they gave you the fellowship?

Y: Well, I do not know. The Institute made the fellowship available, and it was up to the department chairman to assign it. When I wrote him and talked to him about coming, he suggested this because it was in an area that the Institute would be interested in having work done.

P: You were a pretty young fellow to be getting your Ph.D., particularly in view of the time that you had spent in the military.

Y: Well, I had not thought of it. I was twenty-seven.

P: I noticed you were the youngest in a lot of different episodes in your life, including the time that you went to North Carolina State. Now, how did you get that job?

Y: Well, there were a lot of connections between Cornell and North Carolina State. The head of the agronomy department was a graduate of Cornell, and had worked with Bradfield. The director of the experiment station had been on the faculty at Cornell. He also had been head of the agronomy department. And there were two or three professors from N.C. State at Cornell, working on their doctorate at the time. So we just had a lot of connections. Vam and I went by one summer--the summer of 1948--and interviewed. I was offered a position and we were delighted to go. In fact, they started me at an associate professor level, which was a little surprising; they do not do that anymore.

P: How much?

Y: \$4,800.

P: That was big money.

Y: [It was] pretty good money in 1949.

P: You would not have gotten that if you had gone to work here at the University of Florida in 1949.

Y: I think Auburn offered \$4,200 at the time. And that was high by their standards.

P: [That is] much higher than what they were paying here. Presidents were not even getting that at the time, at the University of Florida. I think Miller got somewhere around \$40,000.

OK. You go down to North Carolina State University, which is located where?

Y: At Raleigh.

P: And where did you all live?

Y: We lived in two apartments. We lived in one for a year or so, and moved to another one. And then we bought a house I guess a year or so before we left. I went there to do research on peanuts, primarily.

P: Was that a new area for you?

Y: [It was] totally new. But the department head had also worked on peanuts before he became department head, and he did not have time to continue that. So I was to pick up some of his [research]. He committed to write a chapter in a book on peanuts. So my first assignment was to write that chapter for him, of course, with him getting credit for it too. But it was a great opportunity, because I had to do a lot of literature review for that book, which also was needed to prepare me for the research program. So I did that.

And then about a year after I got there one of the professors left, and was teaching soil fertility. I was asked to take over that course, and [I] really enjoyed it. I was not a bad teacher; I got very good ratings by students and all. In fact, [I got] the top [ratings]. We had a large agronomy department--the largest in the country there. They had one person under the head in charge of teaching, one in charge of soils research, and one in charge of plant research or crops research. And there was another person in charge of extension. So there were four people in charge of specific program areas. The person in charge of teaching left, and I was asked to assume that responsibility because I had gotten involved in the teaching program and was advising students, and so on. And so I became the person in charge of teaching, still continuing my research on peanuts. I had a full time master's-level student working on this Ph.D. work with me.

P: Now, was that a kind of new area of research--peanuts?

Y: It was an interesting area, Sam, because after World War II we began to see a big improvement in crop production. Corn yields doubled and tripled.

P: Throughout the United States?

Y: Throughout the U.S.

P: Including the South?

Y: Including the South. And cotton yields were going up. And everything was improving, except for peanuts. And the title of this book that I got involved with was The Peanut, the Unpredictable Legume.

P: Why were the other crops improving so?

Y: [It was] the result of research, and the new technology available, improved varieties, better fertilization, pest control, and so on. But at any rate, you were really seeing a revolution in terms of how productivity was improving--except with peanuts.

P: Of course we needed it, with the needs of the world.

Y: Absolutely. And in fact, if we had not had it, we would have had billions of people starving today all over the world. But the peanut was truly unpredictable because it did not respond to normal treatments. It did not respond to fertilizers like cotton and corn [did]. And so I was really given that task of trying to see if we could not do something about peanut production. Yields of peanuts in North Carolina--and nationally--had been stable for sixty years. For as long as you had records, in yield per acre, [they were stable]. Whereas everything else was going up.

So I got heavily involved in the research program. And within two years I felt I knew what the problem was and began to put out some demonstrations and experiments to show that. Basically, what you had were a number of factors limiting production. It might be inadequate nutrition, it might be inadequate plant population, poor varieties, insects, diseases, [and] a whole range of factors. I went around to all of the departments--entomology, plant pathology, the agricultural engineering department--and said, "Give me your best practices for peanuts in all of these areas." I was a soils man but I had the responsibility of trying to put all of this together. When we put all of the practices together, we got phenomenal increases in yields. We would set out an experiment in which we would have total, complete practices minus fertilizer, complete practices minus disease control, and complete practices minus insects. We could demonstrate what each of those factors were contributing. Then fortuitously, I have always been interested in agriculture and farmland. We bought a farm over in eastern North Carolina in Edgecombe County, which is a great agricultural area.

P: Now this is you and Vam buying a farm?

Y: Right. And it was a farm of over four hundred acres that had a peanut allotment on it. We could not have bought it if it had not been rundown. Production was very poor; it had tobacco and peanut and cotton allotments, and so on. But I used that as a sort of laboratory for my work on peanuts.

After that first year of demonstration, showing what could be done if you take all of these practices and put them together as a package, I was then the only extension person. I was not paid by extension, but I would go out and meet with farm groups and all and tell them about this. The usual response was, "Well, you can do this on your little plots, but you cannot do it on a farm basis." So when we bought that farm I said, "Let's see what we can do." The average yields in North Carolina were about one thousand pounds per acre. We had these records because of government programs; you had to report production. On that farm, production was about 700 pounds per acre, so it was below average. The first year that we had the farm I put this package together, and our average yields were about 3,000 pounds.

P: You tripled them.

Y: We quadrupled what had been being made. And then I was able to go out and say, "Look, I know this can be done because I have done it." And that was very impressive. Significantly, Sam (and I worked this up), they had a southeastern peanut research meeting here in Gainesville about fifteen years ago. They asked me to come speak at it. I went back and got the records. What happened in peanut production in North Carolina, if you start now in 1950 and further back, is constant. Beginning in the early 1950s, it started up like this. It was a state average, starting at about 1,000. And do you know what the average is today? It is about 4,000 pounds. [That is the] state average. The same thing has happened nationally. I talked with Jimmy Carter once about peanuts. And he was using some of the same practices in Georgia that we started using there in North Carolina. I did not intend to get into that, but since you pursued it, it really revolutionized peanut production. I did not do all of the research; I just helped to pull things together.

P: I want to ask you two things about the peanuts that you have mentioned. What were peanuts used for? I know you boil peanuts and you roast peanuts and you salt peanuts and you serve them at cocktail parties.

Y: You make peanut butter out of them. And it is an oil crop too. It is a very good vegetable oil.

P: What I am really asking is, what was the world demand and the increasing utilization of it in the United States during this period that you are experimenting with it?

Y: Well, it is for all of the purposes that you have indicated. But it is also an important oil crop and it is an important protein crop. That is particularly true of areas in Africa, where peanuts are very important, because that is probably about the most nutritious thing that farmers grow.

P: And it is easily grown?

Y: It is easily grown with the right technology.

P: Is it something that can be grown all over the United States, or only in the South?

Y: [It can] only [be grown] in the South.

P: In which states?

Y: From Virginia around to Oklahoma.

P: Florida?

Y: Florida is a major peanut producer. You have a few in Tennessee, but it is mostly in Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, around to Oklahoma and Texas.

P: Tell the tape what allotments are, or were.

Y: Well, this goes back to the Roosevelt era, in the Great Depression, when farm economies were greatly depressed. They were depressed for many reasons, but one reason was there was overproduction. So this led to a number of actions by the federal government to control production. I remember this on our own place. Back in the early 1930s the government had a program to kill little pigs and to plow up cotton that we had already planted. And there was a lot of criticism for that program--to kill pigs and to plow up something that was already growing.

P: Particularly with people being hungry.

Y: But out of all this there grew a program of restricting production of many crops, such as cotton, peanuts, tobacco, and so on. So you had allotments; this was acreage that each farm could plant for a given crop. And the government came out and surveyed the land, and made sure that you did not grow more than that. If you did, you were penalized.

P: Penalized with dollars?

Y: Penalized in terms of what you could sell the crops for. If you complied with the allotments, then you got a so-called "support price".

P: But you did not get an actual subsidy?

Y: Some considered it a subsidy, but in fact it was mostly the ability to sell at a price that had been picked by the government.

P: Why were they providing allotments for peanut growing at a moment that you are trying to increase production?

Y: That is a good question, and it is a lot more complicated than you might think. They were restricting production because of overproduction overall, which depressed prices. But if you could increase your production per acre by fifty percent, it means your cost of production per pound of product is much less. If you are producing two thousand pounds of peanuts, it would be much more efficient to produce that on five acres than on ten acres, or on one acre instead of two. You do not have as much land to work, you do not have as much input that you have to worry with, and so on. It is really aimed at improving the efficiency of production and to enhance income.

P: You said that when you purchased this farm in Tennessee, it was a depressed farm.

Y: No, [it was in] North Carolina.

P: Did that improve?

Y: Oh yes.

P: It became productive?

Y: It was depressed primarily because it was an absentee ownership situation. They had tenants, and they were not looking after it.

P: So it was not a matter of fertility of the soil, or anything like that?

Y: It was easy to get it into production, just by using appropriate technology.

P: And you were able to then apply the things that you were teaching your students to do to your farm?

Y: [The things] that I had discovered in my research.

P: Tell me about this period, then. You were at North Carolina from 1949 to 1956. You come as associate professor to do research, and you do research.

Y: And I taught.

P: And then you are quickly promoted to professor?

Y: In about two years [I was promoted] to professor, and a few months later to department chairman.

P: At the young age of thirty?

Y: Yes, something like that. Yes, I was thirty. And I was probably too young. I wish many times that I had stayed in research and teaching longer. Although I liked teaching and I liked research, I also liked administration. I felt that in administration, you can probably have greater influence on what is accomplished than a single individual can in teaching/research, because you have an impact on what many others do. At that time, my department was the largest department in the college and the largest agronomy department in the nation.

P: Now all of this was in the college of agriculture? And that was a strong college at North Carolina State?

Y: [It was] a very strong college. It had emerged very well following World War II. It had some great leadership, and it was becoming one of the top colleges of agriculture in the country.

P: Was this the major agricultural college in the state?

Y: Oh yes.

P: By comparison with other schools in the South, was Clemson a rival?

Y: I would say at that time N.C. State was the best agricultural college in the South, and was beginning to rank with the better midwestern agricultural programs. I think that today Florida is equal to or better than N.C. State.

P: You said that your department was the largest in the college?

Y: It was the largest in the university.

P: That meant it was what size?

Y: We had about eighty professors.

P: Because that was a large university in the early 1950s.

Y: Well, it was reasonably large; it had 10,000 or 12,000 students.

P: I thought it was larger than that, with the G.I.s.

Y: Well, it may have been. I do not remember exactly, but it had a lot of students. It had engineering and architecture and textiles, in addition to agriculture and all of the rest.

P: It is kind of interesting that, when that school was organized way back in the 1880s, its first president was a man by the name of Ashley Hurt, who was then teaching at the Florida Agricultural College in Lake City. They wooed him to come up to North Carolina.

Y: I did not know that.

P: So you are the second big star from Florida.

Y: [laughter] I had not thought of it.

P: So you stay at North Carolina. You are happy at North Carolina?

Y: I enjoyed it very much.

P: And you were doing all three things: administration, teaching, and research?

Y: Right.

P: You had good lab facilities?

Y: Yes. In fact, while I was there we moved into a new building. The agronomy department had a new building, with probably the best facilities on the campus.

- P: Well, North Carolina State has always been known for its support of higher education, like most other southern states. So you enjoyed that largess?
- Y: Yes, and I think that grew out of the fact that North Carolina had some great education governors who really made that possible. And that was my great hope and dream here in Florida--that we could convince Bob Graham [Governor of Florida, 1979-1987, Senator, 1986-present] or other governors, to become *the* education governor. But we have never been successful in that; it is very disappointing.
- P: Not from the time you first arrived with Farris Bryant [Governor of Florida, 1961-1965], right down to the present.
- Y: Farris Bryant, and then Haydon Burns [Governor of Florida, 1965-1967] and then Claude Kirk, Jr. [Governor of Florida, 1967-1971].
- P: And [Reuben] Askew [Governor of Florida, 1971-1979], and we would go on and on and on. So you were pleased, then. Why did you leave North Carolina State then, if everything looked fine and the future was bright for you there?
- Y: Well that is a very good question. I was not dissatisfied at all. They treated me well.
- P: And they paid you well, by comparison with other places.
- Y: They just about tripled my salary in seven years, which was not bad. I had a friend, though, who was an N.C. State graduate, and he was on the University of North Carolina's board of trustees, Dr. H.B. "Skin" Mann, who was president of the American Potash Institute in Washington. He had always seemed very interested in what I was doing, and he prevailed on me to come to Washington as eastern director of the Institute.
- The Potash Institute was not a trade association as such. We had no legislative responsibilities, which trade associations have. But we were primarily a research organization. The potash industry supported research and education programs that had some relevance to the industry. For example, they supported this fellowship when I was a graduate student at Cornell. And they had fellowships all over--here and in various places. And [my friend] also--and I think this is probably what interested me most--said, "We are interested in looking at the global potential to expand our programs. One thing I would want you to do if you were to come here is to travel all over the world and give us--the board--reports on the potentials for potassium use all over the world."
- P: Tell us what potash is, and what it is used for.
- Y: Potash is a common term that is used for potassium. Potassium is an essential element in crop production. It is one of the so-called three basic elements, along with nitrogen and phosphorus. Potassium is the third element in a fertilizer grade. If you go to the garden store and you buy a bag of fertilizer, that may be a five-ten-fifteen grade. That means it is five percent nitrogen, ten percent phosphorus, and fifteen percent potash.
- P: So it is a vital element in agricultural production?
- Y: It is a vital element and it is a major fertilizer element. It has been responsible for very significant increases in production.
- P: Where do you get it?

- Y: It was originally found [in ashes--"pot ashes"]. Our source of supply in this country was out in the West, in New Mexico around Carlsbad. These are deposits that were laid down by ancient seas when there was a great sea basin in that area, millions of years ago. And when the water evaporated in that inland sea, it left deposits of salt--different kinds of salts. And so in New Mexico they were mining this.
- P: So it is a mining [operation]?
- Y: It is a mining operation. They were getting it at about 1,000 feet below the surface. I have been down in some of those mines. Then they discovered large deposits up in Canada, in Saskatchewan and other [places] similarly deposited by ancient seas, but they are down as much as 3,000 feet. They have a little bit in Europe, a little bit in Germany, France and Russia. But Israel, as you know, is producing potash from the Dead Sea. They pump Dead Sea water out onto the dessert into flats, and they just let the sun evaporate the water. And you leave deposits of salt there. When it crystallizes out from evaporation, the potassium will crystalize out at one point, and then the sodium chloride will crystalize out at another point. So what you can do is really separate it by layers. It is layered, and that is the way it is in the Israeli operation (which I have seen), as well as in the deposits that you find deep in the earth.
- P: Is this an exhaustible supply?
- Y: It is an exhaustible supply. Except the ocean water, like the Dead Sea (except the Dead Sea is more concentrated), has concentrations of all kinds of salts. You have, in effect, an inexhaustible supply in the ocean but it would be more expensive to get it out because you have to get rid of the water somehow.
- P: Well, we were in Israel in June, and it looked to me like the Dead Sea went on forever and ever and ever. Was potash the thing that we were smelling there?
- Y: I do not know what you were smelling. [laughter] It probably was not potash, because potash is a salt like the sodium chloride you sprinkle on your potatoes. It does not have any odor, but some of the operations may have had some. Incidentally, there is also an operation out at Salt Lake. You have essentially the same situation that you have in Israel. They are producing commercial sources of potash there.
- P: Since Florida emerged from the sea, are there potash deposits in the state?
- Y: No, there are phosphate deposits from old bones of fish and sharks. We used to have some around in this area; we still have some north of here down around Lakeland and all. There are major phosphate deposits.
- P: So we are not a potash developer?
- Y: No.
- P: You go to Washington then, as the eastern division director. What geographic area did that cover?
- Y: [It] primarily [covered] the East coast and the northeast.
- P: To the Mississippi?
- Y: No, it was mainly [from] Virginia north, to the northeast.

P: Now your responsibilities, then, would go beyond just making travels around the world.

Y: I mainly worked with the colleges in that area.

P: Encouraging research?

Y: Encouraging research, supporting research, giving grants for research and education.

P: What were they researching?

Y: [They were] mostly [researching] soil fertility problems, determining what sort of fertilizer needs would be for different crops under different situations.

P: Was the potash industry interested in exploring where new deposits were located?

Y: No, it was strictly the agricultural agronomic side of it.

P: It was then just the utilization of potash?

Y: That is right.

P: Where were your offices in Washington, and how large an operation was this?

Y: It was not a large office. We were just across from the Statler Hotel, sort of diagonally there on 16th Street. In fact, [we were] almost across from the old Soviet Embassy there on 16th.

P: [Did you have] a pretty good staff?

Y: It was not a large staff. They had the headquarters where the president was, the vice-president, the secretary, and the treasurer. But as the eastern director, that is where my office was.

P: Did you have a laboratory there to test things?

Y: No, I was not doing any research. But I was working with a lot of people who were doing research, and [who] could have an influence.

P: Once again, was the University of Florida or other universities in the state involved? I guess we were the only agricultural school at that time, in the 1950s.

Y: The southern director was involved. He worked with the University of Florida and Auburn and so on. They had directors in four regions. They had an eastern, southern, midwestern, and western.

P: So this University was doing research relating to development?

Y: As they are now.

P: So you leave North Carolina, you leave Raleigh. Where did you all live?

Y: We lived out in Bethesda [Maryland], not far from NIH [National Institute of Health], and the Suburban Hospital.

P: Once again, was this a pleasant experience?

Y: It was very pleasant. I enjoyed all parts of it, but [I] particularly [enjoyed] the international work. I had a chance to travel all over the world.

P: And you did?

Y: And I did. [I travelled to] Latin America, all through Africa, all through Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

P: Now, you are seeing a world in the 1950s that is vastly different than what we see today as we travel around. Europe was still devastated by the war?

Y: Very much so. In fact, I spent one summer in Germany, France and Sweden. This would have been 1957 or 1958. Germany was devastated. They were just putting up the Wall at that time. I saw evidence of new construction all along that border between East and West Germany, all the way north.

P: But you were already seeing the fruits of American production under the Marshall Plan and the other support programs. The food was beginning to come in?

Y: Right.

P: What was the situation in areas that are still devastated today, like Africa?

Y: Of course, I have been very heavily involved in that in the last ten to twelve years. I would say in terms of progress in food production--in addressing problems of hunger, there has been substantial progress in all parts of the world, except in Africa. Asia has made significant improvements. There are significant improvements in Latin America. But Africa is still a basket case.

P: [What about] Pakistan, and places like that?

Y: Pakistan is improving, and India--they were the beneficiaries of the so-called Green Revolution. That is the development of improved varieties of rice, wheat and maize, better technology, better fertilization practices, better agronomic practices, and so on. And you have seen tremendous increases in food production.

I spoke at graduation here about ten years ago, when they gave me an honorary degree. At that time, India was claiming that they were self-sufficient in cereal production, for the first time in many, many years. And that grew out of the tremendous improvements that came about as a result of the Green Revolution. India really is not self-sufficient in food. They are not producing enough oil crops to meet their needs. Really, to say they are self-sufficient in cereal production is probably a misstatement because they may not be importing a lot, but the level of nutrition is still far below what it should be to provide adequate nutrition in India.

P: There was more political stability in Africa then, in the 1950s, than there is today.

Y: That is the tragedy, Sam, as I look at Africa. You know, following World War II, there was a great anti-colonial movement, and there was a lot of pressure on all of the colonial governments. Africa was, of course, filled with colonial governments: British, French, German, Belgian. And I think that the colonial powers left Africa long before they should have, because they got out before they left an adequate infrastructure of institutions and trained personnel to really sustain them. And that has been the problem. They do not have the educational institutions, they do not have the governmental structures and [they do not have] the trained personnel to really lead a country.

P: When you were travelling around the world in the 1950s, were you encouraging research activities in those countries, or were you mainly encouraging the application of things developing in the U.S.?

Y: Well, I really was not doing much of either. My travels then were primarily of an assessment variety.

P: Of what was needed and how much it would cost?

Y: Right. But for the last thirteen years, that is what I have been doing; [I have been] working with programs aimed at trying to improve the situation, improve food production, as well as the economy. You see, back when Governor Clinton made his foreign policy speech in October [1992] in Milwaukee, he said the goal of his foreign policy will be "to encourage sustainable development in the third world." That is the theme of the Brundtland Commission work. She [Brundtland] was prime minister of Norway, and chaired the U.N. Commission on Environment and Development. That was the report published in 1987, in a book entitled Our Common Future. But the emphasis there was on sustainable development. How do you encourage development in the third world in a way that it will be sustainable? Clinton said last fall that was his foreign policy goal: "to help achieve sustainable development." Then when [Warren] Christopher came in as secretary of state he said, "That will be our goal within the U.S. AID program." That now is stated as the primary goal of U.S. AID, to help with sustainable development in the third world. I am teaching a course on that subject right now.

P: Do you think that is an obtainable goal?

Y: Well, I think it is something we have to try to attain; you have to work towards it. But the point I wanted to make is, if you are going to achieve sustainable economic development, if you are going to improve the lot of these countries and their people, agriculture is the undergirding force in all of these developing countries. So you have to have sustainable *agricultural* development. Because agriculture is the base of their economies. That is what I have been heavily involved in the last few years. I am writing a book on the subject and I am teaching a course on sustainable agricultural development.

P: Was that already beginning to be part of the American foreign policy, way back in the 1950s?

Y: Oh no.

P: All we were doing was just feeding them?

Y: Well, we had international programs then. I was not sure about your question. We had programs in which we were trying to help develop institutions, mainly. AID had a program in India that began in the 1950s and through the 1960s, working with developing a national system of "land grant" colleges, something modeled after our land grant colleges here. They have developed some twenty of those over the course of the years in India. And we have had about six U.S. land grant institutions that have worked with the Indian institutions in helping them do that.

When I was there in 1958 I visited with the head of the U.S. AID program in India, and that was his main thrust. In fact, he tried to get me to come over there and work with him. He visited me in Raleigh in 1955, a year or so after I became the head of the department there. He wanted me to go to India to be his chief agricultural person. I would have done it, perhaps, because it was very challenging, but I had just become head of the department; I just did not feel like I could give it the time. But at any rate, they developed a network of so called "land grant" colleges in India, which I think have been a primary contributor to India's great progress in improving agriculture.

- P: What about China?
- Y: China is a different story. I have not spent much time in China. In fact, I have not spent any time in China. China was not on our list of countries to help, during the time that I was involved with AID. But China has undergone quite a revolution. The cultural revolution there was a disaster in terms of many things. But beginning in 1979, the government began to make some major changes there. They introduced a little free enterprise into the system, and in five or six years you saw the biggest increase in food production in China, of any country in the world in such a short time. They increased cereal production there 50 to 60 percent in a six year period. And so today, China is doing comparatively well.
- P: Do they depend upon American experts like you?
- Y: They are using more and more American experts, right. But they are doing a lot of things right, now, in terms of their agriculture. They have decided that the old commune system does not work; you have to have some free enterprise to give farmers a chance to make something on their own initiative and sweat, so that everything does not go back to the government. That was a problem in Russia, too.
- P: I was going to say, they are on the eve of that now, are they not?
- Y: Absolutely. If they ever get their politics straightened out, Russia can produce food. They have tremendous potential.
- P: Where did the American Potash Institute get its money from?
- Y: From the potash industry. All of the companies producing potash provided [funds]. They had in effect an assessment.
- P: Was this big time?
- Y: Well, not really big. They probably had a total of about only twenty people, but [they were] mostly well-paid people and good professionals. It was one of the most interesting periods in my life. Many people, particularly in universities, have the image of industry or commercial interests just going all out to sell a product or to do their own selfish thing. But the philosophy of the Potash Institute was: (1) to get good people, (2) to support them well, and (3) to let them be totally scientific and not out to sell a product; it had nothing to do with sales. But [they wanted] to try to support research and education so that in the long run we will help the industry. Their philosophy is if you help the farmer, in the long run that will benefit industry. So I enjoyed that very much.
- P: Were you working, and were the potash activities that you were involved with working cooperatively with the government agencies?
- Y: Well, with research and USDA, yes. But again, [we were] primarily research-oriented. [We conducted] research with the USDA and the universities, primarily the "land grant" institutions.
- P: You were not getting any subsidies from the Feds, then?
- Y: Oh no, absolutely not.
- P: [What made you leave the] institution and go to Auburn?
- Y: Well, I told the president when I came that I did not plan to make that a career.

P: The president of the Institute?

Y: I thought it would be great experience, and if I could contribute something in that time, I would be happy to do so. But I think the big thing is that just any offer would not have motivated me to leave at that time, perhaps.

P: Because you were getting good money at the Institute?

Y: It was very good. And [they provided] good support; they provided an automobile which we could use privately.

P: And world travel. Was your wife able to do the world travelling with you? You had no children then.

Y: A little bit, but not too much. When I travelled I travelled first class all over the world, which I have not done in the last thirty years [laughter].

P: Well, you have been working for the state of Florida.

Y: Or for the federal government.

P: You have been travelling in the back of the bus.

Y: But the president of Auburn called me, and I had a great affection for Auburn. He said that the extension service was in a mess at Auburn. The extension service was a very prominent organization in Alabama--much more so than here in Florida. It had become a political organization, and that was one of the problems. Extension personnel, county agents and all, had become highly politicized. There was a claim that no governor of the state of Alabama could be elected without the support of the extension service. And the old director was very politically-oriented.

P: Who was the president of Auburn at the time?

Y: Ralph Draughon. He had been vice-president when I was there as a student. But I knew him well; I used to work over around his office.

P: Now [James Elisha] Folsom was the governor? Or [was it] George Wallace?

Y: Folsom had been governor, and he was out when I first went there and John Patterson was governor. He had been attorney general. There is an interesting story about Folsom that I will tell you about, if I do not forget about it. At any rate, he wanted me to come back to Auburn. And I just could not say no; it was home. A couple of hours away were each of our homes. So I went back there. The director of the extension service was considered at the same level as the key vice-presidents of the institution.

P: It was the Cooperative Extension Service?

Y: Yes. And so I took that.

P: So it was a major appointment then?

Y: Yes.

P: What were they offering you in salary? Where are you now?

Y: Where am I now?

P: No, I am talking about where you were in 1959.

Y: It seemed like they paid \$14,000, which was less than what I was getting at the Potash Institute, but I did not expect that to be matched by the university.

P: And the cost of living was a little bit less?

Y: It was much less--right.

P: So you come into a pretty chaotic situation?

Y: I came into a difficult situation; the politics had permeated the organization.

P: How did politics work in this kind of a situation? With your county agents? With the farm?

Y: See, you have county agents that are close to the county commissions in every county. They are really partially employed by the county commission. The story was that word could be sent out from Auburn to the county agents, that you should do this and thus and such politically, and it would be done and have a great impact.

P: But theoretically the county agents are there to help the farmer become more productive.

Y: And they are; that is true. But in time they were one of the most prominent forces in every county, and recognized as leaders in the community, and so on. I do not mean to make that all negative because they were great people. In fact, I said that this was my first time that I had ever been associated with extension--when I became director there. This concerned a lot of the old staff there, because they did not know what to think. They had always had people that had come up through extension, to be the leaders. But I thought it was a blessing, and I did not come out of it because I could look at it with a sort of detached perspective and do some things that perhaps would not have been done otherwise.

So one of the first things that I had to do was to try and correct that situation. I had a state conference. I called all of the personnel in the first month or two that I was there for a state-wide, two or three day conference, and we laid out some plans. But I sat down with the group of sixty-seven county agents. They were all men. There are some women now. But these were just the top people in each county. You would have assistant agents that dealt with home economics and 4-H and so on. But I sat down with them and talked about politics in the private meeting. I just reflected what I had heard, and my concerns. I said, "We are here as an educational institution, of extension education. Our purpose is to take the knowledge that is generated through research and extend it." That is where the term "extension" comes from. But I said, "Our job is education, not politics. I just think it is fair to you to understand where I am coming from here. We will not be involved in politics. And the first time that I know of you, or anybody else in extension service getting involved in politics, you are going to be fired." They understood that, I think.

P: Were they looking at each other and saying, "I wonder where this jerk came from?"

Y: I am sure that they were.

P: Did you come in with a charge from the president to depoliticize this?

Y: No, but he talked about the problem, and I agreed with his assessment. It is totally inappropriate. It was not unique in Alabama. A lot of the southern states in particular were highly politicized.

Maybe not so much here in Florida, but Mississippi, Georgia, and Arkansas were very heavily politicized. There is just no place for it.

- P: So much of your political leadership in the South has come out of that agricultural, rural background.
- Y: Well, at any rate, I think we cleared that up. I never had to fire anybody, but I think that it reoriented the program.
- P: Now other than the politics, what were the problems with the extension service that he wanted you to handle?
- Y: Well, he did not describe things, but it was easy for me to see what needed to be done. In the first place, it needed to be professionalized. I was the first Ph.D. to ever be in the Alabama extension service.
- P: What I am really asking is, what challenged you to make the big move from Washington to Auburn?
- Y: Two or three things. The political thing was a negative thing, which had to be done.
- P: That went with the job. That did not attract you.
- Y: One, it had to be professionalized. What had happened was, you had a system in which people who did a good job at the county level were moved up to the state level as specialists. And you had B.S.-level people who had generally been county agents, that had to deal with everything that would be brought into the state office (as the agronomy specialist or the livestock specialist). They had no specialized training.
- P: And they did not know very much, except from practical experience?
- Y: [They learned from] practical experience, but they had no advanced study in their specialty. That is just not how it had to be. And I did not blame them so much. I blame the administrators in the past for not going out and hiring the right kind of people.
- P: Of course, what you found was typical of the pre-World War II South.
- Y: Absolutely. It was the same here in Florida, and elsewhere I am sure. So I said, "We are going to have an 'in service leave program.' I will allow you to take time off to pursue a master's level program or a Ph.D." A few had master's degrees, but very few. "And we will give you leave to do that, and continue to pay you." Of course, we had to structure that in such a way that we did not have everybody doing one; in fact, everybody did not want to do it. So we started immediately with that. And then in a reasonably short time we had a good cadre of trained people.
- P: And you found your group cooperative?
- Y: Oh, yes. Many of them wanted to do it; it was just the fact that they had not had an opportunity. They had families, and could not afford to take off from their jobs to go back. And you had to deal with people that were there. We brought in a lot of new people. In fact, I hired an associate director, from outside the state too, who was a Ph.D. in economics from Harvard. He was at Penn State at the time. He took his degree in public administration at Harvard. But that sort of sent a message to people, too: we were really serious about this upgrading.
- P: So you professionalized the extension service. You tried to de-emphasize the politics end of it?

- Y: But then we had to look at the agriculture of the state, because if anybody was going to give leadership to it, [we needed to know about it]. In many states it would come out of the dean of agriculture's office, but we did not have an overall dean there. We had a person who was head of the research program and the teaching program. The extension was separate; it was not even tied in with research. It should have been.
- P: But you found the same sort of a situation here.
- Y: Absolutely here. It was even worse here, in terms of separation. But the extension director was looked upon as the leader in agriculture in the state. So we immediately started a program in which we made an assessment of the state's agriculture. We brought in all of the different commodity groups and made an assessment of what the problems were and what the potentials were. And we set a goal to double farm income in the state. That was in 1958.
- P: Well, you come to Auburn in 1959.
- Y: Yes, that is right. That was 1959 and 1960. We set a goal to double farm income by 1970. We said, "What does it take to do that?" We looked at research programs, what they needed to do, and what we needed to do in extension, and so on. But I think it really captured the imagination of the people in agriculture and related businesses. And they really got behind it. I did not give you the book, but there were editorials in all of the papers that were strongly supportive of what I was doing there.
- P: Well, agriculture was the basic industry for the state.
- Y: And we were able to get some significant improvements in funding.
- P: I was going to ask you how cooperative the legislature was.
- Y: [They were] very responsive. We were doing some things that everybody realized needed to be done. Then Washington came into the picture. [John F.] Kennedy was elected president. We built a new house at Auburn and I expected to stay there--maybe for the rest of my life. But what happened in Washington was that there was a Federal Extension Service, which is the national arm of the Cooperative Extension Service. It is in the U.S. Department of Agriculture and it is sort of the national leader, the coordinator of extension in all of the universities.
- P: Before you get to going to the federal level, which is what you are doing after you leave Auburn, I want to talk to you a little bit more about the Alabama situation. You say you were getting cooperation from the legislature and from the governor to try to meet the goals you were trying to meet?
- Y: Right.
- P: You said you had a Folsom story.
- Y: I did. I am sorry--I forgot. The person who was associate director of extension when I got there was a great individual. He was a political master. He had been at the heart of a lot of this political situation. But he understood my position and he fully cooperated with me when I told him what we were going to do. But this was the period that John Patterson was governor. And Folsom was expected to come back into office. He had been governor before, and it was just a sure thing that he was coming back.
- P: This is "Kissing Jim"?

Y: [This is] "Kissing Jim"--Big Jim. And he said, "Have you ever met Folsom?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, you need to meet him." That was not an unreasonable suggestion because he was going to be the next governor, and I had to work with him and so on. So he set up a meeting in the northwestern part of the state in Fayette County, which is a very rural county, at the home of--I have forgotten his name. But he had been the finance director under Folsom, and was the person in charge of all of the financial affairs of the state, and where a lot of the graft and "Mickey Mouse" stuff occurred. Everybody knew about it, but they did not seem greatly concerned about it.

Anyway, this fellow had a mansion up there in this rural county out in the sticks. So he invited us up there. So Jimmy Lawson, the associate director, and I went up there. And here in this beautiful brick home--Big Jim had already arrived when we got there--they had Rankin Fite, the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Fite had been a close ally of Folsom. But at any rate, there were those five people: the former finance director, Folsom, Fite, Jimmy Lawson, and me.

P: This was just to get acquainted?

Y: It was just to get acquainted. We gathered on the patio; they had a big brick patio and he was going to grill some steaks and enjoy a few drinks before dinner. One thing that impressed me right off was that he had a special glass there for Jim, for drinking bourbon. It was like one of these big iced tea glasses you would normally get at Sonny's [Real Pit Barbecue]. That was Jim's drinking glass, and it had Jim's name on it. That was filled liberally with bourbon. We sat around there before dinner, and they got to telling stories that were fascinating.

John Patterson was governor, and John had been attorney general prior to that. He supposedly was involved in helping to clean up this Phenix City mess over there. I have forgotten all of the details. John's father was killed by some of the mob groups in that area. But at any rate, John had come in and he was being accused of all sorts of crooked dealings and graft and so on, and they got to talking about how effective John was in making money. Jim turned to Rankin [Fite] and the other fellow and said, "You know, we were pikers when we were down there. I am going to call John and see if he will not set up a special school that we three, and perhaps two or three others, can come down and learn how to make money." They were laughing about it, but they were semi-serious.

P: They were serious also. [laughter]

Y: That was a great experience, and of course I left Alabama before the election, but Folsom got drunk the night of the election. They accused his opponent of getting him drunk, and he got on television and made a fool of himself. That was what defeated him.

P: Once again talking about money, and before we leave Alabama--what about private funding? Was that beginning to develop at Alabama yet?

Y: [There was] virtually none. In fact, I tried to start some. When I had been at North Carolina, they had a foundation program there. We had a program called "Nickels for Know-how," in which all of the feed and fertilizer sold in the state was assessed five cents per ton. And that went into the university foundation to support agricultural research. "Nickels for Know-how" was a marvelous idea. And I was totally committed to trying to do something similar. I guess I was not in Auburn long enough to get something started, but we began the process. But it was something that I was especially concerned about when I got here to Florida that I will tell you about. This is what led to the creation of the DARE [Developing Agricultural Resources Effectively] program.

P: Now, one of the things that you always hear about when you are talking about these areas in southern history is the tremendous power of the agribusiness situation. Was that a problem? Not

a problem, but was that there in Alabama when you were there? And were they trying to exert any influence on you?

Y: No, I would not say that it was a problem. In fact, I think it was an asset because you had a lot of strength. The people who were strong in agribusiness were generally influential people. I found them very helpful in work[ing] with the legislature, just like I did here in Florida. We got people like Ben Hill Griffin and others involved, and they were very supportive. It was not a problem.

P: So they were lobbyists in a way for you.

Y: They were supportive, right. In fact, they were very effective to go before the legislature and say, "Look, we are paying the taxes here. We think this program needs to be supported. So how about using some of our tax money to support them?"

P: But this was before the era of them putting any of their money in?

Y: Oh yes, absolutely. They were willing to get the state to do it.

P: So you were able to do it in North Carolina with the fertilizer industry? But you were not able to do it as far as Alabama was concerned?

Y: Well, I really had so many other things on my agenda, I guess, that I never got around to getting into it. But I did when I got here to Florida--very definitely.

P: Did they have a foundation at Auburn at the time?

Y: No, they did not have one.

P: So you leave Auburn, and you go back up where, to Washington?

Y: That was what I was going to tell you. The new Kennedy administration came in, and Orville Freeman, who was the former governor of Minnesota, was the secretary of agriculture. I had started a program in Alabama called Rural Resource Development, which was a program aimed at trying to revitalize rural communities where agriculture might be depressed and where you needed to try to attract business and industries in the rural communities. We had two pilot counties that had been involved with rural development during the Eisenhower administration. There were two pilot counties in Alabama, and about twelve of them across the country. Freeman came in, and the administration decided that would be the area of major emphasis: rural development. And they also found that the extension service in Washington, the former administrator under the Eisenhower administration, had been moved over as an assistant secretary of agriculture in the fall before the election. They had the reputation of being Republicans. So the word went out from Freeman that extension was going to have to have a change of leadership in Washington. And we have an organization of extension directors nationally. And in effect, [he] told the directors, "If they hope for extension, to thrive--perhaps to survive--they had to have new leadership." He asked them to come up with somebody.

P: A little political pressure?

Y: A little, but I think it was justified in terms of feeling that this had been primarily a Republican organization. Extension had the reputation of being a Farm Bureau-related organization. You know what the Farm Bureau is? It is a major agricultural organization that was really started by the extension service back in the 1910s, as a general farm organization.

P: During the World War I period?

Y: [During the] World War I period, right after extension was organized. And farm bureaus were set up, and there had been a close relationship between farm bureaus and extension. The Farm Bureau had traditionally been considered a primarily Republican organization. The Farmer's Union, on the other hand, was primarily oriented towards the Democrats. Freeman had been governor of Minnesota, where the Farmer's Union was very strong. So when he came in, he was faced with the situation of, "Well, we have got to do something about this Republican-oriented organization." I was a Democrat, at least by registration. And so the extension directors across the country came to me and said, "We think that you are the person to give leadership up there because you are new in extension. You do not have any political baggage." And so they really insisted that I do this. I really felt like it was more or less an obligation. It was considered to be a major advancement professionally, of course, so I took leave from Auburn to go up and do that.

P: You did not resign?

Y: [I did] not [resign] at the time, thinking that I would go spend a year [away], maybe two years at most. But I knew that I wanted to get back into university work, and planned to do it in no more than two years. If I could help get them over this period, and get them reoriented, [I would do so]. But before I agreed to accept it, I had made good friends among the Alabama congressional delegation. And they were extremely supportive. I got up there for the appointment and confirmation. They were very, very positive, and very supportive. The chairman of the appropriation committee that I had to deal with in the House was Jamie Whitten. Whitten was from Mississippi. He has had fifty years of service in the House. He was chairman of the appropriations committee up until this last term because of his seniority. But Jamie was the man who was going to be over the extension service appropriation, and the person that I would have to deal with.

P: But you knew him well?

Y: Well, my Alabama congressional delegation introduced me to Jamie, and I went and talked with him before I went up there. He sort of smiled and said, "Well, you know this bunch of New Frontier crowd; they are going to emasculate the extension service." He had heard all about this. He said, "But don't worry about it. When you come up here to testify you will have to support the party line." But he said, "Come up to see me a day or two before you appear and we will get our little plan organized." He said, "You have to respond. If I ask you a question, you have to respond appropriately. That is, give me your opinion on things, even though it might not be consistent with what the administration might want." I cite that to tell you how the political games are played in Congress, in terms of committee hearings and so on. So I had a great ally in Jamie Whitten, all the way through. He was very supportive. And the man in charge of the agricultural appropriations in the Senate at that time, the chairman of the subcommittee on agriculture, was John Stennis of Mississippi. He was a senator.

P: Was your appointment subject to confirmation by the Senate?

Y: I guess at that time it was not. But I had to make the rounds of all of the key committees.

P: I see. You had to meet the people.

Y: That is right. And it was not supposed to be a political appointment. It was not a Schedule C appointment, although they had made it Schedule C to make this change.

P: Who was making the appointment? Was this a presidential appointment, or was it the secretary?

Y: Well it was the secretary, but it had to be approved by the president's office.

P: But it was not announced from the president's office?

Y: No, I think it was announced from the secretary.

P: Rather as a cabinet or a sub-cabinet position.

Y: Right.

P: Once again, you take this because it is a challenging [position]?

Y: Very much so. And we had two great years up there, involving a lot of things [like] international travel. And [I] got all over the country. I think I visited every state but two in the process, because every state had an extension service.

P: Vam is home now with children? You have adopted your first child, so she is not able to maneuver around with you to the same degree?

Y: This time we lived in the River House apartment which was just across from the Pentagon on the Virginia side. It was very close to the office, and very close to the airport.

P: Where was your office?

Y: [It was] over in the agriculture building, right off the Mall there.

P: Was this a highly politicized job? Were you subject to pressures--agricultural or business?

Y: It could have been and I will tell you, I had not thought of that until you asked the question. When I first went up there, of course you had a new administration in and they had all great things to do. One thing, they put together what they called the Omnibus Farm Bill that they tried to get passed. That would have been in the spring of 1961, and there was a lot of disagreement about the program, a lot of opposition to it and the various elements. The Kennedy administration felt this was vital to their first year of efforts.

The undersecretary of agriculture, Charlie Murphy, was a lawyer who had been in the Truman White House. I have just finished reading a book on Truman that won the Pulitzer Prize.

P: [It was written by] David McCullough [Truman, 1992].

Y: Charlie is mentioned prominently in that book, as being a part of the Truman White House staff.

P: I have that; I have got to start reading it.

Y: I read it, and it is marvelous; I really enjoyed it. But Charlie Murphy called me one day. I had just met him, but casually.

P: Where is he from?

Y: He was a lawyer in Washington, and I think he had a home over on the eastern shore of Maryland. Charlie was a fine fellow, but he was a political type, obviously. He was the number two man in the department. Charlie said, "Come over and have lunch with me." I suspected that he had something up his sleeve.

P: An agenda?

Y: An agenda. So, it was a very cordial session. We talked about a lot of things. He said, "Tell me about the extension service." And I told him a little about the extension service. He said, "I understand that the county agents in the extension service can have a lot of influence on the state?" I said, "Yes, I think they do have a lot of influence." Then he got around to his number one agenda item and began to talk about the Omnibus Farm Bill. He said, "You know, this is coming up in Congress. It is vital that it passes. It is a critical issue, one of the most important things that the Kennedy administration will be pushing this year." And he said, "There is a lot of concern that it will not pass. A lot of my friends tell me that if we can get the extension service to get out and help sell it, that is the best chance we have of getting it passed."

P: Grassroots support?

Y: Grassroots support, with the influence of the extension service. Of course, I had been through the experience in Alabama, with the political issue of extension. I thought, "Well, this is the time that I had better just let the administration know where I stand, and let the chips fall where they may." I said, "Mr. Murphy, the extension service has an educational responsibility. It has developed a great reputation in this country over the last half-century as an educational institution. If it ever got to the point that it was out trying to sell an administration's program politically, its effectiveness as an educational organization would be totally destroyed." And I said, "I am not going to be a party to destroying that reputation as an educational institution. In fact, I think one of the biggest jobs I have here is to try to improve that reputation."

P: He listens quietly?

Y: And so I said, "So, I do not think that as long as I am in this office that you can count on the extension service to be the agent that will get out and sell this administration's program." I said, "Once we do it one time, then the next administration comes in and you have to do the same thing with them." I said, "You are just a bunch of political whores, then. I am not going to be a part of that." And he smiled and said, "Well, OK. We know how you feel." I said, "Yes, I feel that way and I feel very strongly that way." We parted as friends, and we are friends ever since. That was the last I ever heard of that.

P: You never got any more pressure?

Y: I never got any more pressure. While we are on that, let me tell you one other experience I had the first week I was in Washington. Again, this will tell you a little bit about how the process works up there in the bureaucracy. I mentioned the fact that I had a pilot program in rural development in Alabama. That was the thing that this administration said they wanted to be the cornerstone of their program in USDA. So on Friday of the first week that I was there, at about 9:30, a messenger delivered a big package over from the secretary's office. It was really from the Assistant Secretary for Rural Development. They had already named a leader for the rural development program--the assistant secretary. [The package] said, "I am enclosing a draft copy of an outline of what this department proposes to do in rural development, and what each agency in the department will be responsible for."

Well, extension had been the leader in rural development in all of these pilot counties. Of course, we expected extension to be the leader in rural development for the national program here. But I got that and started thumbing through it. And it spelled out who would provide leadership for this, mentioned the Farmer's Home Administration, the Soil Conservation Service, and the REA [Rural

Electrification Administration], and all of these agencies that were mainline agencies of the USDA. And then with a footnote it listed extension, the forest service, and one or two other organizations that would be supportive of all of these lead agencies. And that was the way that extension was

being treated. And it was a fulfillment of the prediction that Jamie Whitten had given me earlier, that "they are going to let extension die on the vine." So I knew what the agenda was.

But this meeting was a meeting of all of the agency heads--the Soil Conservation Service, Agricultural Research Service, Extension, Farmer's Home Administration, and so on. So we go into that meeting, and everybody is sort of new and unsure of what is going on. But on the way over to the meeting, which was in the big conference room right off the secretary's office, I went by the office of the assistant secretary to whom I reported. His name was Dr. Frank Welch. He was a former dean of agriculture at the University of Kentucky. He was sort of a political person (and got appointed assistant secretary), which all of the assistant secretaries were. But Frank was interested in the universities, and in doing right by them in the extension service.

P: He was himself an academic?

Y: Absolutely. I had known Frank for years. I showed him the document. The document read, "The delegation of authority under rural development." I said, "Do you know anything about this document?" He said, "No, I have never seen it." I told him what was in it, and he shook his head. I said, "Frank, I am ready to take off kid gloves here this first week. I may be fired at the end of the first week, but if this is the sort of game they are going to play, I am ready to play it." He said, "Have at it. Go ahead and do your thing." And so we go into this meeting, and John Baker, who is Assistant Secretary for Rural Development, had been the legislative leader for Farmer's Union. He was an old Farmer's Union man, and was obviously oriented in that direction. Under his authority, he had agencies like the Farmer's Home Administration and REA [Rural Electrification Administration], that would be given all of the authority for rural development. Hell, REA does not have any reason to be involved in rural development. You know what REA is, and the Farmer's Home Administration too.

But John comes in, in a very glib fashion. He is an old Arkansas boy, but [he is] a very good politician and very glib. John came in and he said, "Gentlemen, I appreciate your coming. I have distributed here a statement which outlines the responsibility for rural development, which will be the major thrust of this department for the next four years--maybe longer." And he said, "We are going to use this, then, as the basis for which we go to the hill and request a supplemental appropriation." So this had money attached to it, which got my attention in a hurry. That was essentially all he said, and then he said, "Any questions?" I looked around. All of them there had been there longer than I had. This was the fifth day that I had been on duty. Nobody said anything. I finally decided that I had to speak up. I said, "Mr. Baker, what authority does this document have?" He turned a little pale, smiled, and then said "None."

P: He was being honest with you.

Y: He was honest, and I said, "Well, I cannot accept this as a statement of extension's responsibilities under rural development." He was taken aback a bit by this brash, young extension administrator. He said, "Well, Dr. York," sort of sarcastically, "why don't you tell me what you think extension ought to be." I said, "I will be very happy to do that Mr. Baker." He said, "Could you come by to see me next week?" And I said, "Sure." And the meeting adjourned.

He was a pragmatic sort of fellow, so our meeting [the next week] was cordial. He said, "What do you think extension ought to do?" I said, "I think extension should do what it has done under the pilot program." He said, "State that in a short sentence." I said, "I think extension should have responsibility for organizational and educational leadership in rural development. Organizational, to get all of the parties together in the community, consider what needs to be done, and provide educational services to that community to help them." He said, "OK, I'll buy that."

P: He bought it?

- Y: He bought it, and if you go back and look at the literature, you will find that precise language in the literature of the department of agriculture, in terms of responsibilities for rural development.
- P: It sounds as though you did not get any additional pressure to politicize your group.
- Y: I did not--absolutely not. In fact--and this gets into our transition at the University of Florida, but we may want to pursue some other things nationally--Wayne Reitz [U.F. president, 1955-1967] came to see me in November of 1962.
- P: He was president then.
- Y: He was president of the University of Florida. He asked me to come down here. He offered me the job right there. I was interested, because it was an important position, and it was back in a university, and it was in the South. That met all of the conditions that I would have asked for. But I did not feel like I could leave right then. In fact, I went and talked to Freeman. We were having another crucial referendum coming up, to agriculture. It was a so-called "Wheat Referendum" coming up the following Spring. Again, it was very controversial. When I told Freeman of my desire to leave and go back to the university, he said "Well E. T., you know we have this very crucial wheat referendum coming up. I think that all we need to win it is for people to understand what it is about." He said, "So extension has an educational role. I know that if extension is involved in this, they will do an honest, straightforward, educational job." He said, "Would you be willing to stay here through the period of the referendum, to oversee this extension educational job on the wheat referendum?" I said, "Well, I will certainly consider it." And so when I thought about it, I felt that we had an obligation to him. And we did. I got letters from all sides on that wheat referendum issue, commending extension for its objective job. One person I know from the Farmer's Union side said, "We are very skeptical. But my experience has been that the extension did an honest job, a very thorough job, and an effective job."
- P: Did you have a PR arm in there?
- Y: Oh, yes. Well, we had an educational arm with publications. We developed publications that went out to all of the county extensions.
- P: I wanted to ask you: what ever happened to that omnibus bill on agriculture that they had tried to get you to help support? It was going to be a cornerstone of the Kennedy administration.
- Y: The omnibus bill was defeated, but they were able to get pieces done--piecemeal.
- P: Sort of like during the Franklin Roosevelt period?
- Y: Oh yes, right.
- P: When something was overruled, overturned, [or declared] unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, they picked up the pieces and reintroduced them.
- Y: Right.
- P: So you think that is what happened?
- Y: Yes. As I recall, that is what happened.
- P: I want to ask you also: What is the state of U.S. agriculture? Is it healthy or what, in this period of the early 1960s?

Y: It was not overly healthy. In fact, if you look back in history, agriculture seems always to be suffering.

P: And it always has its hand out.

Y: Well, that is a perception.

P: Straighten it out then, for the tape. You are in an important federal position now.

Y: But the Omnibus Farm Bill was the Kennedy administration's way of addressing a lot of major problems that were confronting agriculture and rural areas. The rural development program, for example, was aimed at trying to revitalize a lot of rural communities that were beginning to dry up because farmers were leaving, moving into town, and businesses in rural areas were drying up, and so on.

P: But farms were being taken over, were they not, by the corporations? Or is that the perception?

Y: Not so much. They were getting larger, but most of the corporations were family farms that just incorporated. So that is a myth that a lot of people have--that agriculture is being taken over by big corporations.

P: So this was what was happening with Florida citrus? Coca-Cola was moving in.

Y: To a certain extent. You have Coca-Cola, but you have a lot of other private individuals.

P: You have the Ben Hill Griffins, who are growing.

Y: You have the Ben Hill Griffins, and I would say that 90 percent of the citrus production is in that category.

P: All right. Get back to the state of agriculture in the U.S. at the beginning of the 1960s. Were we still expected to supply the rest of the world?

Y: We were supplying quite a bit of the rest of the world. We were becoming a major exporter.

P: Of wheat?

Y: Primarily, of wheat and corn--wheat for food and corn for feed.

P: What had happened to southern cotton?

Y: Cotton was still important, although [it was] becoming less so. The boll weevil was a major problem.

P: That was still a problem in the early 1960s?

Y: It was a major problem. In Alabama, for example, it was making cotton less profitable. As a result, cotton was moving West.

P: You would think by then that the research would have found something to handle the boll weevil.

Y: There were ways of controlling it, but it became very expensive. You had to use a lot of pesticides, and people were getting more and more concerned about the pesticide problem. So it was difficult.

P: Well, was there growing competition throughout the world? Was Russia becoming a factor in the agricultural situation?

Y: Not Russia, no. Russia was having problems in production. [There was] one interesting episode, if you want to take the time with it. While I was in the department, Freeman called me one day. His secretary called and asked me to come over. He said, "The Soviet minister of agriculture would like to come over here and study U.S. agriculture." This was the [Nikita] Khrushchev Era. Khrushchev had been over here visiting a few times, and he had visited a farmer out in Iowa named Roswell Garst.

P: There was a lot of publicity. [It was] in 1959.

Y: [It was] 1958 or 1959. And [Khrushchev] became fascinated with what Garst was doing. Garst was a big entrepreneur and promoter himself. At any rate, Khrushchev goes back home and begins to talk about all of these marvelous things happening in U.S. agriculture. So he apparently suggested that his minister of agriculture come over here in 1961. We were having cultural exchanges at that time, of ballet troupes and musical groups and things like that. This was the first major agricultural exchange. Anyway, Freeman says, "I do not have time. He wants to spend a month and I just cannot take off for a month. You are familiar with all of these state universities and land-grant colleges." That is where a lot of the focus would be. He said, "Would you mind arranging an itinerary for him and being responsible for him?" I said, "Sure, if you want me to."

P: "I like to travel first class."

Y: So I did that. This was back in the cold war days, very much so. We developed an itinerary that started on the East Coast in Washington in Beltsville, Maryland, which is the big USDA research institute there. We went all the way across the country with him. He had about eight people with him that were given identifications. Of course, he had his own interpreter. There was one man that was designated as the personal representative of Khrushchev. And he was a delightful individual. He looked like Will Rogers, believe it or not. In fact the press--as we went along we had a lot of press coverage--dubbed him "The Will Rogers of the Soviet Union." And he had an engaging smile and good sense of humor. But the thing that he was primarily interested in (and he got this from Khrushchev apparently) was corn. Khrushchev was fascinated with corn production, as he had seen in the Midwest with Garst. Then he had several other people. He had one person that was listed as the editor of an agricultural magazine in the Soviet Union (that I will tell you about in a minute).

But the minister was a great big burly bear type--just what you would expect the Soviet minister to look like. [He] never smiled and I thought, "This is going to be a real bash, to have to spend a month with him." But he was nice and very business-like. We went over the agenda. We started out and I noticed that at times, when we would get into a place for dinner, they [the Soviets] would want to get together by themselves. They would always walk outside and get away from the building, because they felt that their rooms were being bugged, I am sure.

But I noticed too, that one person in that group seemed to be the dominant individual because he did a lot of the talking and everybody else, including the minister, seemed to defer to him. The state department had given me a long briefing before we had started, and said, "Please observe very carefully, because some of these may be KGB. We do not know what they are, but observe them to see if you can detect anything unusual." Well, I detected this as we went along. This was the one that was designated as the editor of their national agricultural magazine. I will get ahead of the story a little bit and tell you that, about two years after they were here, there was a story in

Time magazine about possible successors to Khrushchev. They had pictures of three individuals, and one of them was this guy. He was obviously a very high official in the Communist Party. I never heard of him again though, so I do not know what happened to him.

But anyway, the minister's name was Pysin. Of course I called him "Pise-in", but in Russian it is "Piss-in". And every now and then we would encounter some reporters who knew enough Russian to comment about it. They would refer to him as Mr. "Piss-in". After we had been out for about a week, we ended up in some little hotel in the Midwest. I have forgotten where it was; maybe it was Nebraska. But anyway, as we checked in at about 8:00 in the evening, the minister's interpreter said, "The minister would like for you to come to his room when we check in." So I go up to his room. And for the first time that week that we had been together, he broke out in a broad smile and said "Ah, my friend," in English. He had never used English before. He reached into his bag and pulled out a bottle of Vodka. And then he explained through his interpreter--he did not speak much English--that it was very special Vodka. They never exported it; they kept it for their own use and for the use of their special friends. He wanted to share this with me. He looked around. This was an old hotel, and had some water glasses [that were] almost that big.

P: Some Folsom water glasses.

Y: Folsom water glasses. [There was] no ice, [and] nothing to mix with it. He poured me--literally--a glass full of that vodka. He held it up and said, "To my friend," and turned it down. Of course, I am not a big drinker, and certainly not a drinker at all of anything that potent. But it went down very smoothly. It must have been good vodka. I thanked him very much and ran back to my room and crawled in bed, because I knew I was not in this world for very long. But I had a great night's sleep.

P: And you remembered to get up the next day?

Y: We had a lot of pickets, [with] people demonstrating. They could not understand why we were having these Soviets over here, sharing our secrets.

P: Well, go back to the condition of agriculture. I want to get that before you get to Florida. I remember the media talking about too much corn, too much butter and too much this, and all of those kind of things.

Y: That, as I mentioned earlier, has been one of the big problems in U.S. agriculture: our inability to coordinate production levels with demand levels. And whenever there is an over-supply of anything, prices go down very precipitously. This has been particularly true in agriculture. If you have a business producing automobiles, and if you begin to produce more than you need, they just shut the factory down. In American agriculture, where at that time you had maybe 15,000,000 individual farmers producing, you do not have that ability to regulate production. So historically we have produced more than we can effectively market or use. Therefore, we have been faced with very depressed prices. This is what motivated the big Roosevelt administration--agricultural programs. The Agricultural Adjustment Act [AAA] was where a lot of this started. You remember the AAA? And over the years there have been programs aimed at trying to regulate production, to keep excessive production down, and to keep prices at least stable or [at a] somewhat reasonable level, so farmers can get a reasonable income from it. So that has been the situation.

Periodically, world conditions have been such that we have needed more production. This occurred in the early 1970s, when the world reserve of wheat reached an all-time low; enough for maybe fifty days of consumption. It was critically low. And that was a period that Earl Butts was secretary of agriculture. In effect, Earl got out and urged farmers to plant fencerow to fencerow; to

plant all that they could. And we exported tremendous amounts of agricultural products in that period, until we caught up. And then we have been faced with similar problems.

P: Well, as the director of this extension service, was it your responsibility to try to bring this sick industry back into good health?

Y: Well, not directly. There were programs in the department. For example, the so-called Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Program had responsibility for all of these acreage control programs.

P: But yours was basically an educational program?

Y: Our job could have a tremendous impact on it, because as I say, what we were trying to do was get farmers to produce more efficiently, to reduce the cost of production per unit of output.

P: Not necessarily to produce more.

Y: Not to produce more. Although the effect of the technology [is that it] usually resulted in producing more. So you had to adjust accordingly. That really has been what has happened over the last forty years. We have been steadily increasing productivity so that we have been able to take land out of production and put it into conservation use, and so on. But our job was not to control acreage. It was to try to help farmers produce it more efficiently, and to get a greater net return from what they were doing.

P: That was the same thing that the state extension service was trying to do.

Y: Oh, absolutely. In fact, that is the only way that the federal program was able to operate: through the states. We provided the leadership and direction.

P: So even by the 1960s, with all of our technology, we had not yet learned how to control production in terms of meeting our needs. At the same time, there were still a lot of hungry people and a lot of poverty-stricken people in the United States and throughout the world. So that was another problem we had not resolved.

Y: Well, particularly throughout the world.