

UFLC 7

Interviewee: Leon "Rabbit" Robbins

Interviewer: Sid Johnston

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R: My name is Rabbit, and it has been that for fifty some-odd years.

J: Where did you acquire that nickname?

R: Oh, Lord. I am a musician, a jazz musician, and I played in dance bands. I had a dance band when I was in college for ten years, and even after I got out of college. A trumpet player, I think his name was Ed Morris from Jacksonville, hung that on me and it stuck for a long time.

J: Why do you think he hung that name on you?

R: Well, at one time my name was Rabinowitz. That was a Russian name. My ancestors came from Russia. Jokingly he used to call me rabbit wits, and he just cut off the wits and it became Rabbit. It has been that about fifty-five years.

J: Do you still turn your head when someone hollers out Rabbit?

R: Oh, sure. In fact, that is the only name my wife ever calls me, and all my friends do the same thing. No one ever calls me Leon.

J: That is funny. Well, may I call you Rabbit?

R: Why not. I would feel more comfortable.

J: Mr. Rabbit, where are you from?

R: I was born in Black Shear, Georgia, on February 26, 1911. I did not live there, but I was the first child, and my grandmother lived there, so my mother went home to her mother. I actually lived in a little town that was called Milltown, Georgia, then. It is now called Lakeland, Georgia. It is the former home of Governor Ed Rivers. [Eurith D. Rivers, Governor of Georgia, (1937-1941)] I remember when I was about two years old, they had a flu epidemic or something, and my parents decided to get out. So my father came down to Florida and he was looking around over in Palatka and had about decided that was where he was going to move. Somebody suggested to come over to Gainesville, which was about forty-five miles away because it was a college town to see what he thought. So he came over here and he liked this area better, so we moved here in April of 1913. I have been here ever since.

J: Where did your mother and father come from?

- R: My father was born in Kiev, Russia, and my mother, I do not know the name of the town, but I understand it was about forty miles from there. My mother was twelve when she came over. My father was five years old.
- J: So they came over on the same boat?
- R: No, no, no. They did not know each other. They met in south Georgia.
- J: Boy, that is a long-distance connection.
- R: That is right. I even have something that my father gave my mother for an engagement present. It is sitting there in the living room.
- J: How did they happen to meet in Georgia?
- R: Well, my father was working for his brother. I think it was in Alma, Georgia. I have relatives all over south Georgia or did have, but so many of them have died off. I imagine somebody said, "Well, you ought to meet Rose Gilmore." My mother's maiden name was Gilmore. You know, these things come about that way.
- J: When did your father decide to change his last name?
- R: He didn't, but all of his brothers did. I did not have my name changed until I was nineteen years old.
- J: To Robbins?
- R: When I got in the music business, and especially when I got in the band, it was more feasible to have an easily pronounced, shorter name, an English name. If you ever keep up with it, you know, so many of the movie stars have names that you would not dream of.
- J: I do not.
- R: Well, the latest one that I found out that sort of floored me is a new actor named Steve Bond. He is from Israel. His name is Schlomo Goldberg. That will give you an idea.
- J: That is pretty amusing.
- R: When you are in a type of business where you meet the public, you would have to have a shorter name and anglicize it. All my father's brothers had changed their names to Robbins and that is where he got the idea. I chose that one

myself. Then my other brothers, I have three more brothers, they changed their names too. A little down the line, but they did.

J: That is a very interesting story.

R: In fact, nobody on my side of the family is using the name Rabinowitz anymore. Nobody.

J: My maternal grandparents are from the Ukraine and I do not know what city but they have retained their name. Their last name is Kukura.

R: Kukura. Well, that is an example. Is that what their name was and they kept it?

J: I have not heard anything to the contrary. I had not heard a story like you just shared with me about their name, so I think it is the original name.

R: Well, it could be.

J: Have you heard of a Kukura before being a Russian name?

R: I have heard of Sekura, but possibly if they had been in the entertainment business, they would have changed theirs too.

J: When did you say your father moved to Georgia?

R: When he first came to this country. My uncle had a store in Alma, Georgia, so he took him in as a trainee or whatever you want to call it.

J: I see. What immigration office was he processed through?

R: Ellis Island.

J: He came through Ellis Island and down to Georgia?

R: Well, I think he stayed in New York for a while. He was in the Lower East Side, where so many of the immigrants lived. I think he was either ten or maybe eleven or twelve years old when he came down to work with his brother. You see, there is another thing that might be of interest to you. In those days, I know this to be a fact on my mother's side, they did not have enough money to bring everybody at one time, so the father would come and he would work and save up enough money to send for somebody. When he saved up more money, he would send for somebody else until he got them all over here.

J: What was your father's occupation in Georgia?

R: He was a merchant.

J: Did he retain that occupation all of his life?

R: Yes, but we had other things too. At one time, we owned the theatre here called the Rose Theatre, which was a segregated black theatre. It was very good there for quite a while, and then of course T.V. came in and then desegregation in theatres, and that hurt, so we kind of were forced to close.

J: Now what theatre was that?

R: The Rose Theatre. It is not there anymore. It was on Northwest Fifth Avenue. It has been turned into a park.

J: The building was demolished.

R: Well, we had arson if you want to know the truth about it. When they had all these uprisings, about eight or nine years ago, it burned down. Actually, it was not burned down, but it was burned. The structure was sound, and then the city came along and bought it from us and tore the rest of it down and made a park.

J: Was that part of a bigger fire in Gainesville or was that local?

R: No, no. That was just a local, but we were not the only ones that had that happen. I was in New York at the time, and I was really surprised when my wife called me and told me about it.

J: I bet you were. Did you have a sense of who did it? Were there any convictions?

R: No, none. Oh, I am sure it was some of the dissidents of the black variety trying to get even with all, not us personally I do not think, but as a symbol.

J: Who were your brothers and sisters?

R: Alex, Robert, and Irvin. My brother, Alex, lives here and my brother Irvin, lives here. My brother Alex, is retired. He was my partner in business for a long time, and then I bought him out. He is retired, and he still lives here. My brother Robert, left here. He is the only one that left. He got a Ph.D. in chemistry, and he went to work for Tennessee Eastman in Kingsport, Tennessee. He worked for them until he was involuntarily retired because of reaching sixty-five.

J: So all four of you lived in Gainesville at one time?

R: Oh, sure. Everybody went to school here and graduated from high school here. My brother, Irvin, owned the Gator Shop, and he just sold that last March to the same people who incidentally bought mine.

J: Do you think there is a connection there?

R: No. This guy is an entrepreneur. He knows how to manipulate, and he travels on the road and sells gator-type merchandise. He bought that outright, and the one that we had, he bought in conjunction with two very close friends of his from Orlando, who are now running the store. So he has his fingers in both stores and they are doing okay.

J: Do you mind sharing his name?

R: No, Joe Fincher. He is quite some guy. Not only that, he is a big, big Amway distributor. And the young couple that is running the store we had, they worked for him, and that is how they met each other, through Amway. They worked for him, and you know how it works. In turn, they have lots of people working for them.

J: Where do you lie within the family hierarchy of brothers?

R: In what way?

J: Who was born first, second, third, fourth?

R: I am the oldest. I am seventy-three. Alex is seventy. Robby, I think, is sixty-eight, and Irvin will be sixty-six in November.

J: Did any of them pursue law?

R: No. Myself and my brother, Robert, are the only two who graduated. I have a law degree from 1935. Now it is converted from a LL.B. to a Doctor of Law for five bucks. I got a letter once from the school that they were converting the LL.B. to a Doctor of Jurisprudence. If I would send them five dollars, they would send me a new diploma. It is up on the wall over there.

J: You took advantage of that?

R: I am the only doctor that I know of that paid five dollars to get a doctor's degree.

J: That is funny. What high school did you attend?

R: Gainesville High School.

J: What kind of jobs did you have during your high school years?

R: Not much of anything. Once in a while I would help my father in the store. At one time, my father had stores in the first block of University Avenue across from where old Woolworth's used to be. I would help him once in a while, but I really did not like the retail business. I would rather be out playing. I started playing saxophone when I was in high school, and we had a little band around town. We got together and played, and when I got to college then I started playing in a lot of bands.

J: So what kind of career were you considering when you were in high school?

R: I thought I might want to be a lawyer, or at least my parents thought that was what they wanted me to be.

J: Were there any other outside influences on you being a lawyer?

R: No. Not that I remember.

J: Your parents just had that in mind.

R: Well, they always think that their children, if they have a professional degree, it would be very good. And it is not bad, you know.

J: Right. So what was your decision-making process to attend the law school?

R: Well, I always liked to _____. I was on University Avenue. We lived there. There is a filling station there now, or there was one. I always used to jokingly say when I was in high school when I left the house to go to school, I would turn left to walk two blocks, but when I went to college, I would turn right and walk two blocks. That is where we lived in relation to the high school and the college. I just thought I would like to be a lawyer. Of course, I was not an 'A' student. I was more interested in having a good time, I guess. I did not study that much, so it took me a little longer. Plus, going out and playing for dances, sometimes we would get home at seven o'clock in the morning and have eight o'clock classes. That was not very conducive. If I had been a real brain, I guess I could have done it without any problem, but I was more interested in having a good time.

J: Where were some of the places that you played, that you performed?

R: You mean in college?

J: Yes, when you were in college.

R: Well, the first band I ever played with in college was led by an SAE named J.J. McCranie. We played for all the college dances, and for the fraternities who used to have dances. They had spring frolics and fall frolics and the military ball and things. We used to play for them. During the Christmas holidays, we would play ten days out of the fourteen most likely in various parts of the state. Bauzie Currie was the leader, and he graduated with a law degree. He just died a couple of years ago down in West Palm Beach. He was a small claims court judge there for a long time. He graduated in February of 1932, and that is when I took over the band. I actually had that band for the rest of my college career. I got my law degree in 1935, and some of the old members of the band came up and prevailed upon me to go back to playing. So I did. I was not making much money as a lawyer, as a young kid out of law school with no experience. The first thing you know I am back there in the music business.

J: So when did you first enter college?

R: 1928.

J: As an undergraduate?

R: In the fall of 1928, the same year that Dr. Tigert became president. [John James Tigert, President, University of Florida (1928-1947)]

J: Were there any visible effects of Dr. Tigert coming into the administration? Different classes, more money, less money?

R: It was a long time ago. I was a pretty good friend of his, incidentally. He prevailed on me one Christmas. One year they had a chance to go on the National Farming Home Hour, which was a nationally broadcast radio program out of Chicago. They were going to do it on our campus in the same auditorium that is there now, on the same stage. He asked me if I could get my band back together to come to school a week early so we could play for the program. We did, and he never did forget that.

J: I bet he didn't.

R: He always would remind me of that when I would see him. I do not know if there were any changes. I know it was inexpensive to go to school then. As far as present dollars are concerned, I think it cost seventy-five dollars or something like that. Seventy-five dollars for tuition. What is tuition now?

J: Well, I just paid four hundred and sixty-eight dollars for nine hours.

- R: Well, they did not base it on hours then. It was just for coming to school.
- J: As I recall, the law college cost twenty dollars a semester for tuition, and if you went to undergraduate school and you were a resident, there was no fee for tuition. That was free.
- R: You may be right.
- J: But there were other costs, for example, room and board.
- R: Yes. I am not talking about that, but you might be right about that. I do not know about that seventy-five dollars. I better retract that. When I was in school, I was there during the Depression. I was flat... I hate to remind myself of those days. It was tough.
- J: Where did you live during your undergraduate schooling?
- R: I lived at home. We did not have cars then. We did not have apartments like the kids do now. We were damn glad to live at home.
- J: Now I hear the bicycle was the Mercedes Benz of campus.
- R: Yes, well, at one time, because of having a band, I think I had two cars. One of them I paid two hundred dollars for. You have to have transportation of some sort. For food there was Ma Ramsey's where the old Hardees used to be. I mean Hardees that they just closed up about a year ago. That used to be Ma Ramsey's. It was one of the popular spots in Gainesville for eating. There was another one, but Ma Ramsey's was the best-known of the places, and I do not think they had the same cafeteria they had when I was there. It might be part of it but we used to play broadcasts from there so the kids got food for three. Of course, I could eat at home, but I would go out there and play anyway just to fill out the sax section.
- J: Would you play for law school dances too?
- R: I do not remember any law school dances, but we played for all the fraternity affairs. You know, it was not coed then either. We played, for instance, say for spring frolics. They would have some big band as a main attraction, but they would have other dances during the weeks. Starting on Friday, from ten to twelve, from twelve to two, and from two to four. We would play a lot of those. We would grab up our instruments and run from one fraternity house to the other and set up to play.
- J: Where were the fraternity houses at that time?

- R: Well, the Pike house was on the corner where Holiday Inn is, and just east of that was the SPE house. And the KA house was west of those about a block or so. Wait a minute. Was it the other way? Yes, that it right. There is a parking lot there now. We used to live on the avenue and across the street on the corner was the Chi Phi house. I do not remember where the SAE house was.
- J: Was it in that same vicinity or further to the west?
- R: I do not think so, no.
- J: Were there any on campus?
- R: No. There were no fraternity houses on campus. They did not have a fraternity row.
- J: You say that emphatically. Was there a reason for not having fraternity houses on campus at that time?
- R: Well, I do not think the school was big enough then in those days.
- J: Did it not own enough property?
- R: Oh, in my fraternity house, I am a TEP, Tau Epsilon Phi. It is the Security Building now. There is the Great American Bank across the street. Do you know which one that is? You know where Bill Donnegan's is?
- J: You will have to tell me a street.
- R: It is between Tenth and Eleventh streets. The Security Building. Well, that was my old fraternity house. Before that, it was on Ninth Street which is now Thirteenth Street. From there we went to the one on, University Avenue in the Security Building. It stayed there until fraternity row was built.
- J: What kind of buildings were those?
- R: Well, the Security Building was built primarily from a rooming house. The layout was as you walked in, there was the court, and then there was a dining room, but on the left and right side of each was a room.
- J: So they were wood buildings?
- R: The Security Building was brick. Some of them were wood and some of them were just rented homes for fraternity houses. They did not have the money to build. The first big fraternity house that was built here was the Sigma Nu house.

What is that called now? It is right across as you go to the football game, if you are on University Avenue and you turn left, it is right over there on the other side of the street.

J: Sounds like that is next to the Foundation, or maybe that is the Foundation Building.

R: It could be, yes. Well, that was the first big fraternity house that was built on the campus. Man, everybody thought that was out of sight. Brick, you know.

J: And that was built in the 1930s?

R: It was. I do not remember what year, but it was the first big fraternity house and the one that is now the D.U. house?

J: No, I do not know that.

R: Well, that is east of what I am telling you. Right beyond Haagen Dazs, that was the Sigma Chi house. It is the D.U. house now. Delta Upsilon.

J: They do not keep their own homes, do they? They are always moving around.

R: That is right.

J: So you began your college career in 1928. What was your concentration in classes at that time?

R: You want me to be truthful?

J: Yes.

R: None. I was just going to school to have a good time. I was a young kid. I was seventeen years old and flighty. I was interested in gals and all that kind of stuff.

J: So what was social life on campus like?

R: It was great. From what I am telling you about these weekends, the spring frolics, fall frolics, military balls and all that kind of stuff. It was great, a great social life. Of course, there was a steady stream of cars on weekends going to Tallahassee, which Florida State College for Women in those days.

J: Did you fly up there much yourself?

R: Fly? Who could afford to fly? First of all they did not have plane service between Gainesville. They had no commercial service between Gainesville and anyplace. We had a railroad train that went down the middle of Main Street.

J: Was there any other transportation, public transportation besides that?

R: I guess there must have been buses. But there were not any commercial airplanes at all.

J: So how often would you drive up there to see the gals?

R: Oh, maybe once a month. Remember now, I was busy playing dances, and if it happened to be some time like a weekend and we did not have anything to do, a bunch of us would just get up and go and spend a weekend.

J: Is that how you put yourself through school?

R: Yes.

J: And law school, too?

R: Yes.

J: Did you have any other jobs in addition to that?

R: No, that was enough.

J: How many hours a week would you say you spent working, on an average?

R: You mean, at what? At the music?

J: The music.

R: Eight or nine. Well, also, my orchestra was the studio band at WRUF, and we played there three afternoons a week, thirty minutes apiece and got the magnificent sum of twelve dollars and fifty cents a month.

J: And that was to split between you all?

R: No, twelve-fifty a person, for three times a week, twelve performances. How much is that? A dollar a time. A little over a dollar.

J: That is a thirty minute a –

R: But remember what twelve-fifty would buy then. You could rent a room for ten dollars a month.

J: How much could you live on food for?

R: I was just getting ready to tell you. Ma Ramsey most likely charged twenty-five or thirty cents a meal.

J: And what kind of meal are we talking about?

R: Well, it was home style, you know. You did not get steaks all the time or anything, but you could sure live on it, and twelve-fifty was a lot of money then. If you could get your room rent out of that and have a couple bucks for laundry or whatever, that was a lot of money.

J: Were there laundries, businesses, that would take care of your clothing, or did you have machines available to wash your own.

R: I do not believe there were the machines in those days. I do not even think they had invented them yet.

J: I do not think so either. So how did you have your laundry done?

R: Well, they would have some black woman do it most likely, but my mother took care of mine at home.

J: So you would rush it back to the house once a week and...

R: No, I lived at home.

J: Oh, that is right.

R: Yes, I lived at home. I did not have to rush back at all. I was already there, and even with all the hard times, we managed somehow.

J: Did you see a large attrition rate of college students and law students because of the Depression?

R: No. Well, first of all, they did not come to begin with. I mean, it was a comparatively low enrollment because many could not afford it even with the low tuition and all.

J: When did you graduate with your undergraduate degree?

R: I did not get an undergraduate degree. It was not required then. Then I went

on to law school and graduated in the summer of 1935.

J: You had a three-year program in law school?

R: We only had to go two years of undergraduate work.

J: It was not an academic program?

R: You did not have to have a four-year degree then.

J: The four-year academic degree requirement came in 1933, so you got in just under the gun.

R: You are telling me something I do not remember. Is that when it came in?

J: Yes, were you aware of that in the legislation?

R: No. Also in those days, you did not have to take the bar exam either. Graduates from the University of Florida were automatically admitted to the bar.

J: Did you know many people in the law school that began and then after a year and a half or two years, went ahead, took the bar exam up in Tallahassee, passed it, and did not go back.

R: I know one but I cannot think of his name. He was one of two brothers who lived in Dade City. One of them went up there, took the exam and passed it, and he did not come back.

J: Parks Carmichael was one of those. [P. M. Carmichael, University of Florida, College of Law, J.D. 1931]

R: Did Parks do that too?

J: Yes, but he came back, too.

R: Oh, did he?

J: Yes.

R: Parks was ahead of me by a year or so.

J: That is right. And Sam Getzen was another one of those. [Samuel W. Getzen, Florida House of Representatives, 1923-1931, speaker pro-tempore 1927, speaker 1929; 1935-1937; Florida Senate, 1931-1935] Of course he was about

five years before you.

R: He was quite a bit before me. I remember the name. I have heard the name. I wish I could remember the name of this lawyer from Dade City. I think his brother became a judge.

J: Both of them were in law school at this time?

R: Yes. Both of them. The younger one is the one that took the bar and passed it. He dropped out.

J: And he practiced in Dade City?

R: If he is still living, I guess he still is. I do not know. I cannot think of his name.

J: You graduated in 1935 then, and what type of degree was it?

R: LL.B. Oh, no. I did not graduate in 1932. I told you I graduated in 1932, but I did not because we did not have to have an undergraduate degree to get into law school.

J: So you began in 1928 and you actually went straight through?

R: No, I dropped out a couple of times. Hell, I got so far behind. I remember once in my school work, it was either drop out or bust out. It is tough when you are playing dances every weekend. Even in the middle of the week we would play, and come home, go upstairs, wash your face and brush your teeth, and go to class, I was not an 'A' scholar to start with. I could have been better if I had applied myself but...

J: So would you say you dropped out for a period of a year at one time?

R: I think I dropped out twice. Each time I dropped out, I went right back next time.

J: So you want be out for a semester and then return?

R: No. I remember one time I dropped out right before exams. I said, "This is hopeless." So then when exams were over and the next sememster--it was semesters then--started, then I went back. And I rationalized. I said, "Well, I am putting myself through college and it is going to take me a little longer to do it. That is all." But I was determined to get my degree.

J: So what we are looking at, if you started in 1928 and went for about two years and then began in your law work...

- R: Yes. I graduated law school in August of 1935. Then I went to Atlanta, Georgia, but I did not pass the bar up there. There was a lawyer in town named Zack Douglas that wanted me to come to work for him, so I came back to Gainesville. He was a big criminal lawyer then. He and Sigsby Scruggs were the two leading criminal lawyers in Gainesville. [S. L. Scruggs, University of Florida, College of Law, J.D., 1922] He just died last year. And incidentally was Carmichael's partner. So I went to work for him, and the next thing I knew I was out. So I went down to Miami and practiced there for a while, and then I got into World War II. I left Miami and came back home waiting. I did not wait to be drafted. I just went on in, and I got out in 1945. I wanted to get married, so I did not go back to practicing law. That was the time we owned the theatre and my mother offered me a good proposition, so I took that and got married in 1946.
- J: How much dating did you do in law school?
- R: Not too much. I did not have much time really.
- J: How far south and north in the state would you travel on these music excursions?
- R: We played Miami, Jacksonville, Daytona, and one time we played Pensacola. It had something to do with the naval station.
- J: And how many law students did you say were involved in this band?
- R: Oh, I did not say. I was playing for Banzai Currie. He was a law student, and when he graduated – remember I told you February 1932 – I took over the band. The trombone player was an ATO, one of the trumpet players was a Pike, one of the saxophone players was a Pike, I was a TEP, Banzai was a Sigma Chi, and the drummer was a Chi Phi.
- J: Sounds like your recruits for the band came from the college, not from the town.
- R: Oh, it was a college band. It was not a town band at all. Everybody went to the university. In fact, that is how most of them got through college.
- J: Were there any times when you had to quit school to go earn some money and work full time?
- R: No. I can tell you how tough it was though. I remember, my father had gone bankrupt back when the Depression was at its height. I had saved up four hundred dollars from playing. I had a lot of money. Do you know where, there is a Greek restaurant or something on the avenue? It is right on the corner. Do you know where that is?

J: I do.

R: Well, my family lived right next door to that. That is where our house was. I loaned my father \$400 so we could buy it, and my mother ran it. She would get up at four o'clock in the morning and fix breakfast for kids going to school and everything. The Theta Chi house, incidentally, was directly across the street, so a lot of them would eat breakfast there. She would make sandwiches and wrap them in wax paper. At night I would run out to the dormitory, knocking on doors about eleven o'clock at night selling sandwiches, pickle and sandwiches. Just anything you could do to try to make a dollar to survive.

J: Did your family run a boarding house there, too?

R: My mother did that later. She fed the TEP fraternity. It was funny. Some of them could not afford to eat there because it cost fifty cents a meal, and then could not afford the fifty cents. But that helped us too because my mother did that, and my father was out selling shoes or doing whatever he could do to make some money.

J: Was that a rooming house where other people went?

R: We had a couple of extra rooms upstairs at our house on the avenue that we would rent out to roomers.

J: Three or four people would stay there at one time?

R: We had two rooms that we rented out. Yes, about three. One of them had two beds, for two people, and the other one was a single.

J: How long did you own that home?

R: Twenty-five or twenty-six years.

J: That is a long time.

R: Then, the theatre people bought it with the idea of putting up a theatre, but things happened and it never came to pass. I think that the monopoly came up that was trying to squeeze everybody out. They had no competition, so they did not build it.

J: What other investments did your family make during the 1930s?

R: Well, we owned that home there and we owned some property out towards

Hawthorne on Newnan's Lake Road. In the real estate boom back in 1925 like everybody else, it got stuck on them. And we owned those, we inherited those, and we did not sell them until about four or five years ago.

J: You inherited them?

R: Yes. They had been ours since 1925. We just paid taxes on them. In fact, one or two of them, I did not even know where they were.

J: So for the most part, the investment your family made...

R: That was home.

J: But you were unable to take advantage of any of the foreclosures in the area?

R: We did not have any money.

J: Let's talk a little bit about the tuition that you paid in law school. Do you remember paying that? Did you pay it in a check or cash, or who did you pay it to?

R: No. I sure do not remember.

J: Do you remember paying it?

R: Well, I would have to say that I am sure I did not go free.

J: There were some people that...

R: The amount of twenty dollars rings a bell with me somewhere along the way.

J: There were some work study programs available to a few law students. They actually never paid tuition. They worked off that amount. I was wondering if you had that arrangement.

R: No, I did not. I was making some money. If I could save up four hundred dollars, I felt like a millionaire.

J: People were making fifty bucks a month at that time.

R: That is true.

J: Who were some of your law student friends, the people that you attended class with and that you knew intimately?

R: Well, I knew most everybody on a first name basis. But as far as being real, real close to somebody, Vaden McCall was as close a friend as I had. His father was the Baptist minister at a church on University Avenue, the Baptist Church. He and I were very close.

J: How do you spell his first name?

R: V-a-d-e-n.

J: What were some of the things that you did together?

R: Well, he was a saxophone player, and he was in my high school band. We had played in that together and that is how we got to be so close. He died of cancer about ten years ago. He had moved to Miami and had lived there after his mother died. He had come up from Miami every once in a while to see his father. I think his father was ninety years old when he died, Dr. McCall.

J: Did he continue as a musician or did he take up the practice of law?

R: No, no. He went into the stock market. He was something like a broker of stock. Not estates. What are these plans that they have for buying stocks?

J: Mutual funds?

R: Mutual. That is it. You hit it. Mutual funds. That is what he was doing in Miami.

J: And that was in the 1930s, after he graduated?

R: No. Well, it was sometime after we graduated, but I cannot remember how long it was since he moved down there. He was down there in Miami quite a while. The rest of the people I knew because I had a band. Everybody knew me. We did not have a big enrollment, and everybody on campus knew me because of the band, and I knew all the politicians back in those days.

J: Were those politicians that would come through town and campaign on campus?

R: I am talking about school politicians.

J: Who were some of those school politicians?

R: Will Fairbanks was one of them. One guy is still living but he is in extremely bad health. He lives in Irvine, Florida.

J: I know where that is.

R: He was a big politician on campus. I cannot think of his name.

J: Did either one of those fellows go on to state politics?

R: No. Will Fairbanks died not too long after he got out of school. [Will Fairbanks, 3L, University of Florida, 1934] The one in Irvine is in very bad health. Those two never ran for office, but they were the ones that manipulated behind the scenes.

J: They were the operators?

R: That is what they were. That is right. They were the type, the operating type. And I knew, what is his name, the legislator, Bennett from Jacksonville? [Charles E. Bennett, Florida House of Representatives, 1941] I was not very close to him. He was president of the student body, but I did know him and he knew me. I knew a lot of the football players.

J: What kind of political club did the law school have on campus at that time?

R: I think they still had the two. What are the two honorary clubs? Alpha Delta something, and what is the other one? The one that is more prestigious? Not political clubs. They were honorary.

J: Those were academic honor clubs. They had two of those. But I am wondering about any political...

R: Political? I cannot remember any. We had something in those days they do not have anymore. Some of the guys would put out scandal sheets.

J: Scandal sheets? Tell me about a scandal sheet.

R: Well, they were bringing out a lot of things. This is political. They had put them in all the doorways of the fraternities and in the dormitories. You would wake up one morning, and it really was humorous because they were so damn dirty. Dirty politics is what it was.

J: Well, what kind of politics? Tell me about it.

R: They were knocking some of the other candidates and revealing things about them, and so on and so forth, that you would not do in a newspaper because of libel.

- J: So they were operating their own little night press putting out this...
- R: That is what it was, yes, exactly right. In fact, the rumor was that Will Fairbanks had a lot to do with some of it but you never could prove it.
- J: Yes. That is always the problem. Was there any campus housing for the law students that was specifically targeted for them?
- R: No.
- J: Where did most of those law students and your friends live? On campus, off campus?
- R: I think most of them lived off campus. I recall we did not have many dormitories in those days either, only Thomas Hall and Buckman Hall. Do you know where the law school used to be?
- J: Bryan Hall?
- R: That is not the one I am talking about. Do you know when you are coming toward the university on the corner of Thirteenth Street and University Avenue?
- J: Yes.
- R: This brick thing says University of Florida on there? Well, that used to be a road.
- J: Yes. A little curved road.
- R: You went straight, and it was the first building over on the left. That was the law school.
- J: Well, that is Bryan Hall.
- R: Is that what they call it?
- J: Yes.
- R: It is Bryan Hall now?
- J: What was it called then?
- R: The Law School as far as I know.

J: They initiated that building as Bryan Hall when they put the addition on in 1948.

R: Well, this was before the addition.

J: And it was just called the law building?

R: As far as I can remember.

J: What was the condition of the building?

R: It was old.

J: Crumbling?

R: No. I would not say it was crumbling, but it was an old building.

J: How crowded were the classrooms?

R: Not very crowded.

J: How many people would you have in your classes?

R: Twenty-five or thirty maybe.

J: How long were those classes?

R: One hour.

J: Would you have a bell that would indicate the beginning of the class and the end of the class?

R: I do not think so. There could have been, but that escapes me. I think they would just look at their watch or something.

J: What was the condition of the library in terms of the number of books and the facilities for studying there?

R: Well, it was small really. The library was small. In fact, a lot of times you had to use the libraries of the lawyers downtown if you needed some other information you could not get from our library. They just did not have much.

J: Would any of the instructors suggest that you go down to these town lawyers?

R: I do not recall that, no.

J: How do you remember getting that information? Is that what different law students would do?

R: It was common practice but I cannot recall somebody specifically saying, "I am going downtown to a certain law library to look up something." Incidentally, that worked the other way around too. Some of the local lawyers used to come out there to brief cases you know.

J: Who was the librarian when you were there?

R: Mrs. Ila Pridgen. [Ila Rountree Pridgen, University of Florida, College of Law, Librarian and Executive Secretary, 1930-1954]

J: What did you think of Ila?

R: Oh, she was a wonderful person. Everybody liked her. She was the secretary of the dean. And for all intents and purposes, she ran the law school. Everybody liked her. She died not too long ago. She had been there for many years, she decided there was not any reason why she should not get a law degree, so she went ahead and took one course a semester. Incidentally, I think she made straight 'A's. She lived over in Melrose after she retired, and she died a few years ago. I do not remember exactly how many, but she was a wonderful lady.

J: Do you remember any of her assistants?

R: No. I do not even know if she had any.

J: As you walked up to check out your books, do you remember any law students standing behind the counter to check out your book or shelving books back there?

R: No.

J: How would you check out a book from Ila?

R: Well, she was not a librarian.

J: She was not the librarian?

R: She was a secretary to the dean, but she did all the work. I would like to say, we always considered her as running the law school.

J: I was under the impression that she has always been named as a librarian in the

university records.

R: Maybe so, but if so, it was after my time and I do not recall that.

J: Well, who did run the library?

R: I do not remember. I honestly do not. It might have been Miss Pridgen, but I just do not remember that.

J: Do you remember checking out books there?

R: No.

J: Do you remember studying there?

R: Once in a while.

J: Where would you generally study?

R: They studying I did was home. I had my own room, and of course, I had a phone there in my room, and it rang so darned much. People called me from various parts to book the band. So I had to have a private phone.

J: Where would you practice in the band?

R: Where did we practice? Well, after we were the studio band, we used to rehearse out at WRUF.

J: When did you begin at WRUF?

R: I started with J.J. McCranie in the fall of 1928. I cannot remember the guy's name, but he had one leg. He was the head of it. The next year Garland Powell became the head, and he stayed until he died. [Garland Wheeler Powell, director, WRUF] There were some very well known announcers that came out of there too.

J: So it sounds like you were practicing over at their studio about the time you started college?

R: Yes. Well, when I was with J.J., we practiced at SAE. I imagine we rehearsed sometimes in the SAE house, and when I was with Bauzie, we most likely rehearsed at the Sigma Chi house. But when I took over the band, we rehearsed at the studio at WRUF.

- J: Let me ask you a little bit about the instructors on campus. What do you remember about Dean Trusler. [Harry R. Trusler, dean, University of Florida College of Law, (1915-1947), professor, (1909-1947)]
- R: I think I told you that on the phone. You reminded me about that shuffling of the feet. I had forgotten about that, and he loved it. He loved it.
- J: He did not have a problem with it?
- R: Oh, he just would grin from ear to ear. He loved the shuffling of the feet. He loved it. And I told you about when we came in late sometimes and were hungry and wanted breakfast. He would lecture with his eyes closed so we sat in the back and would open the swinging doors and sneak out and go across the street to the Black Cat. It was owned by PeeWee Keezel and Bud Mizell. PeeWee Keezel was a cheerleader at the University of Florida, and we would run over there and have breakfast and come back. He was the kind of person who would not know you were gone.
- J: He would not know you were gone. What did he do when you started shuffling? What would he actually do?
- R: He just smiled. He would smile like this is great.
- J: How long would you keep it up?
- R: This was when he first walked into class. When he walked in those two swinging doors, we would shuffle our feet for fifteen or twenty seconds, and he loved it.
- J: Now I have heard stories that if he went over the hour and some of the fellows out there had watches, they would start shuffling then too.
- R: That is right. They let him know time was up.
- J: And would they keep shuffling until he quit?
- R: No. I hear he would quit because he got the message. That was the reason they were shuffling the feet because he did not look at his watch either. He was up there lecturing with his eyes closed, and they just reminded him that time was up.
- J: Now are you going to try to convince me that he had his eyes closed the entire time?

R: Oh, I would not say the entire time but you could tell. You could look up there. It was in the moot courtroom. The courtroom was where we had most of our classes. We had some in other places, but the ones Trusler had were in there and you could tell when his eyes were closed. When he had closed his eyes, out you went.

J: That is the best. I have heard that there were no screens on the windows at that time.

R: I do not remember that.

J: Do you remember flies coming in or having to deal with bugs in the classroom?

R: No, not really.

J: What about the heat in there? Did you notice it?

R: We did not have air conditioning. I do not think that air conditioning, they did not have it then. I do not know how. You do not know what you are missing if you have never had the experience of it. You could not say, "Boy, I wish we had air conditioning in here," because there was not any such animal. So, I guess you did the best you could.

J: Were most of the classes in the morning?

R: They were in the mornings, yes.

J: Were there any in the afternoon that you remember?

R: There could have been. Yes, at one o'clock or two o'clock, possibly. Yes, there were. Oh, I remember an interesting thing I never told you about. During my freshman year in college, in those days, they had what they called a compulsory chapel. At eight o'clock in the morning all freshmen were required to be at chapel in the auditorium. They also had a school rat court. You had these little beanies that you had to wear the first semester, and there were certain paths on the campus where you were not allowed to walk. If you got caught for either that or not wearing your cap, then you were reported, and you came before the rat court and they beat the hell out of you.

J: Physically?

R: Yes, with paddles.

J: I heard at the end of the freshman year all those fellows had to take a green flag or climb up a pole to take something away from the sophomores?

- R: It could have been. That sounds logical. You are reminding me of some things that I had long forgotten.
- J: And if they did not get it from the sophomores, they have to wear those beanies another year.
- R: That is right. That is exactly right. I remember that.
- J: I bet you were wild in some of those. Do you remember participating in any of those beatings?
- R: I was a lover-type. I did not go in for that.
- J: You look like it.
- R: No, I did not go in for that kind of stuff.
- J: Tell me a little bit about Judge Cockrell. [Robert Spratt Cockrell, professor, University of Florida College of Law, (1919-1941)]
- R: Oh, Judge, he is the only member of the Supreme Court of Florida who, when he ran for re-election, was defeated.
- J: Why was he defeated?
- R: I do not know. I do not remember.
- J: Is that why he came to the University of Florida?
- R: I have got a feeling that was it. He and I were friends because he lived across the street from me. He always used to tell us, that he put up with my practicing saxophone all during my youthful days. Do you know where Balloonacy is now? Well, there was a home there at that time, and that is where Judge Cockrell lived. He always used to kid me about putting up with my practicing saxophone when I was growing up. He and I were friends. I recall one incident. A lot of times in those days we used canned briefs. Do you know what a canned brief is?
- J: Tell me.
- R: That is a synopsis of the case which gave you the gist of the ruling so you did not have to read pages and pages. I remember one time, I got up, and I was reading from a canned brief and he said to me, "Rabbit, you have to do better

than that." I said, "Judge, that is the only thing I have. I will try to get a better canned brief next time." He was idiosyncratic. If he ever got down on you, Lord help you.

J: He was a bad fellow to have on the wrong side of you.

R: Joe Pinkoson was in law school. [Joe Pinkoson, 3L, University of Florida College of Law (1934-1935)] He was a very smart young man from St. Augustine. Judge Cockrell caught him reading a newspaper in the back of the room, and Joe could never pass his course again.

J: Is that right?

R: He always failed him, and Joe was smart. He was not just an average student. He was way above average. And if you wanted to look at his test papers after, he could never find it. I guess he destroyed them. But if he got down you, it was just too bad.

J: How did Joe get by him finally?

R: I do not remember exactly, but I do know that it would be possible to graduate without having any of his subjects. There were a few subjects that were compulsory, like common law, and Florida civil practice, and a couple others that I remember. The most dreaded course of all was the old English course, common law. Common law procedure, I think that was the name of it. It was tough. And if you made a 'C' in that, man, that was like an 'A' in something else. It was a tough course. In fact, it was so darn hard that later on they did away with that course.

J: Well, that was the toughest course. That was the one people beefed about the most.

R: That is right. Everybody.

J: What was the most popular?

R: I got a 'C' in the darn thing and I was happy as a lark.

J: Well, what was a 'C' grade at that time? In numbers.

R: Numerically, I do not remember that. I imagine it was roughly the same as it is now. Had somebody else told you about this course?

J: No.

- R: Well, it was a toughie. I think it was.
- J: Who taught this?
- R: Common law something.
- J: There was common law pleading and common law.
- R: Common law pleadings I think was the name of the course. It was awful. It was based on old English law, very dry. It was a tough course. I would listen, I cannot think of his name now, but there was a student from Fernandina. He took the course four times and busted it every time, but they let him graduate anyway because he was sincere. It was not that he was goofing off.
- J: Was there anybody that took the course only once and passed it?
- R: Oh, sure. There was some others, sure. But the one I am telling you about in Fernandina, later went on to become a circuit judge, over in Fernandina Beach. But that is how tough the doggone course was, and they let him graduate anyway because of the fact that they knew he was not goofing off. He really studied for it.
- J: What was his name?
- R: I cannot think of it. He was a circuit judge over there.
- J: He was from Fernandina and went back and became a circuit judge there?
- R: Yes, eventually. Yes. What the heck is his name? I do not remember. See, at my age you do not remember as well as you used to twenty years ago.
- J: Lots of things I do not remember. I am not even thirty. How approachable was the judge in class about answering your questions and the like?
- R: Judge Cockrell? He was all right. He did not teach you a hell of a lot though.
- J: Was he more theoretical or practical?
- R: No, he was practical. One of his favorite questions was – listen to this now, this was in criminal law. One of his favorite questions when he would assess the court, the class, was "Can you get gonorrhoea from a toilet seat?" And the answer was, "Yes, but that is a hell of a place to take a girl." That was Judge Cockrell for you.
- J: Was he really nasty?

R: Not really. He was just old.

J: Did he intimidate people?

R: No, but the one of them did. TeSelle, Clarence TeSelle. [Clarence John TeSelle, professor, University of Florida College of Law (1928-1930, 1932-1958)]

J: How did he intimidate folks?

R: Well, he had get you up there, and no matter what you said, he would ask you questions. The first thing you know, he has you so confused that he is making you change your answer. He taught bankruptcy and courses like that. He had come down from Wisconsin. I think he had been a state's attorney up there at one time and he intimidated the hell out of us. And I made up my mind I was not ever going to let him make me change my mind. I remember one time he was asking me questions and I said, "Mr. TeSelle, you might be right, but I am sticking by my answer regardless of what you say," and he just laughed like hell. I just was not going to let him get me in that rat race of making me change my mind. But I would say he was a good professor.

J: Was he approachable outside of class?

R: Oh sure.

J: Were all of them? Was Mr. Cockrell?

R: Oh, you could talk to Judge Cockrell. Some of them were introverts and some of them were extroverts. You know, TeSelle was an extrovert...and some of them were introverted. We had others. Jimmy Day, [James Westbay Day, professor, University of Florida College of Law (1930-1961)] who was an introvert, and Crandall [Clifford W. Crandall, professor, University of Florida College of Law (1914-1938)] and Thompson [George Washington Thompson, professor, University of Florida College of Law (1928-1932)]. Thompson taught contracts.

J: Was that George Washington Thompson?

R: He was the author of the book, *Thompson on Contracts* at that time.

J: Did he also write the *Trial of Jesus*?

R: I do not know that. But he was a nice man, and all you had to do to pass his course was study the old exam questions. That is all. He was an old man

himself. Slagle taught constitutional law and a few other courses like that. [Dean Slagle, professor, University of Florida College of Law (1923-1928, 1929-1958)] I am trying to decide if I have left out anybody. TeSelle, Slagle, Crandall. Sloane was not there when I was there.

J: Was Simonds? [Stanley Simonds, professor, University of Florida College of Law (1926-1928, 1930-1932)]

R: Simonds? I have never heard of him. Let me go down the list. Trusler. Jimmy Day. Clarence TeSelle, Dean Slagle, Judge Crandall. That is five of them. I do not know who... You write a list of them there.

J: Thompson?

R: Thompson, yes. That is six.

J: There was another fellow.

R: Huber Hurst? [Hubert Christian Hurst, professor of Business Law and Economics, University of Florida College of Law (1935-1936)] We were both members of the Steve Spurrier health club across town, and we got to know each other fairly well then.

J: Do you remember him teaching at the law school?

R: No. See, if you said 1935, that was after I left.

J: Now you graduated in August.

R: August of 1935. Being retired, I do not have any place to go particularly except go to the health club.

J: Well, describe those ceremonies for me when you graduated from law school.

R: It was not anything. It was right in that same practice courtroom. That was it. It was simple.

J: It was not with the rest of the school?

R: No. No, it was not.

J: That is interesting. Did they hood you?

R: No.

J: Did you have a robe?

R: I do not remember having robes. We would just go up there in a suit and, incidentally, we thought we were the best on campus. We wore ties and coats to classes because we figured we were so far ahead, above the rest of the student body. It was a practice to wear ties and coats to class.

J: Is this everyday?

R: Yes, as I recall.

J: And was this more of a tradition or was it more of a...

R: No, tradition only. You did not have to, and some of them came without them, but the tradition was to wear the tie and coat.

J: That is fascinating. And you had the tradition of shuffling.

R: Yes.

J: Now did you do that to all the professors?

R: No. Some of them would not put up with it. TeSelle would not put up with it a second.

J: What would he do?

R: I do not know. But he was very outspoken.

J: He would call you down.

R: Oh, I am sure he would.

J: What about Crandall?

R: Crandall was the jolly type. He was a big man. I guess he weighed two-forty or two-fifty, something like that. He had a goatee. That was a novelty in those days, to have a goatee, and he was the jolliest green giant type of guy. He always seemed happy-go-lucky. Nice, nice guy.

J: What courses did he teach?

R: He had that broad civil practice, that big book thing. That is the one I really

remember.

J: Now I have heard stories about his wife pulling up in an automobile outside the law college, honking her horn, and the students would start shuffling their feet at him in class. Have you heard anything like that?

R: No, but that could be so, because most families did not have two cars in those days.

J: Do you recall where he lived in town?

R: No. No, I do not. I can tell you another story about TeSelle.

J: Yes, go ahead.

R: I was going to say the only one that I knew was Judge Cockrell. I told you where he used to live. TeSelle lived near where I used to live, near the old University of Florida golf course, on Newberry Road. He built a home in Golfview subdivision. As you are going to Golfview you go around to the right. There is a little circle and my home was about thirty-five yards from the ninth green. I would turn right, but for TeSelle you turn left, and go up the hill just a little bit, and over on the left was a home that he had built. He never took possession of it. It ran over building costs, and he could not pay for it. Now would you like to know how much the home cost? \$17,500.

J: And this was in 1932?

R: Somewhere back in the Depression days.

J: That sounds like a lot of money to me even in the Depression.

R: Well, it is, it was. And it ran over the anticipated costs, and he had to give it up. I will tell you who bought it. A lady named Mrs. Brown, who was quite prominent on campus, a tall woman. Gosh, I cannot remember what she used to do, but she bought the home, or at least she lived there. I would not say that she got it because TeSelle could not pay for it but she eventually owned it. And later on, the guy whose wife's family bought the *Gainesville Sun* lived there. They are divorced, and they live in Lakeland, Florida now.

J: So, Mrs. Brown lived there for fifteen years?

R: I do not know how long she lived there, but if you will ask, somebody will remember her name and what her connection was with the school. But that was her name, Brown. She was a tall lady as I recall it. That is sort of funny to hear

a person cannot afford \$17,500 for a home.

J: Where did he live? Where did he continue to live instead of moving out to the new home?

R: Well, when I lived there at the Golfview, I was already married.

J: I see. When this happened, he was building a home after you were married.

R: No. I am just putting it together. I think this was before I moved to Golfview, but I remember the incident, and what made me remember it was the fact \$17,500 was so much money then that he could not afford it.

J: How would TeSelle deal with people in class? Would raise their hands to ask a question?

R: He was rough. He was all right but he was rough. I am telling you.

J: How about outside of class?

R: He was okay. Very pleasant. He chewed a cigar.

J: He would not be calling you down then, would he?

R: No, he would not call you down. He was trying to confuse you, to see if you were going to stick by your answer. He made a lot of them change their minds, but he chewed on a cigar.

J: Would he chew on that cigar in class?

R: I believe he did but I am not absolutely certain about it. Of course it was not lit. That was a, I would say a nervous habit.

J: Now we talked about the shuffling and wearing the suits. Were there any other traditions so to speak, like selling books back or eating together?

R: Well, that was not a tradition. No eating together, nothing like that. On campus they used to have a tradition called Key Day. All of the college professors would wear the keys they had earned during their college days. I had a history teacher. I cannot think of his name, but we were real close. He is the only person I ever knew who turned down an invitation to join Phi Beta Kappa. He did not believe in it. So, ironically on Key Day he brought a house key and put it on a chain and wore it. He taught me history, and I am not kidding you, he was a bachelor. He lived at home with his mother. Do not ask me anything because right now I cannot think of it again. We used to go out and drink beer

together. It was not beer then. It was home brew. They had some of these speakeasy things around and we would go out and drink home brew. He would spend the night at my house, get up the next morning and go to teach the class. Oh, gosh, I cannot think of his name. Go ahead. Maybe I will later.

J: Talking about these speakeasies, how popular were they with the law students?

R: Well, they were popular with everybody, with all the students. One of the owners was Yank Roberts. He had a place out on the Newman's Lake Road that sold home brew for twenty-five cents a glass or a bottle, and pretzels and all that kind of stuff.

J: Would you say a majority of the law students were wheeling and dealing with these guys and going to the speakeasies?

R: No, I would not say that. No.

J: Were all your classes in Bryan Hall or in the law school?

R: Yes.

J: No other buildings?

R: No.

J: Which professor have we not talked about? What was Dean Slagle like?

R: He had no personality. He was quiet, and not really personable at all. I have nothing against him as far as his character was concerned, but he was a quiet type with no personality. Jimmy Day was about the same way, quiet. We used to call him Footnote Day because he would always have you refer to the footnotes at the bottom of the cases.

J: What other nicknames of professors do you recall?

R: Well, we called Dean Slagle, Dean was his name, "Sloogy." That is what we used to call him.

J: Did Cockrell have the name of "Judge?"

R: Yes. Everybody called him "Judge" because of his having been on the Supreme Court.

J: And TeSelle?

R: I remember just calling him professor.

J: I guess he was the dangerous type to give a nickname to.

R: Well, I do not know about that but he, I will always remember him, the way he conducted his classes. Boy, he would rip you up and down, and make you change your mind about the answer you had given. I recall what I told you while ago that he laughed when I told him I was not going to change my mind no matter what he said. He laughed right there.

J: I am here in your hand.

R: And I am sticking by my guns.

J: That is so funny. Did Crandall go by any kind of nickname that was a law school name?

R: I do not think he did. His first name was Clifford, Clifford Crandall. I do not think so. He was well-liked because he was so jolly and such a nice person.

J: Did he carry the same personality into class as he carried around outside of class?

R: Yes, yes. He was not laughing in the classroom, but you could tell from his demeanor. He was okay.

J: Now did any of these professors have law practices out of town or outside jobs?

R: I do not think you were allowed to.

J: No moonlighting?

R: No. You were not permitted to.

J: What about coaching any of the football teams or any of the law school athletic clubs? Did any of the professors participate in that?

R: No, but I can tell you one student, if I recall, was the head coach.

J: Head coach of what?

R: The football team. He was before my time. Sebring. Judge Harold Sebring. He was a circuit judge here for years, and then he went down to St. Petersburg and taught at the Stetson Law School. If I recall, he was a head football coach,

but it was before my time.

J: And now you are saying he was a law student too.

R: Yes, while he was going to law school.

J: That is how he made his living.

R: After he was graduated from law school, he went out to practice. The first thing you know, he was circuit judge. He still has relatives of his wife who live here. The Bishops. Wilber Bishop. He married Wilber Bishop's sister. I am not sure. Of course, he is dead and I think she is too. Wilber Bishop is still alive though.

J: What kind of athletics or social clubs were you involved in?

R: I had the F club in those days, which was one. We played for them when they put on the school dances the night after the football game. It was called the F club. I do not even think they have that anymore.

J: I never heard of it before.

R: The F club. Yes. That is right.

J: How about athletics. Did you play softball, baseball, football...?

R: No. The only thing I ever played was volleyball for the fraternity.

J: Were there any law school baseball teams or football teams that competed around campus?

R: Intramurals?

J: Yes.

R: I am not sure but I do not believe football was an intramural sport. If it was, it was a tag team type of thing. I cannot recall, so I better not say. But they had the volleyball and they used to have boxing in those days and things like that. Even today they win the president's cup or whatever it is, between fraternity teams. They had two leagues. One league was with fraternities with x number of members and the other league had less members. Two competing leagues.

J: What about the John Marshall Debating Society? Were you a part of that?

R: No. That was for the better students, shall we say.

J: Is that right?

R: I would think so.

J: What other clubs in the law school or societies do you recall offhand?

R: Well, I tried to think of the name of two of them, but I cannot think of any.

J: How about any journals that were published by the law school that were quarterly or monthly?

R: I do not remember that either. Were there any?

J: I have not come across any.

R: No. I do not think there were any. I was going to say the *Law Review*, but that certainly was not in my time.

J: No, that was about twelve years later. How many cars were on campus?

R: Not many. We did not have a parking problem. None. There was not any question about finding a place to park. None at all.

J: I had to park across Archer Road and take the bus two days ago.

R: You did. On Archer Road?

J: Across Archer Road. On the other side of Archer Road.

R: I went to Sonny's the other day, and I noticed that the way it is coming down Archer Road from the VA hospital. As far as you could see there were cars on both sides, lined up.

J: I am going through the center of campus. Was there problems with bicycle thievery?

R: Nothing like it is today. No. Of course, there was some.

J: Did you have a bicycle? Of course you could walk, but I mean –

R: I think I must have because that is the way I went out to campus when I was selling those sandwiches. I sure did not walk out there. I would put the basket on the handle bars and ride out to what-you-call-it.

J: Do you remember buying that bicycle and how much you paid?

R: No. I will tell you another interesting thing that is history. You know where I was telling you our store was? Next to that is a parking lot, and then there is that building with Court Side Sports. Do you know where it is?

J: Yes.

R: Well, all that parking lot used to be a house where Ray, Ray something, repaired bicycles. It was a house. There was something wrong with him mentally. You have never in your life seen the filth that was in that house. At one time he was on the University of Florida tennis team. I reminded him of that one time and he said, "You have got to be old or something." I said, "Well, look Ray, I remember you were only" – they finally put him in a mental institution. I think it was in Tennessee. And if he is still living, I think that is where he is now. I went to take my son's bicycle and have it repaired, and he charged fifty cents or some ridiculously low thing.

J: Of course, that is the price of a meal too.

R: But, this is some years later now. There was not any Depression because I got married in 1946. What the heck, Ray something. But that is interesting. The condition of that house, if you ever walked in there, you just would not believe it.

J: I would not want to go in there.

R: It was awful. He was mentally disturbed.

J: Were you in ROTC?

R: Everybody was required the first two years.

J: Of undergraduate study?

R: Yes. I played in the band, incidentally.

J: How about that? How much would you practice?

R: In the band?

J: Yes, for the ROTC.

R: Well, what happened was when the ROTC was drilling, we were practicing.

That was our contribution.

J: About how many hours a week?

R: Maybe three hours, three times a week.

J: Did you receive any financial compensation for being in ROTC?

R: No, not that I recall. No. But the easy way out was being in the band. It was not so disciplined.

J: Were there any law students in ROTC that would come to class in uniform?

R: I am sure there were, but I do not recall who it might be at the time. But for advanced military, you got a title after you got out of the reserves.

J: Was it popular even though it was mandatory to be in ROTC?

R: It was not popular with me. I did it because I was forced to.

J: Were there any other people, a number of people, who felt the same way?

R: Oh, I am sure in any group of people, some are on one side and some are on the other.

J: There were not any petitions signed though or demonstrations against it?

R: No. See, this is a land grant college and that is why it was required. I do not remember the year that they did away with that, but being a land grant college, they were real quiet.

J: I did not realize that was part of the requirement for a land grant college.

R: At least I think it was, but there was something in the rules that required compulsory military training, just like I was telling you about compulsory chapel.

J: Talking about the law college, were there times that you remember petitions circulating because the students did not like a course, or they felt that too much was expected of them?

R: No.

J: Do you remember any demonstrations or controversies between professors or between students and professors?

- R: No. I was not in the upper hierarchy of the law school so if anything like that went on, I did not know about it.
- J: Did you have the occasion to see say, Trusler and Crandall or Cockrell and Crandall communicate between each other, and know how they felt about each other?
- R: Oh. I might have seen them talking in the halls or whatever but I had not idea. I am not sure how popular Judge Cockrell was.
- J: With the rest of the instructors?
- R: Yes. I am not sure about that.
- J: Do you remember his wife dying? She died about 1924.
- R: No. I did not know about that. I think that was before he came to Gainesville. He has a daughter who still lives here. Dee Cockrell West, whose husband at one time was the librarian at the school library.
- J: I did not know that.
- R: Well, that might be of interest. Her name is West. And her daughter, now let me make sure I am right now. Dee's daughter is married. Dee Cockrell West is Judge Cockrell's daughter, and her daughter was married to Nath Doughtie, and I think he is the county judge. [Nath C. Doughtie, Circuit Judge, Alachua County; University of Florida, J.D. (1965)]
- J: Did you have any such thing as drop-add?
- R: No.
- J: You would sign up for a class, and if you did not want it, could you get rid of it?
- R: No. I do not remember that at all.
- J: Do you remember long lines anywhere on campus?
- R: Not really.
- J: To buy food?
- R: Well, in law school, you could get your schedule out beforehand, so you did not even have to go over there. Here is my schedule and that was it.

- J: It was a one-time shot. After you picked up that schedule, what would you do with it?
- R: You knew you had to take fourteen hours or whatever it is, and you knew what courses were compulsory, and so you just made out your schedule with a couple of electives or whatever it was and that was it. There were not any drop-adds that I recall, and there were not any long lines either. I do not remember what the enrollment was in law school but it could not have been that big.
- J: Three hundred people?
- R: No. I do not think so. I do not think so at all.
- J: Now this was the Depression. What were these people doing for jobs, the law students? How many of them had jobs?
- R: I am not sure about that, but I just do not think there were enough wealthy students that they did not have some kind of extra things to do to help go to law school.
- J: Who do you remember having the automobiles? There were only three or four on campus, but do you remember catching rides with any of those people to go downtown?
- R: No. I had my own car because I was in the music business.
- J: That is right.
- R: I cannot remember who had cars.
- J: You had a car but you would not drive to campus, because it was just a walk right across the road.
- R: It was just a couple or three blocks to walk. I lived at 1034 West University Avenue, and you know how far that is from campus.
- J: Not enough to talk about.
- R: Yes.
- J: Now you generally studied at home and a little bit over at the library.
- R: Yes, not much at library. Mostly at home.

J: How many hours a week on an average?

R: I did not study too much, unfortunately. I used to cram for exams. I sat up all night long studying and using old exams given before as a guide to what he might ask you also. I recall they used to have sessions. Three or four of them used to get together and study together and ask each other questions and so on and so forth. I recall that.

J: Did you have time to get together with these folks and cram?

R: I went to some of them, yes.

J: Where would they meet?

R: In one of the guy's rooms, and they would go over the book on one thing.

J: Was it generally in a dorm then instead of in someone's house?

R: No, it was not in a dorm. I just do recall many of the law students living in dormitories.

J: That is right.

R: We had some celebrities though in law school. Charlie Bennett is still a Congressman, and there were two brothers from Jacksonville who were members of very prestigious law firm. I am not sure, but I think one of them is dead, maybe both by now. And Whitey Whiteside who was president of the student body at one time and George Smathers. What year did George Smathers graduate? [George C. Smathers, United States Senate, Florida (1951-1969)]

J: I would have to look that up. I cannot tell you.

R: Well, he was in law school but I am not sure whether he was in law school the same time. I think he came a little bit after I did, but he was president of the student body.

J: Was he active also in law school politics as well as being president of the student body?

R: Well, if he came after me, I do not recall it. See I do not remember if he was or not. I think he was an SAE-er in school.

J: There is another fellow, Whitey?

R: Whitey Whiteside. He was a Delta Tau Delta.

J: Who was the other fellow that was president of the student body?

R: Charlie Bennett.

J: Was he involved in school politics as an undergraduate or during law school?

R: I do not remember. And I cannot tell you when he was president of the student body, whether he was already in law school or not. But I think he was.

J: Was there an organization in the law school, a student political organization, that once a year would rise up in unison and run for government?

R: The big politicians in law school ran the campus. They were very influential. They were older than the seventeen and eighteen-year-old kinds that came to school. Very influential in chafing politics. Oh, give you an example, the one clique would be SAE, Pikes, and ATO, and they would see who went to Blue Key. I think they still do that. But I am not saying it is the same fraternities or whatever, but the idea is still the same. They were very influential, as far as politics was concerned, in choosing who the candidates were.

J: To be a politician, you needed to be a frat member.

R: It was very important in those days. They put up the candidates, they would say, to the ATO's, "You can put up president of the student body, but we want so and so." Some things like that.

J: What about women on campus at that time?

R: We did not have any. Only in summer school. During summer school, then women were allowed to attend.

J: Do you remember women in any of your law classes?

R: Yes, Ellen Knight who became Whitey Whiteside's wife later on. Ellen Knight, a very nice girl. She was a Pi Phi from Tallahassee.

J: When do you recall her being there?

R: The years I was there. [Clara Floyd Gehan, University of Florida, College of Law, J.D. (1933)]

J: Any other women?

R: Clara Floyd Gehan. You have her, I am sure. Do you have Ellen Knight?

J: I think I have run across the name once.

R: Well, she later became Whitey's wife. Whitey Whiteside.

J: Were they there only in summer school?

R: No, no. This was after women were allowed to come to law school.

J: Now women were first allowed in law school in 1925 according to our records. We are looking for women that were there.

R: Well, I know that Clara Floyd Gehan was there, and Ellen Knight, because I used to sit with her. I thought she was a very fine person and I liked her a lot. A lot of times we used to sit in class together, her and me and Whitey and whoever...

J: Was that a general feeling amongst law students that you talked with, about women in class or women at the law school? How would you guys feel about that?

R: I do not think there was any negative feelings involved.

J: And would the professors call on them any more or any less than the men?

R: No. They treated them just like anybody else.

J: Did they get pretty fair treatment?

R: Yes. I tried to think if there was anybody else who was in law school that I knew. It was a little odd, incidentally, for girls to go to law school in those days.

J: It is today. I mean, they are still not in the majority.

R: Oh, is that right?

J: Well, they are not a majority in law school or even fifty per cent.

R: Well, it was a little odd then for a girl to want to go to law school.

J: Do you remember where they lived?

R: Well, Clara was from Hawthorne. That was her home base, and I have an idea

she just commuted from Hawthorne to come to school.

J: And Ellen Knight?

R: Gosh, I do not remember where her home town is. I think it was Miami. When she graduated she went down there, and she and Whitey were married. Whitey died a long time ago. I would say fifteen years ago anyway.

J: Well, what about the summer school sessions?

R: It was hot as blazes. There was not air conditioning. I went one summer school that was so hot I dropped out. I could not stand it. I am a very warm natured person anyway, and I could not stand it was so hot.

J: When were the classes held in those days?

R: In the mornings, but it was still awfully hot.

J: And how long were they?

R: The same. They were hour courses. Incidentally, I guess it is still the same. If you have a three-hour course, you go three hours a week. Is it the same thing now?

J: Yes. How long would that run over a period of months?

R: Six weeks, I believe. Six or seven weeks.

J: And was that shorter? How much shorter was that than a regular semester?

R: Well, you started school in September and the first semester was out right after Christmas, after New Year's. You would always go home for Christmas, and then come back and study for exams. Three weeks later, you had exams.

J: That was a crazy arrangement.

R: Yes, that was one of the bad things.

J: Did you all feel it was crazy then?

R: Yes. It was not sensible. You went home and you had to come back, and then three weeks later, you had your finals. Everybody wanted the finals to be before Christmas, to be able to go home with a clear mind instead of having exams on your mind when you come back.

J: You really did some cramming then.

R: Yes. That is right.

J: Were you able to register part-time if you wanted to at the law school?

R: I do not know because I never tried. I did not have any reason to. Wait a minute, I think you were required to carry at least nine hours to be considered a full-time student. I am not sure whether some of them were doing that or not.

J: Was that mandatory or did that involve you having a loan that you had to meet that obligation of the loan by being registered for so many hours?

R: You mean the nine hours?

J: Yes.

R: Well, that was the criterion of whether you were a full-time student or part-time. If you took less than nine hours you were a part-time student. I am sure there must have been some, Mrs. Pridgen for example, remember I told you she only took one subject a semester, and she finally graduated.

J: Why did it make a difference if you were part-time or full-time though?

R: Well, I would think either they did not have the money or they had to go out and work some to make the money to go part-time.

J: But it did not make any difference to the school whether you were part-time or full-time.

R: I do not think so. No, I do not think so.

J: Well, were there any loans available from the government after 1934 or 1935, your last year there?

R: I do not know, so I cannot answer. I never borrowed any money to go to school. The money I made during the summer playing and during the year playing for dances. I always managed to pay my own tuition, buy my books, and things of that nature.

J: Where do you remember seeing law students working around town?

R: I do not know. I am just not sure whether they had interning. I know my son interned when he went to law school, but I cannot remember that happening

back in my day. It could have been though. Incidentally, there were not that many law firms in Gainesville at the time.

J: Well, that poses an interesting question. Do you sense that people would come from Hawthorne or from Lake City to school in Gainesville, do their law degree, and then stay here as opposed to going back?

R: Yes.

J: Why do you think that was the case?

R: Well, either somebody offered him a job or they liked Gainesville or they liked the university, the sports angle. They thought about things like that and thought, this would be a good place to practice and raise a family.

J: Why did you stay?

R: It is my home.

J: That is important. What about books? We talked about that a little bit before. Tell me a little bit about the cost of books at law school.

R: Well, I told you about the Florida Civil Practice book. That was \$20.00. I think I told you it was \$40.00 before, but it was \$20.00. That was a lot of money. That was new. So if you could buy one for ten or eight dollars secondhand, you did. I do not recall exactly what some of the others were, but they were about four or five dollars a book, something like that.

J: So you remember any of the books being tracts that professors at the college had published and then used in their own courses?

R: Yes. Thompson. *Thompson on Contracts*. That was used. He taught it too.

J: Did you distribute those books for free or did you have to buy them?

R: No, those were bought. I do not even recall where we used to buy law books. I sure do not. I am sure that I bought some of them from other students but I do not know whether there was a commissary or a place where you could go to buy books. I do not recall that, but I do know that I bought some of mine from the other law students when they were through with them.

J: Do you remember buying the book from Thompson?

R: Not from him personally, no.

J: I wondered if he administered the sale of his book.

R: No.

J: In general, what would you say the thrust of the law school training was?
Theoretical or practical?

R: Theoretical. I always did say you learned more the first six months you were out
of law school than you did the whole three years you were in law school.
Theoretical versus practical.

J: Was it a problem?

R: It was a lot of theoretical stuff you really just did not use. You got out into
practice, and you found out it was not used, and this was the case against what
the book said.

J: Would these professors often suggest going down to the courtroom and sitting in
on a session and watching what was going on?

R: Well, we used to do that, and I will tell you another thing that we used to do. A
lot of the law students would always go to the Florida Theatre the first day of a
movie at one o'clock. That was sort of a custom. You could always find a lot of
them there to see the movie, and it would be the first show at one o'clock. Do
you know where the old Great Southern Music Hall is located?

J: Yes.

R: That is where we used to do that. Go to the movies at one o'clock.

J: After you got done with the fun at the movies and examinations came around,
what kind of exam would you have?

R: What do you mean what kind exam? Was it easy? Was it hard or...

J: Was it multi-guess or did you have to write an essay?

R: No. It was essay-type of stuff. It was not yes or no, or fill-in-the-blank. No.
We would have four different ones, you picked the answer. It was essay-type of
stuff.

J: Would they have one question and you would just write and write and write?

R: Right. That is correct.

J: Did they have four questions and you would write on each one?

R: No, you would have about four questions maybe, but you would write on each one of them. The nice thing about it, you could have one answer and another person could have an answer diametrically opposite that, but if your reasoning was good, you would get full credit for the answer. It was like the Supreme Court with a 5-4 decisions. As long as your logic and your reasoning was good, they would give you credit for it.

J: Did you have any pop exams during the semester or get one big exam?

R: No. I do not think we did. I do not recall any.

J: And how long would they give you to take the final?

R: I think it was either two or three hours. We really had plenty of time. I am sure whether it was two hours. We had the honor system too.

J: The professor was not in class?

R: No.

J: Did that work out fairly?

R: As far as I am concerned it did. It worked out okay. I do not even remember seeing anybody cheating. I was not looking.

J: There were about twenty-five to thirty people.

R: Twenty-five, let's say.

J: And it was not crowded in the class.

R: No, it was not crowded at all.

J: Had most of these students that were with you in law school done their undergraduate or their two-years' college work at the University of Florida?

R: A lot of them did, yes. I do not think they had that many transfers in those days from other universities.

J: I have a question I wanted to ask you earlier. I will address it now. Why did you choose the University of Florida to do your undergraduate work and then for

law school too?

R: That is easy. Economics.

J: Economics?

R: Remember, I told you how the conditions were when I got ready to go the law school? You were lucky to be able to go to any place. There was not any question of me going out of town where you had to pay for room and board and everything else.

J: That is right. So that was the only consideration.

R: That is it. You want to go to school? You are going here or else you are not going.

J: That brings it right down to the bone doesn't it?

R: That is right.

J: Were there any problems in coordinating examinations? For example, were there any conflicts in examination times at finals at the law school?

R: I think they worked out what time each exam was to be held amongst the faculty. I do not think there were any conflicts.

J: In any of your course work, did you have a class on how to make briefs and how to prepare them and the like?

R: I am not sure about that, but they did have a moot court class. It was a one-hour class where you got practical experience in trying a case. I remember that.

J: How did you do in that class?

R: Well, I do not recall. I think I did okay, because--you can tell--I can talk. I am not exactly an introvert. I think I did okay on it.

J: That was important then?

R: Well, if you wanted to get some practical experience, it was important.

J: Was that required?

R: No, it was not required to my knowledge.

J: And who taught that?

R: Oh, Lord, I –

J: Well, was it taught jointly?

R: I do not know who taught it but they did like in the debates. You took one side of the issue and the other side took the other side of it.

J: Yes, much like the John Marshall Debating Society.

R: I would think so, yes.

J: What was your favorite type of law while you were in school? A course you would want to take again, or a course that looked appealing.

R: Well, my least favorite was bankruptcy. I can tell you that. That was an awfully hard course.

J: And then the common law pleading you did not like.

R: The common law pleading I did not like. I guess I liked contracts and criminal law best. In fact, that is what my son is today. He is a criminal lawyer over in Jacksonville, and a darn good one too.

J: As I understand it, you did not have what you would call law specialists at that time. You got a general idea of law.

R: That is right.

J: Today you specialize in one area.

R: Then you were just a lawyer. Period. I told you I went to work with Zack Douglas. He took divorces and things of that sort, but his specialty, like Sigsby Scruggs, was criminal law. They were the two best criminal lawyers in this whole area. [Barton T. Douglas, University of Florida College of Law, LL.B. (1932)]

J: Zack Douglas. Does he have a son by the name of Barton Douglas?

R: That is his brother.

J: That is his brother.

R: He still practices a little bit. His office is on North Main Street in a house, but I do not think he practices daily.

J: I will interview him later today.

R: I think he is about seventy-five years old, maybe seventy-six. And Zack, I thought he was in a rest home in Crystal River, but I saw his picture in the paper. There was a big article on one of these rest homes in Gainesville. He is in a resthome in Gainesville. He is about eighty years old.

J: He is the older brother, Zack is.

R: Yes. Zack is the older brother.

J: Now Barton graduated in 1929, I believe.

R: From law school?

J: Yes.

R: Are you sure? Six years before I did?

J: I am sorry. It was two or three years.

R: That is right.

J: Now we still have not gotten to the course that you liked the most?

R: I liked criminal law and, I guess, I liked contracts too.

J: Why did you like those?

R: Well, maybe my nature. I do not know. Why do you like something over another? You tell me.

J: Was it the professor as opposed to the material?

R: Well, I liked Judge Cockrell because he was easy on me. I told you that time about reading the canned brief. It was not anything. He said, "Rabbit, you have to do better than that."

J: Was there a popular course at the law school? One that people talked about to

go to or one to stay away from if you had that choice?

R: Well, the old English law, which was Property I or II. I think it was Property IV. I am not sure. That was as boring a course as – heck, I did not take it. It was too boring. It had nothing to do with you really becoming a good lawyer, and it was based on the old English common law that Florida based its law on. I would say that was the least popular among any course over there. But I am not sure what. One of them is Property I, one is Property II, one is Personal Property, and one of them is something. This was old English common law. Maybe Barton will remember what the number is on that. But it was four courses, Property I, II, III and IV. Now which one was the old English one, I cannot really remember.

J: I will make a note of that. Were there great lecturers coming in once a year or once a semester to speak with you?

R: I do not remember that either. There might have been.

J: Do you remember anybody in particular?

R: No.

J: Let me ask you a few more questions then we will move into your career. How much money could you really expect to make while you were in law school thinking about going out to practice?

R: You have to write this down. This is unbelievable. You know how much Zack Douglas paid me a week when I went to work for him? \$7.50 per week.

J: A week?

R: Yes. But that was the only way I could do it. I was living at home.

J: That is for forty hours a week?

R: Well, you did not work forty hours. You did what you had to do.

J: You were on a salary of \$7.50 a week?

R: Well, I was like an intern then, really. He said, "You do not know anything. You are just out of law school. You really ought to pay me."

J: Is that what he told you?

- R: I am not sure whether he did, but that was the general feeling because you were going to learn more when you got into practice than you did in law school by far.
- J: That is bleak. Now did you know that when you were in school? Could you see that coming that seven dollars and fifty cents a week?
- R: No. No, I did not.
- J: Did you think it was going to be more lucrative than that?
- R: I thought twenty-five bucks a week. Twenty-five bucks a week was a lot of money.
- J: Hundred dollars a month. That is what most people were making.
- R: You could support a family on that.
- J: And you ended up making \$28.50 a month.
- R: But the only way I could do that was live at home where I did not have to pay room and board. That was why I eased back into music. Because of that. I just had to have more money.
- J: You graduated in August. What day?
- R: I do not know that. August of 1935.
- J: The ceremony was in the moot court practice room.
- R: It was upstairs in the practice room where Trusler used to have his class.
- J: Was it informal? What were you wearing?
- R: We dressed in a tie and coat. There were no robes, nothing of that sort at all.
- J: Now was there a companion graduation ceremony over in the University Auditorium at the time.
- R: In the summer school? I do not recall that. I do not recall whether there was. Even today, the regular graduation is not the same day as the law school graduation. I think they are about a week apart.
- J: I am not sure how far apart, but I know it was not the same ceremony. Was that because it was a summer session or do you think that was just a general thing.

R: No, it was just a summer occurrence because it was a summer session. I would say off the top of my head, that the graduations were the same day then because there were not that many students involved. That is not gospel now, but it just seems like to me it would be.

J: Was your graduation ceremony rather mundane, or how did you feel about graduating?

R: Like the rock is falling off your shoulders. I was floating lighter than air.

J: Did you sell all your books?

R: Yes. What I personally liked was that I was able with my mother's forcefulness to get that degree, which I was determined to get. So I said, "Now, at least, I have accomplished that."

J: And you began working for Zack Douglas.

R: No, first I tried to get a job in Miami, but nobody needed a lawyer. In fact, there were a lot of them who were not doing very well themselves. So I went to Atlanta and tried to pass the bar, and I did not pass it the first time. I tell you what bothered me on that law exam up there. It really honestly affected me, and I am surprised they let you do it. While you are taking the exam, the people taking the exam were allowed to type their answers on typewriters. The constant clang of that really got to me. It was not quiet like conditions ought to be when you are taking the exam. So next thing I knew, my parents called me to say that Zack Douglas wanted me to come to work for him. So I figured that was a start, even at \$7.50 a week.

J: Did they tell you that on the phone?

R: I do not remember, no. No. He just told me that when I got back, and I remember when I walked up there the first day, he said, "Rabbit, come in here. I want to sit down and talk to you. I am a criminal lawyer. The greatest criminal lawyer that ever lived is Colonel Delay. The longer you can put off something, the witnesses either move away, they forget. They have a change of heart." He said that Colonel Delay was the greatest lawyer who ever lived. That is right. Then I remember after he got through, he said, "I want you to go down to city hall and defend this guy." I do not remember what it was. This is the first day I went there on a Monday. They used to have city court on a Monday. That was on Northeast First Street. I do not know if that building is still around. It was on the corner. The judge was Judge Carter whom I had known for years. He knew my growing up. First thing the judge said to me was, "Do you have a city license to practice?" I said, "Judge, I just got back into Gainesville this weekend,

but I can promise you, as soon as this is over, I am going right down to city hall to get my city license." It is funny to remember something like that.

J: Now was he calling your bluff on that?

R: No. That was a requirement. I think he knew the situation, and he wanted to get me started off on the right foot. I do remember Judge Larkin Carter.

J: How many times did you argue cases in front of Judge Carter?

R: I do not remember that, but I went to circuit court with Zack a lot of times. Well I eased back into music and I stayed there until World War II.

J: So you were working for Zack Douglas?

R: I worked for Zack. Then I left him and I went to Miami. I was trying to find space in a law firm there. I was starving to death.

J: When was that?

R: It had to be in early 1942, or the last part of 1941. Then of course World War II came along, and I quit and came back to Gainesville. I went in the army, and went out to Blanding.

J: Well, what was the deal down in Miami?

R: Well, I had to try to get started somewhere, and I had been there about eight or nine months when I folded up and came back home to wait. I was not going to be drafted. I went right on in.

J: What rank did you go in as?

R: Private. I was a captain when I left the service.

J: What was your role as a captain? Were you in the legal branches?

R: No. I was a special service officer. When I graduated OCS in Miami Beach, they sent me to Washington and Lee where they had special service school training. Then I went to a cadre in Wendover Field, Utah, which is on the Nevada-Utah line. That is where the cadre formed, and kept adding on until they got a full complement of planes and pilots. Then I went to England. I was at one base for twenty-five months. My special service background was that I had experience in law. I knew how to run a theatre. I knew a lot about music. I did that until I wore out. It was hard work. That was the kind of job you could

make of it what you wanted. On the level of organization it was not very high, but I made something out of it. My CO was University of Georgia graduate whom I knew very well. The area executive officer was Bob Satterwhite [Robert Bennett Satterwhite, University of Florida, Certificate of Associate of Arts, (with honors), 1937] from Sebring, and the ground executive officer was Ben McLauchlin, [Ben L. McLauchlin, University of Florida, Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, June 1937] from Citra, Florida, which is a little town not far from Ocala. All of us were from the University of Florida except Bill Davis, and I got in pretty good.

J: And that is all over in England?

R: Yes. Well, we formed at Wendover Field, Utah, and I became a squadron adjutant. It was a lot easier to run a squadron and the TO, table's organizations, was higher. So that is how I got to be a captain. I came home in 1945. I did not want to go back to practicing law because I wanted to get married. Hell, I was thirty-four years old when I got back. My mother offered me this job running our theatre, which I did.

J: And when did you marry?

R: The next year, 1946.

J: What was your job at the theatre?

R: I did the buying and the booking of the pictures. I had to go to Atlanta mostly to book the pictures and buy them, although salesmen would come by to see me to book them.

J: What kind of competition did you have?

R: None.

J: You were it.

R: Yes, I was it.

J: Was it lucrative?

R: Yes, it was until T.V. came along and non-segregated theatres and the whites stopped going to movies.

J: So that blew it away?

R: Remember I told you we closed it. Then that is when we had the arson, later on.

J: Whom did you marry?

R: My wife was from Charleston, South Carolina. Her name was Kate Prystowsky. I met her through the efforts of a sister-in-law of mine, the one that married my brother, and who lives in Kingsport, Tennessee. When I told her, "Look, I will go over to Charleston. I am going to Atlanta on a buying and booking trip and I will just fly over the Charleston." She said, "Well, you can stay with my sister Rosalie." I said fine. So I got over there, and I was supposed to meet three different people, starting off with Kate. I liked her and I never did get to see the other two.

J: Her name sounds eastern European.

R: Well, it is from somewhere. Incidentally, her brother was head of obstetrics and gynecology here at Shands for fifteen years. And for the last eleven years, he has been the dean and the provost executive officer of the medical school complex at Hershey, Pennsylvania. Penn State. That is where he is right now.

J: Now did her family move here to Gainesville?

R: No, no. They are from Charleston. Her father was born, raised, and died in Charleston.

J: That is not even South Carolina. That is Charleston, right?

R: That is Charleston, South Carolina. Geechee town, you know. Have you ever heard them talk? They have this geechee accent, what they call geechee. Even today my wife still has a slight bit of it.

J: What is geechee?

R: I think it is a river or something there, but it is a certain way they talk like B-ee-r. Beer. They call it Bear. A bottle of bear. And some of the blacks are very difficult to understand if you can understand them at all. You really have to listen, and then you are not sure if you heard right or not. They only two places where the geechee talk is common are Charleston and Savannah.

J: Well, I have often heard that if you are from Charleston, you are not South Carolinian, you are Charlestonian.

R: Charlestonian. Charleston and Savannah are the only two places where the geechee talk geechee.

J: So you married.

R: Yes, I married in 1946, and I had my first child nine months and ten days later.

J: Congratulations.

R: Thank you. He is a lawyer. Hell, I was thirty-five when I got married, and I did not see any reason to wait to have a family.

J: You cannot wait too long.

R: No. I had four. All of them grown. And my wife is in Atlanta now because my older daughter had a baby boy three weeks ago.

J: Well, congratulations again.

R: Thank you. I have two grandsons now and I am going to Atlanta tomorrow. I am going to Atlanta tomorrow and we are both coming home. She will have been gone five weeks and we are setting in for the winter, for the fall, with the football season and everything.

J: So tell me, once the theatre was burned and folded, where did you go? What did you do?

R: Well, by that time, I was in the retail business. I started off where the Great Southern Music hall is now. As you are looking towards the lobby, on the right was a store. That is where I started off in the retail business, in a little haberdashery shop. And then three or four later, the man in the first block across from Woolworth's had the L&L Men's Shop. He wanted to retire, and we bought him out, and we stayed there twenty-six years. Then we came out to the campus, where I was telling you about until this past June.

J: How would you say your law school training was a benefit during your career?

R: It helped me very much.

J: In what ways?

R: Well, it made me more aware of things, like in a contract. You read the fine print and you use some of your law experiences in that. It was not wasted. Not in my opinion it wasn't.

J: How different is law school in your eyes today than when you were there?

R: When I was in law school, it was easy, very easy, comparably speaking. Now it

is tough as it can be. And the reason is because so many people want to be lawyers, so they are going to make sure you want to be a lawyer. If you can survive this, then you are going to be a lawyer.

J: It is really going to weed them out.

R: That is right. It is very tough now.

J: How do you feel about the retroactive awarding of J.D. degrees?

R: I really do not have any feeling, although I thought it was funny. You heard me joke about it. For five dollars, I became a doctor.

J: There are some people that had some hard feelings about that.

R: Did they? I do not have any understanding as to why they did it either. From Bachelor of Laws to Doctor of Jurisprudence.

J: As I understand it, it was to make the degree prominent and recognizable nationally.

R: Is that what it was?

J: Yes, because an LL.B. is not looked upon as favorably as a J.D.

R: That could be.

J: So if you give everybody a J.D., everybody from the University of Florida Law School looks good.

R: Yes, that sounds logical. Sure.

J: Well, I have certainly enjoyed talking with you and feel like I have gotten to know you a little bit.

R: Well, I have given you a lot of information, but some things I do not know. I told you I did not. But you reminded me of a couple of things I had forgotten about.

J: Well, if there are any other pieces of information you would like to share with me, I will be glad to leave my phone number or my number at the office and...

R: Okay. Are you in Sam Proctor's office? Well, I could get through to Sam.

J: Now this will be transcribed and we will send you a copy of it and you will have

the opportunity –

R: Oh, just turn it – about making corrections?

J: Corrections, additions, if you wanted to delete anything, what have you. That will be in about, four or five months, I guess. And we would like to have this information on file, once we have the final transcripts, for researchers to come in and use the information, we need your authorization, your release to use the information.

R: It is okay with me. Far as I can tell, I have given it to you just like I remember it.

J: That is what is important, and you have given me a good story. I have enjoyed listening to it.

R: A lot of things went on in those days.

[End of the interview]