

UFLC 8

Interviewee: Barton T. Douglas

Interviewer: Sid Johnston

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Barton Douglas is a graduate of the University of Florida College of Law and maintains a law practice in Gainesville. He was born March 23, 1908, in Gainesville, Florida, and attended Kirby-Smith School, graduating from high school in 1926. After completing two years of undergraduate work at the University of Florida, Douglas entered the law college and received his LL.B. in 1932. Douglas served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. His law office is located on 103 N. Main Street in Gainesville.

J: I am sitting here today with Mr. Barton T. Douglas in his office at 103 North Main Street in Gainesville, Florida. Where are you from, Mr. Douglas?

D: Gainesville, Florida.

J: And when were you born?

D: March 23, 1908.

J: Who were your parents?

D: James B. Douglas and Rebecca Isabell Hickland Douglas.

J: Is Hickland her maiden name?

D: Right.

J: Where are they from?

D: He was from Winnsboro, South Carolina, and she was from York, South Carolina.

J: How did they happen to come to Gainesville?

D: In the 1880s after marriage, they heard so much about Florida, that they got on the train and went down to the little town called Summerfield, Florida, right below Ocala in Marion County, and he purchased an orange grove there. I had three brothers and one sister who were born there. He was also engaged in orange growing, timber, and a general mercantile store. He married after he graduated from Davison College, and my mother graduated from Queens College in Charlotte, North Carolina. The date that he graduated, I did know. I have it

documented, but it is not here. I cannot tell you about my mother. I just know that she went to Queens College, and I am assuming that she finished because I have heard it so many times.

J: Now, he ran a business in mercantile goods and timber?

D: Oh, yes. He also graduated from Eastland Business College in Poughkeepsie, New York, which was a prestigious business school in those days.

J: How did your father feel about being from the South and going to New York to school?

D: All right.

J: Did he talk about that much?

D: Well, he said he had the time of his life up there.

J: What kind of timbering did he do?

D: Pine and hardwood and other timbers that grow in Florida.

J: And would he turpentine?

D: No.

J: Sawmill?

D: No, he did not do any milling. He sold the timber.

J: So, he bought land here and grew the timber and then sold it and then replanted it?

D: No, he would buy timber from people and resell it.

J: He was a broker of wood. Who are your brothers and sisters?

D: Well, my oldest brother was Alexander S. Douglas, who is deceased. James Byers Douglas, who is also deceased. William Davis Douglas, who is deceased. I have a sister living. Her name is Eloise Douglas Smith. I have another brother named Zachariah Hickland Douglas, who is living. That is the family.

J: Where are you in the family?

D: I am the youngest. I named them in order.

J: Good. Is there a tradition of law in your family?

D: Well, my grandfather was a lawyer for over fifty years in Winnsboro, South Carolina. His two sons were lawyers in Winnsboro. Douglas and Douglas was a famous old law firm in Winnsboro. My grandfather was a member of the legislature. He graduated from Erskins College and the University of Virginia, I believe in law. My uncle, W. D. Douglas, graduated from the University of South Carolina. And my other uncle, I really do not know.

J: There are quite a few lawyers and attorneys in your family, then?

D: Right. All on the Douglas side. Now, there are doctors on my mother's side.

J: Medical?

D: Yes.

J: How many of your brothers are lawyers?

D: One.

J: Zachariah?

D: Zach.

J: What did your other brothers do?

D: My oldest brother, Alexander, died when he was eighteen of typhoid fever here in Gainesville. James Byers was an independent oil operator in Ft. Worth, Texas. He is deceased now. William Davis Douglas was a registered civil engineer in Florida.

J: Where did you go to elementary school?

D: I went to what they call the Eastside Grammar School.

J: That is in Gainesville?

D: Yes.

J: Where was that located?

D: The east building of what we now know as Kirby-Smith.

J: And where did you attend high school?

D: There were two buildings – the grammar and high school.

J: Was there a junior high?

D: No. I started out when F. W. Buchholz was principal.

J: What do you remember about Mr. Buchholz?

D: Well, I always thought he was a very wonderful man. He had discipline among the students. He had a wonderful academic career and his students were outstanding. He was of German extraction and he had that philosophy that you were there to learn and not play around.

J: And did you learn and not play around?

D: Well, I did a little bit of everything.

J: So you attended both grammar and the high school grades in the same building?

D: Same building, but they built a new building, which was the Gainesville High School on University Avenue. It has been torn down now. It was between Seventh and Eighth streets. It is a parking lot for the doctors' buildings for Alachua General Hospital. That is where I think I did the last two years of school.

J: When did you graduate?

D: 1926.

J: Did you graduate with the rest of your class?

D: Oh yes.

J: When did you first begin thinking about going to law school and college?

D: Oh, ever since I was a child. I was named after a circuit judge, and I had a feeling that I wanted to be a lawyer.

J: Did you apprentice in a lawyer's office when you were in high school?

D: No, no. My brother had his office here. This man pictured right back of you is my brother and he was a circuit judge.

J: Did you often go down to the courthouse and watch procedures?

D: Oh yes. Often. All the time. I lived at the courthouse. That was not at these

present courthouse buildings.

J: Right. What kind of jobs did you have in high school and growing up as a youth?

D: Well, let me see. I delivered papers. I raked yards. I sold sandwiches. I met the train here with Louis' Lunch. Do you know about the man who owns Louis' Lunch?

J: No, I do not.

D: Well, he is an old-timer here and we used to meet all the trains and sell ice cream and I would go through the train and sell ice cream cones.

J: How would you keep the ice cream cold?

D: Well, you had the cart right there.

J: And didn't it have a bicycle on the back end of it?

D: No, it was a pushcart.

J: Did you deliver newspapers on your bicycle?

D: Oh, yes. Not many paved streets.

J: I bet that was tough keeping it up.

D: No, you got used to it. I lived on a bicycle, too.

J: I bet that was handy going between the courthouse and home.

D: No, not between the courthouse. No, we walked.

J: When did you first enter the University of Florida?

D: I think it right after I finished high school.

J: Did you start in the summer semester?

D: No, I started in the fall.

J: And so you remember what day that was?

D: No.

J: What kind of coursework were you interested in during your undergraduate academics?

D: Sociology and agriculture because this is an agriculture area, and a little bit of biology, rhetoric, and Latin.

J: How many years did you take the academics?

D: Three, I think.

J: Do you recall the requirements for entering law school?

D: I think I had two years.

J: So, did you graduate with a B.A. degree?

D: No, I did not.

J: When did you decide to quit taking the academics and move on into law?

D: Third year.

J: Was that something that just happened?

D: No, I was eligible to go into law college and I went ahead.

J: So, as soon as you were able to, you went on in?

D: Yes.

J: You had the thought then that you were definitely going into law all the time you were in the college?

D: Yes. When I went to school, I will be honest with you, I considered that the fraternities had a hell of a lot to keep me from making the best grades in the world, and I was a playboy, too much so at times.

J: What fraternity?

D: Delta Chi.

J: And when did you join that?

D: Either 1926 or 1927. I forget which.

J: That was about the first or second year you were in school.

D: Yes.

J: What were the initiations like?

D: Oh, it was terrible.

J: Well, tell me about them.

D: Well, they would beat your ass until it looked like hamburger.

J: They were physically violent?

D: Yes, sir. Set you on electric carpets. Put you in a chair and hold you there with electricity. It is a wonder we are living. It was horrible. They put us on the train with molasses and sugar and rice, and blindfolded us and told the conductor to let us off at Evingston and we had to find our way back.

J: Did you?

D: Yes.

J: How did you find your way back?

D: Well, I knew all that territory.

J: Was it a walk or did you catch a ride?

D: We caught a ride.

J: That must have been a real shock.

D: Well, every fraternity did it. I remember when my brother joined the ATO fraternity and they initiated him. His tail was just like mine.

J: Could not sit down for a day or two?

D: Oh, you would get over it. You would live through it.

J: Sure. So you went three years through the undergraduate program. You joined a fraternity and then who influenced you to go into law?

D: I think, historically, it went back to my grandfather. My brother was also a lawyer at the time. I am sure he was a lawyer at the time.

J: Were there any other people on the University of Florida campus that influenced

- you to go into law or was it basically a family affair?
- D: No. I had my mind made up that I would try to get into law. I will tell you that I did not appreciate me getting into the university. I had the time of my life, and all of a sudden I realized that I had to get down to work.
- J: Did you still hold on to the social activities once you were in law school?
- D: Oh, no. I got down to business then.
- J: Well, before we move on into the law school proper, tell me some more about the social things that you would do for entertainment.
- D: Well, they had two ribbon societies, Serpent and Theta, and they were strictly dance organizations. I belonged to the Serpent. That was the green ribbon you would wear. The other was red, and they would have several big functions every year. And all the people, the girls and everybody, would come to it. Generally the people who belonged to these societies were members of a fraternity.
- J: Now, did the fraternities establish when the dances would be held, or did the societies organize it?
- D: No, they were generally held the week of activities, like homecoming or spring festival or something like that.
- J: Where did you go to church?
- D: First Presbyterian.
- J: Were there a lot of students that went to the churches in the area?
- D: Generally, then, they did, yes.
- J: And was there a tradition of that in law school? People going to church in groups?
- D: Oh no. See, I had been going to First Presbyterian since I was knee-high on the grass. I am an elder of the church now.
- J: Did you consider any other law schools besides the one here?
- D: No. I had thought about Cumberland Law School because Judge Thrasher had graduated from there and my brother had graduated from there. It was an outstanding school, and it is now.
- J: Tell me a little bit about the effects of the Florida land bust and the Depression in

Florida.

D: Now, that was back in 1926. We witnessed a great deal of activity. Values of different lands got very high, lots of sales went on, but most of it was reduced to paper, and then all of a sudden it busted and went dead. People had a hell of a time around here.

J: You could see that happen right here in Gainesville?

D: Oh yes. I saw it.

J: How did that affect your university social life?

D: I had been left a good estate, and it did not affect me at all.

J: Did it affect people you were in school with?

D: Some, yes.

J: Did a significant number drop out?

D: Yes.

J: So, who paid for your education?

D: Well, I inherited this estate and I paid it out of my own pocket. It was mine and I took care of it myself.

J: Was it large enough to keep you from having to work?

D: Oh, yes. It was of the big ones in those days.

J: How much time did you have to put in each week to keep up with the estate dealings?

D: Oh, no. It was all taken care of very properly.

J: Where did you live when you were going to law school?

D: Well, I lived at 618 East Church Street. I was born at 507 North Franklin Street, right next door.

J: Now, are those still streets in Gainesville?

D: Yes. I presently live at 612 Northeast Fourth Avenue, which is right next to where I was born.

J: That is real tradition for you.
D: Yes. I have not moved. My daddy owned both places.

J: So, you would not have needed a loan or grant when you were in law school.
D: Oh, no. I would not have thought of such a thing.

J: Do you know of students who did have those things? Work study programs, perhaps?
D: Honestly, I do not remember anybody having anything like that. If anybody came to school, they would have to work on the side.

J: Was it very common to work while you were at college?
D: Oh, yes.

J: What was the availability of jobs for these people that needed work?
D: Very good. The Gainesville people really tried to throw jobs to them.

J: Even in the Depression?
D: Yes, surely did.

J: How much would you say a person could make while attending law school and working part-time to support himself?
D: I would have no idea. You are getting into ancient history now.

J: Did you have any breaks from law school? Or did you go straight once you began?
D: Oh, no. I went straight through.

J: Did your social activities completely diminish, or did you keep active with the fraternities?
D: I was not too much interested then.

J: Why had you lost that interest?
D: Well, I wanted to be a lawyer.

J: Couldn't you keep the social activities alive and still be a lawyer, too?

D: Well, I had a bellyful of it.

J: That is an honest answer. How much would you say it cost you a year or semester to go to law school?

D: I do not remember.

J: Do you remember paying money for tuition?

D: I do not even remember that, to tell you the truth.

J: Do you remember writing a check for tuition?

D: They must have had a minimum fee or something at that time. I think they did in law college.

J: About twenty dollars?

D: Something like that, yes.

J: Do you have a sense of how much you spent on your law school education?

D: No. You had to buy books, but I would not have the vaguest idea.

J: Never sat down and figured out how much after you graduated.

D: No.

J: When you bought those books, where would you buy them?

D: I used to buy most of mine secondhand, because you would have a lot of good notes in them.

J: What were some of the books that you bought?

D: I have some here now.

J: I would like to see those before I leave. How much would you expect to pay for a used book?

D: I do not remember. That is too long ago.

J: Fifteen dollars? Twenty dollars?

D: I could not give you a price.

J: Fair enough. Now, as I understand it, you lived at home?

D: Yes.

J: Did your mama run a rooming house?

D: No. We always had our own private home. After the freeze in the 1880s, my father moved to Gainesville because he was broke, and his father re-financed him, and he was in business here in Gainesville.

J: He was making enough money then?

D: Oh, yes. He had two grocery stores here. He was a bookkeeper for a big turpentine institute at Sampson City. That is near here. He got involved with insurance companies and was one of the outstanding insurance men in this part of the country in life insurance and health insurance.

J: Did he initiate that business on his own, then?

D: Well, he just kind of fell into it. He promoted it and it just grew to many counties around this particular area. If you had a death claim, he would pay it in cash an hour after the man died.

J: So, he grew from an employee to managing and owning this insurance company?

D: Oh, no. He was the representative of the insurance company, Southern Life and Health of Birmingham, Alabama. He did acquire stock in the company. He got to be one of the bigwigs in this particular area of the company.

J: He paid off claims in cash?

D: That is right. Everybody knew him.

J: Did you generally eat at home when you were in law school?

D: Oh yes.

J: What were some of the popular hot spots in town?

D: The Black Cat.

J: Where was the Black Cat located?

D: Thirteenth Street and University Avenue.

J: Which corner?

D: The northwest corner.

J: Was that popular for just about everybody?

D: Oh yes. They had hamburgers there. Everybody got to the Black Cat and the College Inn.

J: The Old College Inn.

D: Yes.

J: Now, would you say that there was one place that law students tended to congregate or segregate themselves to as opposed to the undergraduates?

D: No. I do not think so.

J: When you attended class, were you generally dressed in a coat and tie?

D: I was. I always wore a coat.

J: Was that a tradition?

D: Not necessarily. But I think when you got to law college, if I can remember correctly, it was looked upon with disfavor if you were not properly attired.

J: Was that social pressure from your peers, or were the instructors saying something to you?

D: No, it was just tradition. You would not dare dress like they do around the campus now. I would not dare dress like that anyway.

J: What was the condition of the building when you walked in?

D: Good.

J: How about the library?

D: Well, we thought it was good. I did.

J: Did you find it crowded? Did you find plenty of room in there?

D: Plenty of room.

J: Who was the librarian?

D: Now, later on I think Mrs. Pridgen [Ila Roundtree Pridgen, librarian (1930-1954)] got to be, but earlier I cannot remember. Let's see, I knew Dean Trusler [Harry Raymond Trusler, professor (1909-1947), dean (1915-1947)], and Dr. Thompson [George Washington Thompson, professor (1927-1932)] was a professor. Dr. Slagle [Dean Slagle, professor (1923-1958)], I will never forget that good old man. He gave me an 'A' in Constitutional Law.

J: Did you earn it?

D: I damn sure did. I studied like hell for it. Then there was another man from Wisconsin who used to be one of the prosecuting attorneys up there.

J: Did you say Crandall?

D: Crandall [Clifford W. Crandall, professor (1914-1949)] was there and so was Cockrell [Robert Spratt Cockrell, professor (1919-1941)], Judge Cockrell, they called him.

J: He was a Florida Supreme Court justice [1902-1916; defeated in 1916 Democratic primary election].

D: He was the only judge that ever got beat in the supreme court.

J: Why did he get beat in the supreme court?

D: I do not know.

J: You do not know the story behind that?

D: No, I do not. I know he was a unique gentleman. Some of the people did not like him; some did like him; some thought he was kind of hard on grading.

J: How did you feel about him?

D: I would rather not comment because his son was a good friend of mine.

J: Would you say he was as approachable as –

D: I got rid of him and was glad to do it. I passed the class – Criminal Law – and I got out of it. The hell with him thereafter.

J: Well, I think that comes through clear. How did you feel about Professor TeSelle [Clarence John TeSelle, professor (1929-1959)]?

D: He was one of the finest men that I have ever know in my life.

J: How well did you know him?

D: Real well. I did some legal work for him.

J: Was he much different outside of class than inside of class? Did you approach him as easily in class?

D: I was very relaxed always around him.

J: Did you find that to be the general attitude of your peers?

D: I think so. Yes. He had an outstanding way of imprinting in your mind how to handle trial practice, I will tell you that. Particularly in different cases.

J: Well, what was his method of doing that?

D: Well, he would get up there and act as if he was practicing law himself in a trial and he would catch you asleep – not literally asleep – but he would catch you whereby he would trip you up in what you were trying to say. Cross-examination and things like that. He taught insurance. I was an insurance counselor. That is how much it impressed me.

J: It sounds like he was one of your favorite instructors.

D: Oh, he was. He knew his unions.

J: And it sounds like Judge Cockrell may have been one of your least favorite.

D: A professor either has a personality you like or dislike. I did not dislike the man, but I could not get along with him. I could not communicate. I could not do the things that he wanted. Now, I do admire some things that he promoted, and one of those was brevity. In fact, today I often think of how Judge Cockrell would say, "Put it in the fewest words that you can." He emphasized brevity. So, in a way he has been an asset to me. I want to be very fair to the gentleman. I would not want to go back to him again, I know that. I just had mixed reactions about the guy.

J: I understand.

D: He helped found the athletic department. He was one of the first trustees.

J: Was he a coach at any one time?

D: No. They had the law college begin the University of Florida Athletic Association and form it as a nonprofit corporation. In those day, all you had to do was file it over at the courthouse, and I will bet you anything that you will find the original

charter over there. He had his hands in athletics, and of course he had a good deal of weight with him. Many boys thought that he had favorites. I am the kind of a guy who does not like favorites. I am just what I am and that is it. I will bet you that in his own mind, he did not think he had any favorites in anybody. You did not know what he thought about you.

J: I have read some of his private correspondence that is stored in the University Archives, and he sounds like a very balanced fellow without any beefs or grudges.

D: Yes.

J: You mentioned earlier that you lived near Priscilla Kennedy [Priscilla McCall Kennedy, librarian, College of Law (1921-1930)]. Will you tell me about that please?

D: Well, she and two of her sisters lived next door to us. I knew her since I was a child. Even knew her when I was out of law college.

J: So, her family lived here?

D: Oh, yes. They were part of the county history.

J: Do you have a sense of when they first moved to Gainesville or to that home?

D: Well, I was born in 1908. They were living then, to my recollection. I think they originally may have come from High Springs. I know she had a brother who was a conductor on the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad.

J: So, she had two sisters and a brother?

D: Let's see. Three sisters.

J: Do you remember their names?

D: No, I cannot right now.

J: Do you remember them marrying, or going off to college?

D: They were all old maids, if I am not mistaken. I cannot remember any of them being married.

J: Was Priscilla an old maid until she died?

D: I am sure that she was.

J: She was at the law school library until about 1929, so about the first year you were there, she left.

D: Yes.

J: Did you have a sense of why she left?

D: No, I do not.

J: The lady that came in to take her place was Ila Pridgen.

D: Right.

J: What was Mrs. Pridgen like?

D: Well, I thought Miss Kennedy was a wonderful person. She was very nice and we were excellent neighbors. All the sisters were ladies of the highest order.

J: What did she look like?

D: Who?

J: Miss Kennedy.

D: Oh, she was tall, and the typical Victorian-type lady.

J: What kind of schedule would she hold? When would you see her leaving the house?

D: Oh, I never paid any attention to that.

J: Was she living with her parents in that same house?

D: Oh, no. Yes, her mother did live there. Her mother died in that house, I believe.

J: Did Miss Kennedy continue to live there as long as you can remember?

D: Yes, they recently sold it, just a few years ago. One of them was named Julia and another one was named, well, it will come to me.

J: Did she continue to live in that house?

D: Right.

J: How many times did you borrow books from her or from Mrs. Pridgen?

D: When have I needed them, and there is no way in the world I can tell you the answer to that.

J: What did Mrs. Pridgen look like?

D: She was a very nice-looking lady, very business-like, a business-type woman. She went to law college and graduated.

J: Was she different in her approach than Miss Kennedy?

D: She was a very kind woman. No, they were both, I think, very nice people, and very good librarians.

J: You say Mrs. Pridgen was very business-like, and I am wondering what Miss....

D: Well, I do not mean to deter from Miss Kennedy. I think that she tried to do her job real well. She looked like she dotted the "i's" and crossed the "t's." She was that kind of a very petite lady.

J: Now, when you walked into the law school from the west side, where was the library?

D: To the left, I believe, yes, to the left.

J: Was it rearranged when Mrs. Pridgen came in to take over?

D: I do not remember.

J: How many hours a week would you study in the library?

D: All the time.

J: Most all the time.

D: Yes. The spare time that I had while I was out of school.

J: Did Mrs. Pridgen help you find sources that you could not locate?

D: Very accommodating lady, yes.

J: Do you remember being able to check out books like the Southern Reporter?

D: You got me there. I do not remember. That is too long ago.

J: So, the library was to the left when you walked into the law school from the west side?

D: Yes, that is right.

J: Did it take up the whole end of the building downstairs?

D: I believe it did.

J: Where was Dean Trusler located?

D: I think his office was in the southeast corner.

J: On the bottom floor?

D: I believe it was.

J: Do you remember having a conference in there, or going in to say hello and talking with him?

D: No, but he is the kind of a gentleman that you would not hesitate to walk in and see. He was very pleasant and very nice. I thought he was great.

J: Was he dressed in a coat and tie all the time?

D: Just about.

J: I have heard references that he was rather timid, or maybe a delicate person.

D: Not that I know of.

J: Very sensitive?

D: No. I certainly did not notice it. I thought he was a very well-rounded man.

J: How many classes did you have with him?

D: Whatever it required. I cannot tell you, but I do remember him very much so. I remember he would lecture to you and he would close his eyes and you would shuffle your feet. Things like that.

J: When would you shuffle your feet?

D: At the end of the class or if you did not like something he said. It was all in good humor and he could take it.

J: Who else would you shuffle your feet to?

D: I do not remember.

J: You said you had a pretty good friendship with Professor TeSelle, and did some outside work for him.

D: Oh, this was after I graduated.

J: Did you know him pretty well as a friend as well as professor?

D: Yes. I knew his wife and I knew his children. They were good citizens. They tried to participate in things in the town.

J: Were there any publications at the law school that were put out quarterly or monthly?

D: No. I cannot tell you that. I do not remember.

J: Do you remember any petitions being circulated at the law school to begin a publication? Any organized groups that wanted to put out a publication?

D: I know the *Law Review* got started, but when I cannot tell you.

J: It was not started until 1947, but there might have been some talk about it well before then.

D: Yes, I have tried to keep them all. They are very good reference. You can see the span between 1932 and 1947 is fifteen years. Time passes and you cannot always put things together.

J: What about the John Marshall Debating Society?

D: Yes, we did have one.

J: What about it?

D: It was all right.

J: Were you part of it?

D: No.

J: Why not?

D: I had too many things to do to keep up with my studies.

J: Were there a lot of people involved in it?

D: Oh, I think you had some good fellows in that thing.

J: Was there a lot of talk about it?

D: I think Dixie Beggs (class of 1931) was in there.

J: What was his real name?

D: That is it. He was from Pensacola. He became a very famous lawyer.

J: What did they talk about in the debating society?

D: I do not know. I never did give it much attention.

J: How about the practice or moot court?

D: That was good.

J: How many times a semester or year was that?

D: I had a criminal case and I had a civil case, that is the way they did it.

J: Was that during one semester?

D: Well, at the time I was taking the course.

J: So, was practice court offered each semester?

D: Had to be.

J: What would you actually do for that class?

D: Well, you would prepare your statement of facts and prepare your case and try it.

J: Who would give you these statements of fact?

D: I think TeSelle was the trial judge.

J: So, you would go to his office –

D: Cockrell, I think, used to be.

J: Would you meet in a classroom situation?

D: No, you would go right in the courtroom.

J: You would go in the courtroom and TeSelle would be standing there and he would hand you a statement of facts?

D: Oh, I do not know when in hell he handled it. He would just give it to you somewhere.

J: And you had to make a case around this.

D: That is right.

J: Would you have a person that you were actually representing?

D: Well, obviously you would if it was a criminal case. You may be representing a person, but it was a full-fledged good course.

J: So, there would be witnesses that you would have to subpoena?

D: Oh, yes. You would use freshmen for witnesses and jurors.

J: How did the freshmen like it?

D: Well, it was just part of the deal.

J: Were they paid?

D: Oh, no.

J: Were you paid?

D: No.

J: Was the moot court more of a fun thing, or was it pretty serious?

D: Everybody enjoyed it, and looked forward to it.

J: So you got two types of cases to argue.

D: They gave you a criminal one and a civil.

J: Two different semesters or at the same time?

D: I do not remember that.

J: What day would court be held?

D: I have no idea.

J: Would you have Saturday classes when you went to law school?

D: No, though I am not sure. You are talking about fifty years ago.

J: Were you going down to the courthouse after school to watch proceedings?

D: Oh, I have been doing that all of my life. Even now I go if I do not have a case, and if it is something I am interested in.

J: How many people had automobiles on campus and at the law school?

D: I was the big one. That is one thing that I did have.

J: You had an automobile?

D: I had a Chrysler Roadster and I had a Century Eight Hupmobile.

J: Both at the same time?

D: No. One right after the other. That is what made me so popular. I did not know what made me tick. I thought I was hot stuff.

J: You were.

D: I was.

J: Hot commodity.

D: No getting around it.

J: Did you go to Jacksonville?

D: Oh, I went to all the football games. I went to Savannah, Georgia, when Georgia played Florida. That is where they used to have the games. One year they would have it in Savannah and the next year they would have it in Jacksonville. Now they have it all the time in Jacksonville.

J: Would you ever drive down to Miami to watch games there?

D: Not so often. We would go down to Tampa a lot, and Orlando, Ocala, Lake City, and Tallahassee, particularly Tallahassee. That is where the girls' school was.

J: Would you drive up to Tallahassee to get dates and watch football games?

D: Sure, over the weekends. You would not have football games there. They did

not have football games.

J: That was not a neutral ground?

D: No, that was Florida State College for Women when I went to school.

J: I am wondering if that was a neutral ground for two other teams?

D: No.

J: Was there even a stadium there?

D: I do not think so, unless it was high school. They did have a good high school team.

J: Who were some of the girls you dated?

D: I do not even remember.

J: Did you marry any of those girls?

D: Oh, no. I married a Vermont girl.

J: A Vermont girl? How did you come to meet her?

D: At a reception here in Gainesville that one of my friends gave. She was from Sarasota. Her father was a lawyer, too.

J: What year did you marry?

D: Well, let's see. Twenty-five years ago.

J: Congratulations. That is the Silver Wedding Anniversary, isn't it?

D: We are going on to twenty-six.

J: When did you first meet her?

D: February and we got married in May.

J: Who were some of the fellows that were real close buddies of yours in high school that you would drive with to Jacksonville and Savannah?

D: Well, Dale Vansickle was a real good friend of mine and he made first All-American at the University of Florida. He and I played on the same football team in high school. Fred Cone [Frederick P. Cone, governor, Florida (1937-1941)] is still living here in Gainesville. A fellow called Runt Beasley owns

the Beasley and Williams Furniture Store here. Then there is Billy Dial [law class of 1932], who used to be president of the Sun Bank and the whole shooting works in Orlando.

J: Who were you in competition with for owning an automobile? Who else on campus had one?

D: I do not remember anybody.

J: You think you were it?

D: Yes, I really do. It was one of the unique things. I even had one in high school.

J: Did any of the professors have automobiles? Could you see them in the parking lots and driving around town?

D: They must have.

J: Do you remember Mrs. Crandall pulling up outside and honking the horn?

D: Yes, I have seen her. They did not live too far from me.

J: Where did they live?

D: They lived on Northeast Fifth Street. I forgot what the name used to be. It was not on the quadrant system then. He lived in a little bungalow. Dr. Crandall had one son.

J: What block on Northeast Fifth Street?

D: Three blocks north from University Avenue.

J: Now, did any of these other professors, Dr. Slagle or Trusler....

D: I knew where Dr. Slagle lived. He lived out in the east side. Professor Cockrell lived on University Avenue. TeSelle lived out in Golfview, I think. Professor Thompson and I were great friends.

J: Where did he live?

D: Let me see, where did he live? He loved to fish. I think he lived somewhere in the east part of town.

J: Northeast?

D: Yes.

J: Now, you say you loved to fish. Did you and Professor Thompson fish together?

D: Sure, I have been fishing with him.

J: Where would you all fish?

D: Orange Lake.

J: Would you go there a couple times a week?

D: I never saw a man in the world that would have more joy in catching a bass. He would just hoot and holler.

J: Did he take his law books with him?

D: No.

J: How often would you all go?

D: Oh, this was after law school. I do not even think I had classes with him. He was such a good man. I have never seen a more perfect and kind man in the world.

J: Sounds like this is after you graduated?

D: Yes.

J: Did you all take your car and hitch the trailer onto its back end?

D: Yes. Most of the time it would be my car. I had a camp down there that I could use.

J: Was it a family camp or property?

D: It was a friend's camp. I was his attorney and represented him.

J: How often did you go to summer school?

D: I do not remember. You know summer school was one of the big deals because all the ladies were here.

J: So, you remember being there with the ladies on campus?

D: I remember being there sometimes. I do not know how many times.

J: Do you remember it being any different? Were classes any longer during summer school?

D: Well, it was kind of an accelerated course.

J: So, it would be shorter?

D: Yes.

J: But everyday it would be a little bit more intense.

D: That is right. You put in clearly.

J: Do you remember any women in courses with you during summer school?

D: I do not. I really do not.

J: You hesitate a little bit. Are you sure?

D: No, I do not. I can remember the faces, but I would not remember the names.

J: You say faces, as in plural. Do you mean two or three?

D: Oh, yes. I had several. I was trying to think of one who lived in Winter Haven. I ought never to forget that one.

J: This was before you graduated? This is during the summer school session?

D: Yes.

J: What did she look like? Blonde hair?

D: [Laughter] I do not remember.

J: Pretty?

D: Yes.

J: Well, I guess you would not have dated her if she were not pretty.

D: Well, I do not remember.

J: What were some of the hot spots around town besides the Black Cat?

D: I do not think there were any dens of iniquity around Gainesville at that time that any of the college students went to.

J: Now, there was the Old College Inn, and there was the Black Cat.

D: That is right.

J: Where were the restaurants?

D: Downtown there was the Alachua Restaurant, and there was another one on the corner of Main and University Avenue. Louis' Lunch it used to be called, and the same guy that has this fish place on Thirteenth Street, his daddy had this place.

J: It is called Louis' Lunch?

D: Louis' Cafe, I believe it was called.

J: What is it called today?

D: Well, it is a different type of thing. It is where you go in and order fish. It is on Thirteenth Street.

J: What is the name of it?

D: I do not know. It is north of the Shell station on Thirteenth Street.

J: What kind of sports did you play? Either intramural or varsity?

D: I used to play a little tennis. I did not play intramurals at all. I would enjoy throwing what we call catch. We would throw baseball back and forth, and bat it once in a while.

J: And of course you were a great spectator, too, watching all those football games?

D: I loved it.

J: What about the Fall Frolic? What would you do for that?

D: Well, you just prepare and have a good time. That is all.

J: Where did you participate in the Fall Frolic?

D: Right in Gainesville. You stayed right at the fraternities. That is all.

J: What would you all do for the frolic?

D: Dance, mostly dance.

J: Were there any celebrations at the football field?

D: You might have one at the gym. Everybody would go to the gym. Other fraternities would extend invitations to their functions, and vice versa. We had a full day.

J: And spring house parties?

D: Same.

J: What about the Military Ball?

D: If you were the higher echelon that would be a big deal.

J: That was not open to all the campus students then?

D: No. I think I am right about that.

J: What about special lecturers coming in to give a talk in Dean Trusler's or Professor Crandall's class? Would they come in for a day or maybe a week and speak?

D: The probability is that we had them, but I just cannot – by the way, Bill Carleton [William Graves Carleton, class of 1931] went to law college and he was in my class. Carleton Auditorium was named after Carleton, political science and history. He was an outstanding man in his work.

J: How well did he do in law school?

D: He did all right.

J: Did you have him in many of your classes?

D: I had him in Insurance. I never will forget that. I made a higher grade than he did, and did I let him know about it. [Laughter] That was Bill Carleton.

J: Now, when did he graduate from law school?

D: Same time I did. He is dead now.

J: Did you have him in any of the moot courts?

D: No. I had him in his history classes and political science classes. He was great.

J: When did you graduate?

D: 1932.

J: What day and month?

D: It is on the diploma.

J: I will look at that on the way out, then. What building were the graduation ceremonies held in?

D: Where they had the organ.

J: The University Auditorium.

D: Yes.

J: How were the ceremonies distinct for law students from the rest of the crowd?

D: It was not. Everybody graduated together.

J: What kind of robe?

D: Black. Hat and tassel and everything.

J: Was that any different for the law students than it was for the undergraduates?

D: I do not remember.

J: Didn't they have some kind of sash perhaps?

D: Might have.

J: How many people were in your class?

D: Thirty or thirty-five.

J: And did you all sit in the same place as a unit for graduation?

D: Oh, yes. I told you I had a picture.

J: Yes. I still want to see that. Were you all treated together as a unit?

D: Oh yes.

J: Whole graduation?

- D: Sure. Let's see, I cannot think of that guy's name.
- J: Was the fellow you are thinking about the master of ceremonies?
- D: Oh, no. One of the graduates got to be state's attorney for Hillsborough County. Red is his first name and a good halfback on the football field, and his brother is the sports editor of the *Tampa Tribune*, but I cannot think of his last name.
- J: Did you know Fuller Warren [graduated Cumberland Law School, 1928, governor, Florida (1949-1953)]?
- D: Sure. Real well.
- J: When you were in school?
- D: I damn sure did.
- J: Now, he went to Cumberland to finish his law degree.
- D: That is right.
- J: Why did he go to Cumberland?
- D: Well, I guess it was a school that required one year of attendance to graduate. And I think that he wanted to get it over with.
- J: Did you have him in any of your courses?
- D: No.
- J: Did he have an automobile?
- D: No. I do not think so.
- J: Where did he live when he was in Gainesville as a student?
- D: I do not remember.
- J: Did his parents live here?
- D: No. I think one of his brothers lived here.
- J: Might have lived with him then.

D: Well, he was younger than Fuller.

J: Who else did you know in law school that rose to state or national political fame?

D: Let me see. Arnow [Winston E. Arnow, class of 1933] was a federal judge [in Pensacola].

J: What was his full name?

D: Bo Arnow. His name is Winston. There was another guy who got to be a federal judge in Miami, and I think there were several circuit judges who came out of that group. They all turned out to be very successful.

J: After you graduated, what did you do?

D: I came here and opened up a law practice.

J: Did you begin in this office?

D: Yes.

J: And you have been here since 1932?

D: No, I went to Texas for a while.

J: When did you go to Texas?

D: Cannot be exact about it.

J: Before World War II?

D: Oh, yes. I was only out there a short time; a little more than one year.

J: Then you returned here and continued with your practice of law. Now, you received the LL.B.?

D: Right.

J: How many in your group of graduating law students received the J.D.?

D: Everyone.

J: No, the J.D., as opposed to the LL.B.

- D: I know, but everyone. They replaced the LL.B.
- J: Well, at one time, the J.D. signified the top of the class. I am wondering how many of those people received that degree in 1932?
- D: Oh, just a pocketful.
- J: Five or six out of thirty?
- D: Yes, kind of like that.
- J: How did you feel about the J.D. becoming retroactive in 1965, I believe it was?
- D: Did not make any difference to me.
- J: There have been some lawyers that graduated with the J.D. who felt somewhat offended by it.
- D: I was not. I thought it was pretty damn good myself. I like to tell these doctors, "Well, by God, I am a doctor, too."
- J: How was the University of Florida Law College experience important and significant in your life?
- D: Well, I think it was one of the most important factors in developing adulthood that I know of. It put you on your own. You were swim or sunk, and I did not care to get drowned.
- J: How active are you today with the law college?
- D: Well, I keep up with them. The librarian out there, Mrs. Taylor, is a very good friend of mine. I admire the dean very much, and there is a German professor out there. I cannot think of his name.
- J: Robert Mann?
- D: He speaks broken German.
- J: Is this fellow you are speaking about a professor there now?
- D: Yes.
- J: He was not there when you were in law school?

D: Oh, no.

J: So, how was your law college significant?

D: I enjoyed it. Very pleasant. I just loved it. Good people. The faculty was good. All the young men were good, and wherever you went, even after graduation, you would know where one of the fellows were. You would not mind going there and calling for a favor in that town. It was a very close-knit group.

J: How is it different today?

D: Well, I do not think they have a closeness that we had back then.

J: What kind of law was most appealing to you while you were in school?

D: Well, I was like all the rest of them, who thought they wanted to be big shot criminal lawyers. When you got out it was for the birds.

J: Why?

D: Well, number one is that you worked your tail off, and sometimes people appreciated it and sometimes they did not. Most of the time they did not give a damn, but you still did a good job.

J: So, what kind of law did you settle into?

D: Well, I settled into insurance practice, representing insurance claims.

J: Are you still representing insurance companies?

D: No. I have not since 1974. It is too much pressure on me.

J: What type of law do you practice?

D: Estates, wills, guardianship, real property, contracts, and just a smattering of any good general civil practice. Little corporations, etc.

J: Do you enjoy that more than insurance?

D: Oh, yes. You see, when I was representing insurance companies, I was going everyday. Depositions, hearings, trials, outwitting this fellow and he would outwit you. It was tremendous tension.

J: Did they teach you that that is how it would be at the law school?

- D: Oh, no. Hell, you got that after you got out. I did it for thirty years.
- J: Do you think there is a method with which a law school can teach the intensity of practicing insurance and criminal law?
- D: I do not know. Really, you should be in a big law firm to handle that stuff. A single practitioner is just shortening his life to get into law.
- J: Why is that the case?
- D: I had two heart attacks.
- J: That is pretty serious.
- D: So, after the last one, I decided the hell with it. You ought to see the damn files I got out there. These companies would drop things on you overnight, and you had to really get them out. Sometimes the time to file an appearance or plea was so short that I had to work all night.
- J: Did they compensate you fairly for that?
- D: My experience is both yes and no. Whenever I built up a big bill, I would have to analyze it and cut it, or I would have a hassle to get paid.
- J: Itemize that bill.
- D: Oh, hell yes. You have to have documentation of hours. Brother, you learned to do that. They would say, "Well, what in the hell did you do? Were you on the case?"
- J: That bad?
- D: Yes.
- J: Were they teaching you that over at the law school?
- D: No. They do not tell you that.
- J: Why not?
- D: Well, I was a very conscientious person representing these insurance companies and I had a wad of them and I did have some success. I gave them my bill, and that was it. I did not deviate. They either paid it, or by God there was going to be hell to pay. That was just the way I was. And I would say, "You don't have to

hire me."

J: I would have thought that Professor Cockrell, having the experience of being on the supreme court –

D: I do not think he had any insurance experience.

J: Were they teaching courses in insurance law at that time?

D: Oh, yes. TeSelle taught that.

J: But he was not letting you in on how tough it could be out there?

D: I do not think he realized that.

J: Did you feel afterwards that it would have been good to have a practitioner come in and talk about the rigors of insurance law or law in general?

D: To be perfectly honest, I am a one-man wheel. I do not get along with anybody in my office. It is going to be done my way, and people sometimes do not see it my way, so I just forgot it.

J: I see your little sign up there: "Be reasonable. Do it my way."

D: That is right [Laughter].

J: So, you will not hire associates or bring in....

D: Well, you take Benjamin M. Tench, the circuit judge, in Gainesville. He worked in my office. We got along all right.

J: Well, why did he leave?

D: Well, he is a very ambitious man. He wanted to get out on his own, and make his way, which he did.

J: Well, who else worked for you that was from the law college?

D: Osee Fagan [Osee R. Fagan, class of 1948] is one of our circuit judges here in Gainesville.

J: Now, these people graduated after you?

D: Yes. This was when they had just graduated and wanted to get some

experience.

J: So, what attracted those people to your eye to bring them in here and let them work for you?

D: I do not know. Just probably one of the cog wheels in it.

J: Would you consider doing anything like that today?

D: Have somebody come in the office? Ah, no, I would rather have my freedom. I would rather get and go and come and do as I please.

J: Now did they work for you, or did they just work with you?

D: They worked for me.

J: For you?

D: Yes. To this day Ben Tench remembers the suit to quiet title. He even mentioned it once [laughter].

J: Suit of quiet title?

D: Yes.

J: What is that?

D: Real estate.

J: What is that about?

D: Oh, that was a hell of a deal.

J: Tell me about it.

D: I just dropped it in his lap. Well, you have to hunt up the old heirs and things like that. You have to make them all party defendants and you have to make sure that you have got adverse possession of the property. It is quite an interesting lawsuit.

J: Was that one of his first cases?

D: Yes.

J: You all still talk about that?

D: Well, once in a while he will mention it.

J: Is there anything else you would like to add about your experiences at the law school?

D: Well, I have a great deal of respect for the law college, then and today. I pray and hope that they will accept one of my kids there. I do not know. You just cannot tell about that. He is the one at Washington University, and he is taking pre-law. That is what he wants to be. He is not going to be into insurance, I can tell you that.

J: Best of luck to him. We would like to use this information that you have shared with us in the law school history, and would like to have your authorization to release this information. We have a copyright release form here. I will let you read and sign. I have enjoyed talking with you.

D: We have covered an hour. You said two hours. Do you want to go farther?

J: Yes, I would like to return and finish the interview later.

[End tape]

J: What about ROTC?

D: Well, everybody gripes about ROTC, particularly the first two years I took it. I will tell you right now, I ended up being a lieutenant-commander in the United States Navy, and I got a commendation letter from the Commander of the Pacific Fleet for my work at the invasion of Leyte. I was a combat officer and I made the invasion of Lingayen Gulf in the Philippines, and at Leute, Saipan, Tinian, and Okinawa. I was Assistant Communications Officer on the *U.S.S. Ancon* that helped handle the surrender of Japan aboard the *U.S.S. Missouri* in Tokyo Bay.

J: What was your duty then?

D: It was all on ship. You did not go aboard. It was all canned, and we relayed it all around the world. My duties were very little. Just to be a lackey boy. That was the ship the newspaper and radio people were on. You did not have television yet. I would do what came down to be done, and as I said I did very little, to be honest with you. I just had the honor of being the Assistant Communications Officer. That is what amount it amounted to.

J: What was your location during the signing in Tokyo Bay?

- D: I was on the *U.S.S. Ancon*, which was a command ship. All of this stuff was piped. It was recorded, and then brought over to the *Ancon* and broadcast to the world. It was like that building over there is the *U.S.S. Missouri*, and I was here.
- J: You were right there next to it?
- D: Oh, I was on it, too. We had to go on the *Missouri* once in a while before the end of the ceremony. I was one of the first in the city of Tokyo, before the surrender.
- J: What did Tokyo look like? Bombed out?
- D: Well, Yokohama was just flat with tin all over the ground. I will tell you something else. Had it not been for that bomb at Hiroshima, I do not know whether I would be here today.
- J: Why is that?
- D: Because it allowed the surrender of Japan. You just do not know what we went through in Okinawa with the kamikaze planes and everything else. It was horrible.
- J: Did you all have kamikazes crash your ship?
- D: The ship next to ours got a kamikaze. One went right by our mast and hit the ship right next to us. That was in the Philippines. Lord, another thing, they would come when the sun was setting. My eyesight is such that I have to have cataract lenses because we had to look in the sun on watch to try to see these guys. I was on the *U.S.S. Cavalier* then.
- J: What kind of ship was that?
- D: That was an attack transport. We would take U.S. Marines or infantrymen and land them. Then we would take casualties and turn it into a hospital ship.
- J: When you went into the service from 1942 to 1945, why were you not part of the legal branch?
- D: That is extra duty. I was judge advocate for the United States Naval Forces in Western Australia. That was extra duty. That is just something you did extra besides your regular duties.

- J: What types of cases would you hear in that position?
- D: Criminal, all of them were criminal. All were U.S. Navy and U.S. Marines, at that time. We tried military cases in that particular area.
- J: How much time would you devote to that duty?
- D: Lots of time. You would have your trials right aboard the *U.S.S. Pelias*.
- J: Witnesses would come on board?
- D: Oh, yes. There is a lawyer in Chicago right now, James Baker, who is a very prominent lawyer in Chicago. He was also the judge advocate; I succeeded him. The military law is stricter than the civil laws we have today as to criminal law.
- J: How many cases would you say you heard while you were judge advocate?
- D: The judge advocate is the one that does the prosecution.
- J: You were a prosecuting attorney then?
- D: That is right. That is what you call your judge advocate.
- J: How many cases did you prosecute then?
- D: Oh God. I do not know, a lot of them. I had some dillies, some murderers and things like that.
- J: Thousands of them?
- D: No. I could not tell you, but you did have a good many of them.
- J: Did that sharpen your legal ability when you came back to civilian practice?
- D: Not necessarily, because you had naval officers as the hearing committee. I defended before I got to be judge advocate. They got so damn mad with me that they said, "Well, we will fix him." I was very successful in defending people. So, they took that away from me and made me judge advocate, and I had to do the prosecuting.
- J: How long were you a defender before they took that position from you?
- D: A short time after I got aboard the *U.S.S. Pelias*. I really did a good job. I really tried my best. Jim Baker was the judge advocate, and he was a graduate from

Michigan. And I said, "Well, to hell with a graduate of Michigan. The University of Florida is just as good."

J: So, you were defending people against him.

D: Right.

J: Where did they put him?

D: He was put in my position of defending.

J: [Laughter] You guys were playing sides of the road on that. So did you become good friends?

D: Oh, yes.

J: How had Gainesville changed when you returned from the service?

D: Well, it was kind of dull. You had to start all over again. I did.

J: Had your practice dissipated?

D: Gone. I just started all over again.

J: Had to build up a new clientele?

D: That is right.

J: Did you open the same office here in Gainesville?

D: Oh yes, I own this property.

J: So it sat vacant for those three years?

D: Yes, it was locked up.

J: When did you bring in Ben Tench?

D: I could not tell you. It was not only him, but just about all during the year at college you would have somebody coming in. They called it clerking. They want to come and clerk for you.

J: Do you still have them come by?

D: Oh yes. I take their resume. I always talk to them because that is a very important part of their life.

J: How many would you say come by to see you in the course of a year?

D: About two or three. I get some resumes through the mail, too.

J: Well, I think we can wrap it up. We have got some good material here. Thank you again for your time.

[End of the interview]