

UFLC 75

Interviewee: Fredric G. Levin

Interviewer: Samuel Proctor

Date: July 1, 2002

P: I'm doing an Oral History interview this morning, July 1, 2002 with Fredric G. Levin, and we're doing it here in his office in Pensacola. The address is 316 South Baylen Street, Suite 600, Pensacola 32501. Fred, the first thing I'd like you to do, if you will, is to give me your full name.

L: It's Fredric Gerson Levin.

P: Was it always spelled Fredric that way? Never with a "K"?

L: Never with a "K."

P: Where does the Gerson come from?

L: I'm really not sure.

P: Family?

L: I'm really not sure. It was always a funny name to me, and back early, I think even when I did my Social Security [card], I was so embarrassed by the Gerson name [that] I put on my Social Security card "Fred George Levin."

P: You gave yourself a new middle name.

L: A new middle name, but then eventually it got straightened out. The "Fredric" was spelled the way Fredric March, my mother told me that she liked that way.

P: I like saying him, too. What's your birth date?

L: March 29, 1937.

P: March 29 is my birthday. I didn't realize that you and I had something we could celebrate together. Where were you born?

L: I was born in Pensacola.

P: Tell me your parents' names.

L: They were Rose Lefkowitz Levin and Abraham Ivan Levin.

P: Where was your mother born?

L: At some points I hear it's Danville, Virginia or High Point, North Carolina. It's right in that area, the furniture area.

P: How about your dad?

L: He was born in Butte, Montana. His father was a trader, pushcart type trader, and just happened to park his wife there in Butte, Montana. I've always heard that he left them there and went up to Alaska for the Gold Rush, but the timing wasn't there. I think daddy was born in 1906, so that wouldn't have been the Gold Rush timing. I really don't know, but I know daddy was born in Butte, Montana.

P: The family came over from Europe from where? Russia?

L: Latvia and Lithuania.

P: Into where?

L: They came into, I think, Ellis Island. It's very unfortunate that none of us ever really got much information. In fact, I didn't realize that my grandfather had been married a couple or three times, my grandmother had been married – this is on my father's side – that by the time we got interested in genealogy and all of that it was gone. The Levin side of the family, that was not their name apparently when they landed.

P: I was going to ask you about that, the change.

L: My father told me he thought it was something like Webber, and somehow or another the name Levin got there, and there's a videotape of my father doing one of these interviews, and unfortunately he died before we ever completed it, but I think it does give as much of the history as he knows.

P: So they came in, you think, into New York. How did they then move south into Virginia you think?

L: I'm not sure. I know that somehow or another they ended up in Norfolk, Virginia, and my father was a twin. I'm really horrible when it comes to...

P: I think the most interesting part is how they got to Butte, Montana.

L: Yeah. He was one of the, I'm sure, few Jews that was born in Butte, Montana, but apparently he was like a pushcart peddler.

P: Your father or your grandfather?

- L: I'm talking about my grandfather, and then my father was born in Butte and lived there about a year. My brother Allen went back, and I can't even remember what Allen said. I think he went to the archives, and there was nothing showing that they were born there.
- P: The question is how did they get to Pensacola? That's really where the story begins.
- L: Yes. My mother was one of, I think, eight or nine children, all [of them] boys except for her. They moved to Fort Lauderdale.
- P: From Montana?
- L: No, my mother was born in Danville. The Lefkowitzes were in the furniture business in the High Point, Winston [-Salem], all that area there, and fairly well-to-do and had moved to Fort Lauderdale. The story is that my dad grew up in Norfolk, and he graduated high school and my mother did also. My father, his father, my grandfather, they had a little grocery store on Church Street, I don't know why I always remember that, in Norfolk. Anyhow, my dad said he graduated high school and heard about the big boom in Florida.
- P: Land boom.
- L: Yeah, this would have been in the 1920s, 1924 probably. 1923, 1924, somewhere in there. He told my grandfather that he was going to South Florida to get involved in this great explosion of wealth that was occurring down there. My grandfather said, this is according to my father, that he didn't expect my daddy to last very long, so he bought him a train ticket round trip. My father said when they got into Fort Lauderdale he cashed in the back end of the ticket; he wasn't coming home. He said there had been no failure there. He started working in a grocery store [and] eventually took over the produce department. He was living in something like a YMCA with a bunch of guys and started saving his money. He said that time, he was making [\$200], \$300 a week.
- P: That was big money.
- L: Yeah, of course. He said it was only costing \$6 to room and board, \$6 or \$8, and he was saving a lot of money. [He] was going to the synagogue in Fort Lauderdale and saw my mother, and he kept coming around, and my mother's father didn't think much of him. This was the only daughter, and they wanted her to marry a doctor.
- P: He was Jewish, but he was also a produce man.

L: Produce man, manager of a little produce stand. My mother was very attractive and had a lot of suitors. My daddy said he always realized at the synagogue that... Anyhow, he left a major contribution in order to win the heart of his father-in-law to be. It was something like \$20 for some different thing back then. This would have been in the mid-1920s, and he had saved up several thousands of dollars that [he] married my mother in Fort Lauderdale. They honeymooned in Havana.

P: That was big living.

L: Yeah. The little things you remember, the National Hotel was where their honeymoon was. [They] came back to Fort Lauderdale. About that time, the boom busted, and he always laughs because there must have been a major hurricane down there.

P: September, 1926.

L: All right. And my father's father became deeply concerned and had heard that there was no water supply, so he either tried to send bottled water down there or was attempting to. My father used to laugh about his father was going to send water on [a] train. Anyhow, my father, there was the bust, and started looking for something else to do.

P: In Fort Lauderdale still?

L: Except there was not much in Fort Lauderdale. I think by that time the hurricane had occurred, the bust had occurred, so he and one of my uncles, I believe it was my uncle Morris, my mother's brother, decided to go look and somehow or another ended up in Pensacola.

P: No relatives here, no family here.

L: Nothing, nothing. But they saw the naval air station here, and it looked like a great opportunity for a pawnshop. My dad didn't really know anything about jewelry, but he was a good businessman. They went into partners in something called the L&L Pawnshop, Levin and Lefkowitz or Lefkowitz and Levin. That apparently didn't last long and my uncle Morris went back to, I guess it was, Miami or somewhere and got into the hotel business. Now, daddy and mamma are here in Pensacola, and my brother David must have been born about, either, we can look it up, but I think, 1928, 1929, 1930, something like that. The pawnshop started to do better and better.

P: Wasn't there a question about the location of the pawnshop to begin with? The original site was Ordons?

L: There was, and then he moved...

P: The woman didn't want to after she learned that it wasn't going to have clothing there too, the Ordons...

L: Yeah. Ordons yeah, who were dear, dear friends. Ordons Men Store was the men's store in town, and Jewish.

P: The one that just closed on that site?

L: The one that just closed on the same site, not near as nice. Mr. Ordon, Harry Ordon had just tremendous talent in architectural type, art type things, and you'd even see the store that he built, which is still there today, was built in the early 1950s, and it was so far ahead of its time. Even to when they closed it last year in the year 2000 or 2001. They have not really changed it much, it was like for fifty years the same.

P: But Ordon's sister owned the property next door?

L: I'm not sure [about] the relationships, but apparently somebody got concerned about my father was going to sell used clothes in the pawnshop, and they somehow or another worked it out.

P: And they went to another site?

L: Went to another site, and I think that's where it remained until when it closed at 108 South Palafox, which was right across, I'm not sure...

P: Near the San Carlos Hotel?

L: No. This was closer to the Saenger Theater and on that side of the street there was Walgreens across the street, Tom Macan on the corner, then next to that was Joe Williams, then Silvermans, then, I think, Singer sewing, then daddy, and then next to that was Maxie Lipschitz's bar called Sir Richards or Sir something.

P: Anyway, the family opened a pawnshop, and it prospered?

L: Opened a pawn[shop], and it prospered. A lot of military people would come in and pawn, and daddy learned the jewelry business and started to become a fixture in the Jewish community here.

P: Was there a Jewish community?

L: Yeah. The oldest temple, a reformed temple in Florida, is the Temple Bethel, still in the same location. I noticed driving on Chase Street, there's a sign "Oldest Jewish Synagogue". I never knew that because of an historical sign on the way home.

P: I wrote that historical sign.

L: Really?

P: Yeah. The plaque.

L: Yeah, the plaque.

P: The state put it up.

L: I didn't even realize there was a synagogue there. Anyhow, there was a very strong Jewish community there.

P: And your family moved right into the community?

L: Moved into what they thought was Orthodox, but you know, they had the women in the back, the men up front, and the total service was in Hebrew. Everybody would go home and eat. We kept kosher in our home, but out everybody would eat shrimp, my mother used to love shrimp. So my brother David was born.

P: All your family, all of the brothers were born in Pensacola?

L: Yeah.

P: David's the oldest.

L: David's the oldest. Then Herman, Herman would have been three or four years behind that. Then, daddy built a home on 15 West Blount Street, and that was like [\$5,000] or \$6,000, and that was right about the time I was born.

P: Are you number three?

L: I'm number three. So I grew up on 15 West Blount, which is about a half a block off of Palafox, north of town, a block from P.K. Yonge School, which is now the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, a very small area. Then, you move a couple of blocks away I remember Dr. Ames lived there. Then, on one block was Silberman. Then, next to the Silbermans were the Goldenbergs, Mr. and Mrs. Goldenberg were my godparents. Then, next to them were the Danheisers. Next to them were the Rosenthals. That whole block was Jewish.

P: A little ghetto.

L: Little ghetto. But it was North Hill in Pensacola.

P: Was it a close-knit Jewish community?

L: Yes. I think the proudest my daddy was, I think he went for either twelve or sixteen years as president of the synagogue year after year.

P: It's a reformed temple when they get here. Do they stay in that?

L: No. We had both a reform and Orthodox group.

P: So when your daddy came, the Orthodox community was already established?

L: Sure.

P: So they went right into that.

L: They went right into that.

P: I wondered if your father was one of the founders of it.

L: No. That had been the Lischkoffs and... It was the congregation B'nai Israel, and I'm not sure whether that sign that you put up is for the synagogue or for the temple.

P: Only for the temple.

L: So that was the location of the temple, then they moved to Cervantes. When daddy got here, it was on Belmont Street, the synagogue. I remember right across the street, the Greenhuts lived, and he had been mayor of Pensacola, or the father had been mayor, and they were in the candy business. Then, right down the street was a kosher butcher shop.

P: A kosher butcher shop in little Pensacola?

L: Oh yeah. Mrs. Kalishman, Millie Kalishman. That was a pretty reasonable size. I think the Orthodox Jewish community probably is almost as big as what is now the conservative [Jewish community]. Back then, I'm sure there were at least fifty [or] sixty families, and maybe there's no more than one hundred today. The temple, the Reformed, they've gotten pretty big. A lot of doctors moved in, things like that.

- P: You named two of your brothers, David and Herman are older than you. Who else are your siblings?
- L: Shortly after me, I was born in March, Stanley was born about a year and a half later in November. Then, my brother Martin would have been – he died in...
- P: That's the one that died?
- L: In October, 1958. He was just about to turn seventeen, I think.
- P: He was the youngest of the children.
- L: No. Seventeen, so he was born in 1941. Then Allen, Allen was born, I think, in 1944 or 1945.
- P: Allen is the youngest?
- L: Allen's the youngest.
- P: What did your brother die of?
- L: Martin died of leukemia.
- P: And your son Martin obviously is named for him.
- L: Yeah. I named my first child Marci really for Martin, my brother. Then, along came Debbie, and then Martin. I was going to name him Martin Lewis Levin, which my brother's name is Martin Lewis Levin, and my mother said "No, you don't," because she was superstitious that Martin died at such a young age. So, I changed it to Martin Howard Levin, and the "Howard" was for somebody on my wife's side. 1937 is when I was born. The family had been here for seven or eight years, whatever, 1928.
- P: Is your father already becoming part of the business community in Pensacola?
- L: Yes. I was getting ready to tell you. I grew up on 15 West Blount Street. We had sort of like a chauffeur, handyman, yard man named Willy, I think it was Willy Davis. We had at least one maid and maybe two maids, black women. We lived pretty high on the hog.
- P: I was going to say, you didn't grow up poor.
- L: I did not grow up poor. I never wanted for anything. As I grew up, my father not only had the pawnshop, which was doing well, but he was in the jewelry

business in Tallahassee, Rays Jewelers, I believe, on College Street. Then he got involved at Pensacola Beach when it started to go and allow motels to be built there. He and Mr. Silverman and Mr. Goldenberg put up one of the first motels on Pensacola Beach. Daddy got into the concession business on Pensacola Beach. Then, in the early 1950s, he took over the concessions at the Pensacola dog track. My father was very well liked by the non-Jewish community as well as the Jewish community. They thought of him as being extremely bright, and I always felt like he knew his place. In other words, he was a good Jew. We never were "country club" or anything like that. My parents social life was strictly in the Jewish community. Daddy worked an awful lot, as you can imagine between all these different things. He got into the bowling alley business, he got into a bunch.

P: He was a real entrepreneur.

L: Entrepreneur. I was just amazed, I thought he was the most brilliant person I'd ever seen.

P: Your father was a smart man.

L: Most of the community felt that way, too. I think they probably, looking back, gave him a hell of a lot more credit than maybe he deserved. I used to couldn't wait to come down to the pawnshop. I was always working.

P: I was going to ask if you worked at all.

L: Oh yeah. I worked at the Pensacola Beach in the snowball stand. I worked in the pawnshop. You learn a lot about people by doing that. I used to come down to the pawnshop, and my daddy loved to play gin rummy, and they used to have a place in back, and they'd play gin rummy. I loved to watch him play, and he had a couple of helpers in the pawnshop, and I'd run back and forth between watching the card game, when he'd let me, and working in the pawnshop. [I] grew up there on Blount Street, went to P.K. Yonge.

P: Tell me about your education now. P.K. Yonge was an elementary school?

L: Elementary school.

P: Named for P.K. Yonge from Pensacola?

L: Yes, from Pensacola. As I grew up, I'm surprised I was really not a good student, but I was more social.

P: You go through elementary school at P.K. and then what?

L: About the time I get through the sixth grade, my father and mother buy a home on the east side of town on 18th and Larua Street, which was the Garmondy home. I remember looking at it and thinking it was the biggest house I'd ever seen. The Garmondys, they had a big room upstairs. My uncle Bennie, my daddy's brother, had come to live with us. Uncle Bennie worked in the store, but he also drank a lot. We all moved over, and my father's mother had come to live with us. We all moved to 18th and Larua [Street] big family here the Laruas and all of that, back from an old Spanish thing. This was in the high rent district. When I say that, it's not far from the water, and some of the major families lived on that side. So we moved with all of the boys. There were six boys, but David had gone off to Duke University at that time. Herman may have gone to Emory [University] or something, no Herman would be going to high school or something. I moved from elementary school to junior high at the same time that we moved to Larua Street, it was over that side.

P: What was the name of the junior high?

L: Clubbs Junior High School.

P: What years are we talking about now?

L: I graduated high school in 1954, so seventh grade around 1948, I guess. I remember my daddy used to take me and drop me off at junior high, and I started meeting people. I was somewhat embarrassed either by the car or whatever it might have been, but he would drop me off at school, and I made friends easily, and a lot of times, playing the fool. Never really saw any real anti-Semitism.

P: You're still in junior high going on to senior now.

L: I'm in junior high and spent seventh, eighth, and ninth grade in junior high. [I] developed some relationships. I was a fairly good athlete. I was not real good, but see, I started school at the age of five so everybody was basically a year ahead of me. But I was a pretty good basketball player, played with the YMCA, a pretty good baseball player. My problem was I was slow, had good coordination. I won the – somebody just brought me a copy of the junior ping-pong championship for the city. So I had good hand-eye coordination, I just didn't have any speed. Anyhow, I loved to gamble.

P: You didn't start gambling in junior high school did you?

L: I would play gin rummy. You have to understand, all these years I've been watching my daddy play gin rummy.

P: During the seventh, eighth, and ninth grade?

- L: It was not for money, it may have been over at my house.
- P: You're supposed to be practicing for your bar mitzvah, not playing gin rummy.
- L: Oh, I was doing that.
- P: What about senior high now?
- L: The bar mitzvah was interesting.
- P: Yeah, I want to hear about that.
- L: I [was] scared to death, absolutely scared to death. My speech may have been two paragraphs, but you had to memorize it. I had to have the maftir, the haftora, and the speech.
- P: You remember the rabbi?
- L: I practiced with Rabbi Holzman. He lived on top of the synagogue. I remember [being] scared to death and may have been, but I had to go ahead and do it, and I remember there was a Jewish progressive club that was maybe four or five blocks from there, and that was a social place. We had my bar mitzvah party afterwards, and momma made all the food, the chopped liver, she was a great, great, great cook. It's funny, because years and years later, Roy Jones, Jr. [Boxer managed by Levin], buys the place that was the Jewish Progressive Club. So, [I was] scared to death to stand up in front of people. The bar mitzvah which usually works in the exact opposite way, [to] give you confidence, I was absolutely scared to death. I remember I fumbled on my speech. You have to understand, I studied for the bar mitzvah for like five years, six years. Nowadays, they do it in five months or six months or a year. I go off to Pensacola High School and somehow or another, my friends start to expand into the, socially, country club set.
- P: This is the affluent gentile community.
- L: Gentile community, but I was still the Jew and they would call me the "Happy Hebrew" or something like that. I started to pull away from the Jewish community. Then, we would drink, and we would gamble over on Pensacola Beach, blackjack and poker and all kinds of things.
- P: Where did you get your money from working? Allowance?

L: Yeah. It really wasn't a lot of money. Two dollars or four dollars, and we would go out to the dog track.

P: You were kids.

L: Yeah, but it was a different time and a different place. It was the 1950s. It was just good times, everybody was happy.

P: Doesn't sound like you were a great student.

L: I was not, I thought I was a lot better student than I was until I just went back and saw my high school report cards. I was a "B" student. A few "A"s, very little studying.

P: Did you get along with the teachers?

L: Got along with most of the teachers, but I started smoking in high school, drinking. I was an excellent dancer. This all goes back to the coordination, I always had great coordination. Between me and a guy named Eddie Gebara, we were the two great dancers at the high school, and Eddie was a big star football player. Somehow or another, I got in with a group. This has a lot of significance in regard to my life, something I regretted, and something that made a big difference to me. There were two high school fraternities. I had two very close non-Jewish friends in high school. Gene Rosenbaum and Maurice Shams, the Jewish guys, I was pulling away from as I became more social. David Cobb, who was later killed in an automobile accident and Ronnie Williams, who was later killed by the police, these were my two big buddies. The social fraternity called the Rebels was the only fraternity that would accept Jews. The social fraternity called Travares never had accepted a Jew, and they'd been there for years and years. David Cobb was in the Rebels. Ronnie Williams, who was one of the best looking men you've ever seen in your life, and all of the big football stars and everybody else was in Travares.

P: All non-Jews?

L: All non-Jews. Two groups in there. One were the star athletes and the very wealthy country club group, and the other was just sort of regular old guys. David Cobb, my dear, dear friend, said I had been invited to join the Rebels, which I agreed to do. About a week before the initiation, Ronnie comes to me and tells me that Travares wants me.

P: Even though they knew you [were] Jewish?

L: Yeah. I regret because I said, " God knows, what a great opportunity to be with the elite," and after having accepted, and I felt so bad, but I had to do it because this was the greatest thing that ever happened. I still maintained somewhat of a relationship with David Cobb. All of this makes a lot of difference a couple of years later when I go to the University of Florida. I become [a member of] Travares, and I start dating Anne Stevens, non-Jewish girls, I'm really "it" now, and all kind of things, just wonderful, what a great life. It was probably the happiest times in my life from a standpoint, socially. It was every night.

P: I can see why you didn't have a chance to study.

L: Yeah.

P: Weren't you folks concerned about that?

L: I think in a way, but my daddy – [unclear] all these guys started coming. You have to understand, Pensacola High School was "the place." Pensacola High School played football, it was front page news. Here I was, his son Fredric, he was big time. I think that probably made him feel good. You have to recognize the times. This was 1953 and 1954. Abe Levin, they called him the Prince of Palafox, everybody was accepted, the Levin's were no longer the little Jewish merchant.

P: You weren't an outsider...

L: Not an outsider anymore. John Pace would say nice things about my daddy and he was the big wealthy people, MacHenry Jones – all of the elite, the "power struck," everybody. So I go ahead and graduate in 1954. Back then, anybody could go off to college, the University of Florida.

P: Where'd you stand in the graduating class?

L: I would've probably been about the middle of the class, something like that.

P: In other words, you didn't get any great academic honors?

L: No.

P: When did you get a car?

L: Never. I always used a car. I think the first car that I ever actually got was a hand-me-down station wagon once I went into law school and had gotten married.

- P: So as a high school student you didn't have a car?
- L: I had the use of a car. I had my brother's and my mother's and my father's, there were all kinds of cars around, I just never had one.
- P: What kind of a home life did you have? Was it a religious home life? Did you go to service?
- L: For them, yeah. Momma and daddy went to every Friday night service.
- P: And you say your mother kept a kosher kitchen?
- L: Kosher home all the way through until she died. Daddy did all the way till he died in 1995. He maintained the kosher home.
- P: So they kept all the holidays?
- L: Oh, yeah. Pretty much, it was getting to a point as I got into high school that the Friday evening services went by the wayside, and I would do the bar mitzvahs and kept Rosh Hashana and the high holidays.
- P: Your family were strong financial supporters of the synagogue?
- L: Yes, and United Jewish Appeal. Even though he was certainly far from the wealthiest Jew in town, he was the biggest contributor to the synagogue and to United Jewish Appeal.
- P: So the Levin family was recognized both within the Jewish community and the non-Jewish community.
- L: Yes.
- P: Why did David go to Duke?
- L: Mr. Harden, who was his Algebra teacher (and David was a good trumpet player too), he loved David and he wanted David to go off to a good school. David went off to college at fifteen, and went to Duke and hated it.
- P: David was a good student?
- L: Yes. Mr. Harden was a high school teacher that David loved. Anyhow, he got him to go to Duke.
- P: So he goes to Duke for his undergraduate work.

- L: He said it was the most anti-Semitic place he had ever been in his life.
- P: At Duke?
- L: Yeah, this was in the 1940s right after the war. There was a quota, either 1 or 2 percent Jews could go to...[he] just found it to be just miserable.
- P: So he was not happy at Duke?
- L: No. Then he decided to go to law school at the University of Florida.
- P: So he graduated from Duke, he took a Duke degree?
- L: Yes. Three years, and then went to the University of Florida law school and did very well and loved that. Became a Gator. He may have given \$10 to Duke, but he hated Duke.
- P: I know he was a great philanthropist of the University of Florida.
- L: Yes. So it was the summer of 1954.
- P: Are you back to you now?
- L: Yeah.
- P: Because I was going to ask you, your brother Herman is older than you and he goes where?
- L: Emory and was going to be a dentist, but he couldn't handle the dentistry and goes into psychology.
- P: And that's what he is today, a psychologist?
- L: Yes. He got his doctorate I think at the University of Florida. All of the brothers got a degree at the University of Florida, all five.
- P: So everybody in the family are Gators.
- L: Stanley got two degrees there, David got his law degree, Herman got his PhD there, I got both of my degrees there, Allen got one degree there in business.
- P: Why did you select Gainesville?

- L: I guess in the meantime, David had gone to Gainesville, and this is where all of the Pensacola boys went.
- P: There was a school in Tallahassee, they didn't have a law school there.
- L: Well, I wasn't even concerned with law school. I didn't know law school, it didn't make any difference to me. At that point, all of my buddies, Y.B. Patterson and Ed Sears, big football heroes, [there] may have been others, going to the University of Florida. They were Travares. Then, I was going to room with Winston Bailey, we got an apartment down there, who was Travares. Jack Gardener, now Jack was not, we used to call him Alibi. There were four of us. Was David Cobb? I don't know. Anyhow, there were four of us that went, and we roomed right off of University [Avenue in] an upstairs apartment.
- P: I'm surprised they weren't pledged to fraternities.
- L: This is how the story goes. So here I am, the football players, everybody, all the social elite, we're all down in Gainesville. I was so naive, I didn't know anything about Jewish fraternities, non-Jewish fraternities. It's rush week, and everywhere these guys went, I went. S.A.E., Sigma Chi, Sigma Nu, Pike, all of this.
- P: You didn't get to the Tep house or the Pi Lam house?
- L: I didn't know anything about Tep or Pi Lam or anything like that. S.A.E.'s, I was going to go S.A.E.. Either way, all the Pensacola boys did. It was either Thursday night or Friday night before the bids came out, or it was the last night of the parties, the evening parties. All the guys came in to see me. Bill Cobb, David Cobb's older brother, was a big S.A.E. All Pensacola [boys] always went S.A.E. on the corner of University and 13th, with the lion. They came into the room where I was, and they said they were all going S.A.E., and I said that's great, I will too. I noticed the look on their face, and they said "Fred," and they went on to explain that I could not. And I said, "Why?" And they said, "Well you're Jewish. But, that's not bad because, you see, the S.A.E.'s sister fraternity are the Teps, and they are the coolest Jews you ever met. I know it's wrong, Jews just, you know how it is, they just can't belong to this fraternity, but we have the greatest parties together and we adore each other, and the Teps are it, and I have already made arrangements with whoever the rush chairman was. Tomorrow at 2:00, they can't wait to meet you, the cool Jews. I've told them all about you, and they just absolutely, they can't wait to meet you. You're going to be like a star there."
- P: Must have hit you like cold water.

L: Oh, God. The first thing that went through my mind was, I said, "I don't believe I could do this if I were them. I believe I would take a stand." But then I thought back, I didn't take [a stand] on the Rebel and Travares thing, I jumped [ship]. All this has a great effect on me throughout life, and has a lot of effect just how things went as to how my life could have changed completely by going into the Tep house that next day. I think it was a Friday at 2:00 or noon, and I remember they were having hamburgers. I got dressed up, and I went down, and I walked in. Nobody came up to me, they didn't know who the hell I was. I kept looking around for the guy I was supposed to meet, and he was there in like a corner, and there were four or five of the top recruits. I remember, later, it was Norman Lipoff and a couple of other guys. So I walk up and I stand there, it's as vivid as if it were yesterday really, and I stand there, and I stand there until there's a break. I introduce myself, "I'm Fred Levin," expecting Bill Cobb has just really set this thing up. "Oh it's nice to meet you, why don't you go over there and have a hamburger?" I went through the line, took a left, and got this hamburger and potato chips or something, Coca Cola. I went and sat at the table, by myself, nobody ever came up, nobody said a word. I'm sitting at a four person table by myself. I don't know a soul. I saw Gene Rosenbaum off to the side. Gene had been my buddy all the way through until I went into high school. I saw maybe another person I knew, but they were all covered up with Teps rushing. I had my hamburger, I looked around, nobody seemed to give a crap one way or the other about me. Had somebody walked up to me and said, "Welcome, heard a lot about you, or something like that, can we talk to you," I would have ended up being a Tep, and there could've been big changes in my life for a lot of things. I walked out of the house, I remember I walked out of the Tep house.

P: This was in 1954 you said?

L: 1954, August, September.

P: They were still down on the Avenue, they haven't moved to the new house yet.

L: [No], they were down. My house would have been across 13th and to the right, but I walked by the S.A.E. house...

P: ...which was right on the corner.

L: I walked by the S.A.E. house and everybody was out partying, they were having their party, and I looked over and really, oh God, you can't imagine how it felt. Now I was not only not an S.A.E., I was nobody. I wasn't even with the cool Jews. So I go back to the apartment, and Alibi Jack Gardener comes [by]. I was really feeling bad, I'm talking about teary bad. He said, "Come on with me." He had been one of the Rebels, he had not been accepted by S.A.E. either, and he was going Sigma Chi. He said, "I want you to come along with me," he said,

"I met some great, great Jewish people over at this Pi Lam house, and they really want to meet you." At that point, I thought my whole career at Florida had gone down the drain. So I go over to the Pi Lam house...

P: ...which was on University Avenue.

L: Right next to the Sigma Chi house. I get there, and you would have thought that Yetsky [Yiddish for "Jesus"] had walked in the door. Alibi was a real personal kind of guy, and he had gone over and he had told them all about me. I walked in the door, and they grabbed hold of me. I remember Fernando Storch, just made me really, really feel very, very comfortable. So I end up being a Pi Lam. There I met Jack Graff and Fred Vigodsky, we were all in the same pledge class.

P: You and Fred, is that your first meeting or you knew Fred?

L: No, I didn't know any of these people. This was Miami High as compared to Miami Beach High. So I, then, become a Pi Lam.

P: Both of my two brothers, George and Saul were both Pi Lams. They were before you, though.

L: Yeah. So I become a Pi Lam, and it was amazing because Sam Goldenberg, who was my god-brother, had been a Pi Lam, Norman Williewzik, in fact all the Jews from Pensacola...

P: I knew Sam well when he was a student.

L: Yeah, Sam's still living, isn't he?

P: Yeah.

L: Nobody ever rushed me. Honest to God, I went off to college, I had no idea there was such a thing as a Jewish fraternity here, that I could not belong. It did have an impact on me because as I went through college, I began to realize, these guys that I had become associated with were really a lot sharper than my buddies who had gone on to S.A.E., Dick Massington, Stanley Rosencrantz. Then I would go over to the Tep house, and we'd play cards over there, Stan Greenberg, and I began to realize these people just – Pi Lams had won the scholastic thing like twenty straight years. And they'd just all moved into...

P: Both Jewish fraternities were very smart.

- L: And they moved into the Orange League or whatever it is, and they had done very well athletically, and they went politically, and I began for the first time to realize....
- P: To what degree were you scarred by the anti-Semitism?
- L: At the University of Florida?
- P: At the University of Florida. You ran into some of it, obviously, in Pensacola, but not to the degree...
- L: Not to the degree it was there. I saw it as my buddies didn't stand up when they should have and said "Hey guys, if you can't do this . . ." This actually, in law school, did occur with my brother Stanley where the whole fiddley-fi group stood up and said if Stanley Levin is either coming or you got to break this Jewish bit and bang, they did. Otherwise they were all going to go . . .
- P: But it's a different kind of a world. You leave your gentile friends now in many ways and move into a Jewish crowd.
- L: Yes, and became good friends with Jack Graff and Fred Vigodsky. These are guys who later moved to Pensacola. Jack became my law partner.
- P: And became life-long friends.
- L: Life-long friends. The other guys, David Cobb, Bailey, Alibi, I'm still somewhat friends with Alibi Gardner.
- P: Did you still live in the apartment?
- L: Still lived in the apartment, and, then, moved into the fraternity house when they moved over. They were Number One, Fraternity Row.
- P: Dean Weil was...
- L: Yeah. When that opened, I moved in the new house.
- P: What kind of a student were you at the beginning in Gainesville?
- L: Nothing. Just played.
- P: You took university college courses.
- L: Sam, I took your course.

- P: You were never in my class.
- L: Yeah I was, somehow or another. I remember in a big room. I must have taken Florida History.
- P: I taught the C1 class, American Institutions is probably what you took, second floor of Peabody Hall.
- L: I took something. Yeah, it was a big room.
- P: A big room, elevated.
- L: Yes, elevated room.
- P: I hope I gave you a decent grade.
- L: It didn't make any difference to me. At that point, if I didn't know what I was going to do, I was going to go back into business and be a pawn broker or something.
- P: In other words, you were looking for four years of good times.
- L: Four years of good times. We would go, Fred Vigodsky and I, there was a professor, I can't remember his name, we'd all go over to the dog track a lot of nights. I had pretty good money to spend at the time, I think like \$120 a month.
- P: Where'd that come from?
- L: My daddy. We used to go to the dog track, Fred had a car, I didn't have a car.
- P: You went to the Jai Alai Fronton?
- L: No, in Ocala? That wasn't anywhere near...
- P: Where'd you go to the dog track?
- L: Orange Park or Jacksonville Kennel Club. They had a whorehouse down by a place called South of the Border, across the border, we'd go there every once in awhile. It was just party, party, party. Grades didn't really make much of a difference.
- P: I can see that you weren't setting any great academic records.

- L: No. Then, the years I really enjoyed myself I met Marilyn who was later to become my wife, Marilyn Kapner. Her cousins were Teps, Norman and Lewis Kapner. Her sister had been a D Phi E, Marilyn was an A E Phi. She had dated Lenny Golden who had been Fred Vigodsky's roommate his freshman year. She was still in high school. Fred Vigodsky introduced me to her, and I remember Freddy told me, "She's the most beautiful Jewish girl you'll ever meet." When I met her, I may have been certainly either a sophomore or a junior. I remember going to the dorm with Fred Vigodsky, and I walk up, and there's Marilyn sitting on this couch with about seven or eight Teps around her. Again, I'm waiting my turn to be introduced. Unbeknownst to me, she's engaged to a non-Jewish boy back in West Palm. I'm introduced, and, then, I call her. Back then, I get a date for like seven weeks, eight weeks off. Jack Graff and Cissy Holly, we double date. Jack had a car, and we'd go to the Alamar Bar. I'm drinking, and I remember the first date she says, "Don't you think you've had enough?" I say, "No". I'd ordered a V.O and Seven or something like that. I call the waitress back, it was just embarrassing that here she had put me in this situation, and I said, "Make that a double." To make a long story short, as I walked her back to the dorm that night from the car to her dorm, she said she was not really turned on by me. I reached over, and I grabbed a newspaper, and I said, "Tomorrow when you get up, put a nickel in there for me." It was a five cent *Gainesville Sun* or something. I walk off, and she was just stunned that anybody could be such an asshole. Anyhow, I called, and every Jewish guy in both fraternities were trying to date her. Then, I'd get another date, eight weeks off, ten weeks off. So I'd met Marilyn, and I was having a great time. I loved the University of Florida.
- P: It sounds to me like you were even more of a social animal in Gainesville than you were in Pensacola.
- L: We'd go out a lot.
- P: Did you ever go to class?
- L: McHouston was his name, was our buddy who'd go gambling with us, and he'd taught business, letter writing, a couple of business courses. I went to his class, and he gave me a couple of "A"s. Fred Vigodsky got "B"s and had never been to class, and he got all upset at him. The guy would just give you the grades. It was just fun times. We get into 1957...
- P: By this time you did have a car.
- L: No. Fred Vigodsky...
- P: It was his car.

- L: Yeah. By the way, he and I, then, move out of the fraternity house, and we room together. We originally move up way near where the airport is. Nice home, we had a maid. Eddie Heller was going to move in with us. Eddie was the drum major, Eddie was big politically at the University of Florida. Fred Vigodsky and myself and Chuck Ruffner were going to room together. I think Stanley may have been involved. Anyhow, Eddie Heller got all upset because there was a disciplinary action against all of us in that apartment for gambling. A guy named Harvey Ward had been arrested, I remember him, with a bunch of student cards. By the way, a week ago Friday, I was having drinks at a place called Lou Michaels here in Pensacola. Jackie Simpson introduced himself to me, and a guy named Dick Hobin, who had been a basketball player, all of them were there about the same time, and I was mentioning to Dick about this guy who had gotten me into so much trouble and was a great dancer and he said, "Harvey Ward." He had remembered Harvey. Harvey, years later called me from Eglin, he had been arrested for bookmaking or something.
- P: He was still booking.
- L: Yeah. We got picked up by the disciplinary committee, and Stanley, who didn't want to stay in school anyhow, took the blame for everything. He got suspended.
- P: When you were in school, which of your brothers were there? Stanley was there later, Stanley's much younger.
- L: No, Stanley's just a year and a half [younger]. Stanley was two years behind me.
- P: David's not there?
- L: David's gone and was practicing law at the time.
- P: Had David made a good reputation at school?
- L: Yeah, David did well in law school. Herman came back during some of this time when I was in law school, I believe, to get his PhD. at Florida.
- P: Where was this place that became the gambling house, again?
- L: Two things. One is downstairs at the fraternity house we'd built this thing and, we had a dice table.
- P: This is the new fraternity house now?

L: On One Fraternity Row. Used to have Saul Fruchman come over.
P: You had Teps over there a lot.

L: Yeah. We'd gamble and stuff like that. This apartment that we were in, Stanley and myself.

P: You knew what happened to Saul Fruchman?

L: No.

P: He committed suicide. His mother and father were both dead by that time.

L: He was in the shoe business or something?

P: His father was in the shirt business selling Manhattan shirts. Saul worked with him, and, then, he hung himself.

L: He was a miserable [person].

P: Lost a lot of money.

L: Gambling?

P: Gambling.

L: Yeah, he did. Is that why he killed himself?

P: I don't know. I think he was just depressed. I remember the house on University Avenue next to the Sigma Chi house, the Pi Lambdas, and in back of it was a one car garage.

L: Two story garage.

P: A cottage.

L: Yeah. There was something on top, you had to go upstairs.

P: And that was not the gambling house?

L: Oh, no.

- P: We went into that place once. My son Alan was in there then. There must have been 2,000 used condoms lying around on the floor and mattresses everywhere.
- L: I never stayed in the fraternity house, there. First place I stayed, I roomed with Stanley Hammerschmidt. Stanley was the dumbest guy I've ever met in my life, but was very, very wealthy. The family had some kind of potato chip deal in Miami. Miami exploded, and he was the Wise potato or whatever the hell it was, but they had done extremely well. So our gambling was going on in our apartment, and we had Jimmy Dunn and Joe Hergert, a lot of the football players coming over. Harvey Ward gets arrested.
- P: How did he get arrested?
- L: Got arrested for stealing student cards and cashing checks, and, then, blamed it on us that he'd lost all his money gambling.
- P: That's how the university became involved with you.
- L: Yes. And Stanley copped a plea for a one semester suspension.
- P: Did they interview each one of you separately?
- L: Yes. I basically told them, along [with] Fred Vigodsky, "Listen, it was a lot of playing bridge and things. If I go, we're all going." That was Hergert and Dunn, that was the football team. This would have been 1957, so I was put on a one-year probation. So all of a sudden, I have to figure out what in the world am I going to do.
- P: I was going to say, you were building up a great record to get into law school.
- L: It didn't make any difference back then. What in the world am I going to do for a living? I was having such a good time, I needed to stay in college. My brother had become a lawyer, David, and had been a lawyer for a lot of years, five or six years, whatever. He said, "Why don't you go to law school." I'm getting out in spring of 1958, June, I'm going to graduate, except Dr. Ring who had this German accent, he flunks me.
- P: I want you to know, he's still around.
- L: I know. The Alfred Ring Tennis Center is right across from the Levin College of Law. So all of a sudden, here I am, I have to go to summer school and, then, go to law school. I go to summer school and take the course over again, transportation. I enter law school. In the mean time, I was home in the spring.

P: Once again, I want to make sure. To get yourself into law school, because you had such a poor academic record....

L: It didn't make any difference then. Anybody could join, anybody could go.

P: Fenn was the dean at that time? Henry Fenn?

L: Yes. So I'm home for the Easter holidays, 1958, and we're living on 18th and Larua [Streets], and my brother David and his wife are across the street. My brother Martin was being checked, he'd been feeling real, real bad, and this again goes back to something that you'll remind me of later. Martin had been treated by Dr. Charles Kahn and had a bad case of acne – Chuck Kahn who's a district court of appeal judge is his son – that during, probably the fall of 1957 or early 1958, she goes to Dr. Kahn, he gives Martin a prescription for Chloromycetin, it had to be Chloromycetin, I didn't know at the time, which was an antibiotic. Martin immediately started getting blotches, and my mother said, "I knew something was wrong, and I knew he shouldn't have taken that." Anyhow, he took it. I'm home for the Spring and Marilyn's with me, we are engaged at the time.

P: So Marilyn's broken off with the guy in West Palm Beach.

L: Oh, yeah. We got engaged I think maybe....

P: You're both students when you got engaged?

L: Yeah, and she's in nursing. Momma comes in, and she's crying. "David," she said, "I think Dr. Ames thinks that Martin has leukemia" and Marilyn gets out the book and starts reading that, back then, it's fatal and everything. I remember David walking across, he grabbed the book and threw it across the room, and I don't know what in the world is going on. Keep in mind, Dr. Ames is the family doctor who lived around from 15 West Blount Street. His wife and daughter, very, very big Catholics. His wife and only daughter were killed in an automobile accident in North Carolina when she was on her way to Duke or somewhere and left his whole estate and everything to the Catholic church, and today it's still a home for nuns, a big beautiful home across from P.K. Yonge

Anyhow, it becomes apparent sometime during that weekend that I'm there, that my brother Martin had leukemia. Everybody up until this point, you have to understand, [was] just a happy, happy family. From that point, to the day she died, I don't think my mother ever really had any happiness. Martin lived maybe six months. He died. It was a miserable disease back then. I remember they went to City of Hope in California. Nothing worked. They had some remission, and everybody was so happy, and, then, three weeks later, he

went. I was home with Martin a couple of weeks before I was to go to law school. I think Martin knew he was dying. I took him to the firehouse drive-in, I remember he caused a big scene there, mean. The last words we had, I remember he threw a plate across the room at me as I was walking out to go to law school. So I get to law school....

P: Had it already moved down to the new area or was it still in Bryan Hall?

L: It's on University and 13th. At that time I'm rooming with David Levy and somebody. We're up in a loft somewhere. I go to my first day of law school, and I'm sitting on one side of the room, and the other side of the room, the auditorium, nobody's in it. Dean Fenn stands up, look to your right, look to your left, neither one of them are going to be here. We graduated about 20 percent of those that started with us, it ended up being. About that time, back of the auditorium opens up and here comes George Stark, first black student to enter a public institution in the State of Florida.

P: You're in the room the day George appears first?

L: Yes. I'm in the auditorium, all the white guys on one side, and, then, George comes in. I didn't understand a lot of what was going on. I remember looking at him, he was dressed in a suit, and all the rest of us were dressed like a bunch of bums. We have two sections in law school, George ends up being in my section. I am slap scared to death. I realize, they're going to flunk two-thirds of these people out, then what am I going to do? For the first time in my life, I start a program that even to today, some forty-four years later, I still do, and that is from the moment I get [up], I am constantly working on something, a case, whatever it is. I get my books in law school and fell in love with law. It just made sense.

P: Let's get back to the segregation and George Stark. Had you been following that, because there was a lot in the newspapers at the time, and Judge Devane is the one who issued the order. The Supreme Court was turning it down, the Board of Control was turning it down, and they were trying to organize a new law school at Florida A&M.

L: I really wasn't into the politics of it. We go to our sections, and they ask people to give a little something about themselves. Hell, I had to go to summer school to get out. All the rest of them were magna cum laude from here and all that. I start studying my butt off, I mean day and night, and this stuff starts to make sense to me, it's so logical. In the mean time, poor old George Stark, wherever he went, they would shuffle him with a law school prison type shuffle. We'd go into the library, and everybody had study groups except me because I was so

dumb and George because he was black. I worked so hard at it, I really did. I worked day and night.

P: What brought this turn around with you?

L: Hell, I didn't know what I was going to do in life.

P: And you finally thought you found it.

L: I didn't know. I knew I had to get out of law school, and they're going to flunk two-thirds of these people out.

P: Didn't Fenn once advise you not to come back?

L: Yeah. I'm there in September, and toward the end of September I get a call. "You need to come home, Martin's dying." Fred Vigodsky, Marilyn, Stanley, and myself drive – I think Stanley had a car, somebody had a car – we drive back. Martin died before I could get there. I go in to see Dean Fenn, and I said, "My brother's dying," and he pulls up my name and everything, and he tells me, I mean just cold [ly], "You know, really with your grades and everything, you [might] just as well stay home." My brother's dying, I've been told I have no chance at all. I remember it was the first time I'd ever seen my dad crying. Just a real sad situation. Back to Gainesville, and I'm working my butt off. I see all of the things that are happening with George Stark, and I don't do anything. Some of the most prominent, later prominent lawyers – at that time Phi Delta Phi, a legal fraternity, would not accept Jews. I became a Phi Alpha Delta. All of those guys in fiddle-d-fi, they called them, they were the same as the society group all the way through. George would walk into the library, they'd start that shuffling, he'd sit down by himself, scared to death in class, and the same thing, I started thinking "God, I really know this stuff," and I would start asking questions in class, and they'd shuffle me. So we basically were shuffled. George had enough sense to stop. I really wanted some answers to some things to fill in the gap.

Along come midterms, and I remember I walk out of an exam, and there is Normal Lipoff, Strawn, who became a circuit judge, another guy, and they were all post-morteming the exam. I remember I walked up, and I sort of felt like I did when I went to the Tep house. They were talking about what they had done on the exam. I said I had this answer. It's amazing some things that stay with you.

I remember Normal Lipoff saying, "Levin, wait till the grades come out." Oh, hell, here I go again. I knew that all these guys were so bright, and I... Thanksgiving break took place, I think I went home to Miami, I got married in 1959, yeah, I went home Thanksgiving. The only break I had out of law school I went home with her, and I don't think her dad really ever cared a lot for me. [I] came back, and at some point, when I came back, they gave you the grades by

your student number, and I remember looking down and figuring mine was going to be low. I'm leading the class. I didn't go home for Christmas holidays, studied throughout Christmas holidays, [I] come back, and I'm clearly leading the class.

In the meantime, the next semester, we had to do something called case comments or something. Dean Fenn is my tutor. Future interest is the toughest course in law school. That's where they all flunked out. Dean Fenn gives me a future interest case to write a case comment on. I hit on something that nobody else had ever thought about. It's insignificant now, but it was how the market – there's something called a rule against perpetuities and options. This would have blown a senior law student out at Yale, it wouldn't have made any difference. I really think that Fenn was really trying to embarrass me. I've always had a good economic background or understanding of money and the marketplace, and I realized that for hundreds of years the rule against perpetuities was supposed to be an economic tool to keep people from going from generation to generation, keeping it within the family. Anyhow, I came up with some theory on options and why it worked in reverse. It blew Fenn out of the water.

P: Fenn remembered the advice he'd given you?

L: I don't remember whether he ever remembered that, but many times, for the next two years, he would call me down to the office and say, "Such and such from Wall Street is on the phone, and they're very interested in this option theory, and I told him you'd talk to them." So I won [End of Tape A, side 2] ...Her name was Gertrude Brick.

P: That was a different one, then. Gertrude Block became the writer person there.

L: This was the Brick Award which is still being given today. I won everything, absolutely everything. All of a sudden, as Fred Levin spoke, there wasn't anymore shuffling. There was nothing but writing. I'm trying to remember, maybe it was the fall of next year, but whatever it was, keep in mind that everybody would join in on this shuffling of George Stark, and I think it was either the start of the next year, start of 1959, fall, or it may have been January 1959. Anyhow, George Stark walks into the library, and they start shuffling. He goes, and he sits down by himself. I do know, that when I stood up and walked, I was the star at the law school. There wasn't any question about that. I stood up, and I walked over, and I sat down next to him, and I said, "George, you need any help?" He says, "I sure do." I said, "Why don't you and I study together." I had been rejected by all the others. So we became...

P: The Jew defends the black.

L: But the interesting thing was, all of a sudden, over the next several days, I would be sitting in the library with George and more and more joined. Pretty soon, the great, great majority of that law school were with us, and it was six or eight races by themselves other than the professors. George Stark got three "A"s in law school, all by a professor named Josh Okun. I heard that Josh had died ten or fifteen years ago. I heard that for the first time when my ex-roommate Dave Levy came through. I had gotten married June 14, 1959, got married in Pensacola. I must have had fifteen ushers, all my non-Jewish buddies and just a very few Jewish friends, Fred Vigodsky, Gene Rosenbaum. It was a big wedding for Pensacola, it was in the synagogue. Then, momma did all the cooking.

P: Why in Pensacola and not West Palm?

L: Because we were going to live there, and Marilyn's folks were not well-to-do, and there had been some problems in the meantime in the Kapner family, I think. There were five or six brothers together, and one of them had formed his own company and pulled a lot of the business away. They were not doing good.

P: So an internal family problem.

L: Yeah. They were not doing well.

P: So your folks were happy to have it in Pensacola.

L: Yeah. I'm married, we move into an apartment.

P: Let's finish the George Stark story.

L: This gets back to the George Stark story. We're living in the apartment and George and I study at the law school.

P: Are you pretty much the only one befriending him? The only white person befriending him?

L: I think there were others that came along.

P: Began to join in.

L: Yeah. It's getting close to the end of the semester. I had befriended him and helped him, but as far as really studying, I had never done that with him. We were going to study for the exam the next day, I told him to meet me at my apartment. I was running a little late, and I got there, and he's sitting on the steps, we were an upstairs apartment. I said, "Why didn't you go on in?" He

said,” You don’t understand, a colored man doesn’t go into an apartment where a white woman is.” I said, “ Oh the hell with it, come on.” So we came in, Marilyn cooked supper for us, and we studied all night long. I had these little flip cards that worked real well. All night long. He goes home, and I clean up and go to the exam, and he never shows up. He had gone home just to lay down for a second [snap of fingers], slept through the exam. They wouldn’t give him another exam, they flunked him. He was getting “D”’s and everything else other than [in] Josh Okun’s class. They flunked him out.

P: He withdrew himself. He said it was too competitive.

L: Whatever it was, he was gone. I never saw him again until back when he came for my...

P: I wondered if you had maintained a relationship.

L: I tried to find him. I finally called Willie George Allen, who gave me an address. I wrote him a letter, and he eventually wrote me back.

P: He comes to Gainesville on occasion, and I’ve done an Oral History interview with him.

L: I don’t know if he remembers it the way I do.

P: He remembers you in a very positive, friendly way.

L: I continued to do very well in law school and, then, nine and a half months later, my first born Marci...

P: You graduate law school at the top of your class.

L: No, this is now, I’m into my junior year. I remember when Marci was born at Alachua General [Hospital], and I’m studying, holding Marilyn’s hand, while she’s screaming. I go home that summer, and I worked for David. I’d fallen in love with the law. The next semester two people kept me from high honors. I actually graduated number one with the three hundred and some students I started with, but two students came in from the Spring class and graduated with me that were ahead of me, J.M. Starling and Park Hill Hayes. With the class I started with I graduated number one, but there were two professors that kept me from getting high honors. If either one of them had given me an “A” instead of a “B” – one was Judge Crosby who taught appellate practice.

P: Who later becomes part of your friends out here in West Florida.

- L: Yeah, and partner here in the firm. I wrote the brief, I argued the case, and George Dunlap was with me. He gives George an "A" and me a "B" obviously because of the personal relationship, he didn't want to look too obvious. Then, Professor Day, our property law professor, adored me. Wanted me to teach property law, he was going to be retiring. The grades were like, in his class, I'll give you an example, would have been out of fifty points, a forty-nine, a couple of forty-eights, a forty-seven, a forty-six – I had missed one question – then it dropped down to thirty-nine and I had the forty-six. He draws the line between forty-six and forty-seven and gives me a "B." It was just unheard of. The line was clear where it should have been drawn. I take trial practice. Jack Graff and I were a team, and Professor Enwall was a trial practice professor. I don't know why I took that because I was going to be a tax lawyer. We're having coffee or something down in a restaurant on 13th and somehow or another, Enwall was there, and he says to Jack Graff, "Where are you all going to practice?" I said, "Back in Pensacola with my brother, both of us." He makes a comment, he says, "Well, I'll tell you one thing. I am glad I'm not still prosecuting there, you two guys are great at trial practice." Keep in mind now, I had never stood up in front of anybody up until this point and said anything. So I have one more year of law school, and I go through that and graduate number three in the class.
- P: You're not working, your father's still supporting you?
- L: Yes. During the summer I work at the dog track as a bartender and make some money, but daddy's supporting me. I don't work. Marilyn's father sends, I think, \$50 a month. We have the baby, I'm using an old station wagon that daddy had let me have, and I graduate and come back to Pensacola.
- P: You graduated well? Your grades and all were good?
- L: Oh, yeah, I graduated number three. I had a 3.48. Like I said, either one of those two-hour "B"s had been an "A," I would have graduated with high honors.
- P: I just wanted to have it on the record.
- L: Yeah. I would have had high honors. I come back to Pensacola. I adored the law. I understood more about the logic behind it than anybody I'd ever met. I understood it. [For] everybody else it was rote, this is the law and things like that. I understood why things were the way they were.
- P: You had by this time given up the idea of being a tax lawyer?
- L: No. Reubin Askew had become David's partner, it was Levin and Askew. I was getting \$400 a month, which was big money back then. Jack Graff

graduated in the summer in August and came with us. I was going to do tax law.

P: Did you have to take a special course for tax law?

L: Yeah, there were some tax courses, but I was going to go to NYU tax school.

P: Yeah, which had the program.

L: Then, another great event takes place in my life.

P: When did you take the Bar exam?

L: Took the Bar exam, I guess, August.

P: No problem?

L: No. And then I get sworn in October, October 27. I'm back in Pensacola doing the research.

P: With one child, Marci.

L: One child. Doing the research for David and Reubin, and we're over on Government Street.

P: That's the office?

L: The office, Levin and Askew.

P: I want you to stop for just a minute, and tell me the origins of the firm and the relationship between David and Askew.

L: David went off, became a lawyer, started working for the county solicitor's office. Worked awhile, and, then, it was Korea, and he joined the Air Force. Got a commission as a lawyer, went to Korea, came back, and went to work with J.B. Hopkins and George Roark, whose son later becomes a judge. He practices law, and he's a good lawyer.

P: By himself?

L: Goes off by himself, and he's an excellent lawyer.

P: Doing all kinds of cases.

L: All kinds of cases. DUIs, divorce, a little bit of personal injury, I guess. Then, a guy named Henry Barksdale, who had come to work with him, it was Levin and Barksdale. Henry got elected, I believe, county solicitor and, then, Reubin Askew and David had a number of cases together. Reubin was working for the state attorney's office.

P: Where did Reubin Askew come from?

L: Pensacola.

P: But originally he was from Oklahoma, I think.

L: Yeah.

P: He came here with his mother.

L: And she was a maid at the San Carlos Hotel.

P: No father.

L: No father.

P: So it was just Reubin and his mother came here from Oklahoma.

L: He had a father, but either the father left, divorced, died, something. I remember his father's name was Goldberg, something Goldberg Askew.

P: Almost sounds Jewish.

L: She was. His father had been dear, dear friends with a Jewish guy named Reubin Goldberg I believe.

P: But Reubin Askew had no Jewish ancestry at all on either side.

L: No.

P: What's his background, Reubin Askew? Does he go to the University of Florida?

L: Goes to FSU and becomes president of the student body there. Then, he moves over to the University of Florida law school and, politically, was always involved, Blue Key and all of that.

P: Did he and David know each other in Gainesville?

L: No. David graduated before Reubin and went into the service.

P: What brought those two together?

L: Reubin was with the state attorney's office, and David was defending cases. They would come up against each other, and when they would do this, they had mutual respect, and, then, David, when Henry Barksdale got elected county solicitor, David asked Reubin to come in with him, and they became partners, became Levin and Askew. That would have been, maybe, a couple of years before I graduated.

P: That really became the beginnings of a legendary firm.

L: Yeah, that would have been in the late 1950s. You haven't done Reubin Askew in Oral History yet?

P: Not yet, no. It's a natural that needs to be...

L: Oh, God, yes. Levin and Askew...

P: And that's the name of the firm, Levin and Askew?

L: Yes. Then, I get in.

P: You're the third person in the firm?

L: Levin, Askew, Levin, and Graff. My number is four, so it must have been Henry Barksdale had a number, Reubin had two, I don't know.

P: Where was the office then?

L: It's over on Government Street, 120 West Government or something, upstairs of the building. So I'm waiting around for my Bar and waiting around a year to go to NYU Tax Law School, and I'm doing research. I passed the Bar, and David tells me about doing divorce cases. I'm doing uncontested divorce cases, and then, one day, a lady comes in, and secretary Dorothy Steinseck, it may have been Bonnie Anderson, I think there was one receptionist and one secretary [who] took care of Reubin, David, and myself. The lady came in, was a walk-in, she needed a lawyer on a contested divorce case, and I was listening to the lady, and I was taking the information down. You get \$50 for an uncontested divorce and \$170 for a contested divorce. She mentioned that her husband said he was going to kill her lawyer. That ended my divorce career. I went in and told David I'm going to be a tax lawyer.

The story of how I ended up as a trial lawyer was about that time, it was probably right around Christmas time, a lady named Angeliki Theodore [was]

living out on Scenic Highway at this brick home that had some fire damage. She had Traveler's Insurance Company. Traveler's had offered her like \$17,000 to settle for the fire loss. She came in to see me, and she said she would pay me a percentage of anything over \$17,000. I called Traveler's, and they said that was it, \$17,000 was it. My typical way of doing things, I start working and working, and finally I filed a law suit, *Theodore v. Traveler's*. They move it to the federal court.

P: Why the federal court?

L: Because there was diversity of citizenship and Judge Arnow..

P: Who was originally from Gainesville.

L: Yeah. Had he already become federal judge in 1960, 1962, 1963? Maybe it was Judge Carswell. Whatever. I filed a lawsuit, and I don't ask for a jury trial.

P: Why did this become a federal case?

L: It's called diversity of citizenship. When a local resident sues a corporation, they removed me. At this point, the lawyer [for Traveler's Insurance Company], what they used to say about Bert Lane of Beggs and Lane, they would ask, "Who's the best lawyer in Northwest Florida?" "Bert Lane when he's sober." "Who's the second best lawyer?" "Bert Lane when he's drunk," and that was the story. He represented the L&N Railroad, he represented a telephone company, he represented all the insurance companies. Bert Lane was a great, great lawyer. I filed a lawsuit, and Bert Lane calls up and says, "Fred?" I says, "Yes." "Bert Lane." "Yes sir, Mr. Lane." "Listen, this case against Traveler's . . ." and he goes on and on, "We'll pay you \$18,000, but if you don't take it, Fred, I've got to ask for a jury trial." So I call Miss Theodore and beg her to take the \$18,000, no fee, no nothing. She just says "No." She wanted \$20,000 or something. I'm sitting there, I don't know what to do. For the next seven or eight days I can't sleep, I'm scared to death. Finally, I just couldn't take it anymore. I went ahead and amended the complaint and asked for a jury trial. I start working, and I work, and I work, and I learn everything about that case, everything. Then, we go to trial.

P: With the jury.

L: With the jury in federal court. Bert Lane, the bailiffs, the court reporters, everybody's laughing, "Are you crazy? You're going up against Bert Lane? It's your first case," and all this kind of stuff. I'm just scared to death. But I was so well prepared, I knew everything about the case, I had every witness, so well-prepared, jury verdict comes back, and it's a \$45,000 verdict. The judge gives

me a \$5,000 fee on top of it. Here's a guy making \$400 a month, and I decide, "Heck, I like this game."

P: You're in high cotton.

L: I like this game, and that's how I became a trial lawyer.

P: And that woman was thrilled to death.

L: Oh, God. [She] was a friend for life, her son, the whole Greek community. No matter what I did, whether it was a motion hearing or it was a jury trial, no matter what it was, I would overwork it to the point where...

P: But you also had the golden touch. It seems to me that everything you turned to... I understand it was backed up by hard work, it just didn't happen.

L: Hard work. I became more and more comfortable standing in front of people talking. Keep in mind, the first time I had done anything had been in law school. I had never made a speech. Never in all the classes. I always avoided it in some way. If it was required like at the University of Florida....

P: Except your bar mitzvah.

L: Except for my bar mitzvah, but I blew that.

P: That's right, that reading, speaking, and writing course you're supposed to give a little talk.

L: Yeah, never did.

P: For freshman.

L: Never did. I was absolutely scared to death.

P: But now you've become a master.

L: Well, I was still well prepared. I'm still well prepared, but I can ad lib, I can handle it when it gets rolling. I always have my comfort level of having everything prepared. Anyhow, that started a career. I began doing personal injury cases.

P: Talk about the expansion of the firm and the move from place to place. You started a small little office over here with two or three people and one secretary.

L: Then Dick Warfield came in. He moved in front of Levin, Askew, Warfield, Levin, and Graff.

P: Graff was a full-time partner?

L: Yeah. He came up in August.

P: At some point, Reubin, Dick Warfield, Jack Graff, David and myself meet with the guy who had just bought First National Bank building, which is Seville Tower. Very funny story about that, J.B. Hopkins is his lawyer, and we all go to lunch at Carpenters, which was a very nice restaurant. They're inviting us to lunch, Jack Graff [was there]. Anyhow, they invite us to lunch to pitch us on renting some space in Seville Tower. The greatest line in the world, he said, "Oh, this fish is so good." He orders another fish. The check comes, and he says, "I don't know who to thank for this meal, but it was one of the greatest meals I've ever had." Here's the guy who invited us to lunch, and he walks out, he and J.B. Hopkins walk out, and we start laughing that this was the best line. Here's a guy who invites you to lunch and [says], "I don't know who to thank." After that, Reubin and David and I really used to laugh about the thing.

We ended up moving into those offices. In the meantime, I think Stanley comes with us... Reubin, in the meantime, runs for state representative, and, then, he runs for state senate... No, no, no. Because we're still in those offices on Government Street when.... Alright, the story I say about the Seville Tower takes place later, because when Reubin ran for governor, we were still over on Government Street.

P: That's not the First National Bank building is it?

L: No, we didn't move over there until later. It was in the late 1960s when the guy did bring us all together for lunch, but we didn't buy into it until after Reubin got to be governor. At that point, Reubin became governor, W.D. Childers ran for his seat and got elected.

P: In the legislature.

L: State senate, and, all of a sudden, we'd become like the political geniuses having taken this guy, David and myself. Everybody says, "Oh my God, these guys from Pensacola have gotten this guy elected."

P: Is this a preeminent law firm by that time in Pensacola?

L: No. Reubin had some anti-Semitic campaigns run against him for being with Jews, and we still don't represent anybody of any significance. In the meantime, I have kicked butt in personal injury cases. David's handling divorce cases, Jack Graff and I are

handling personal injury cases, but I'm really starting to get the reputation, winning, winning, winning.

P: Did you also have a reputation of being mean?

L: No.

P: You hadn't turned people off from that point of view.

L: No. What was happening was I was getting such great verdicts, winning so many cases, but from hard work, I mean really hard work, I'm talking about every little thing. I've never been surprised in a court room until last week, but that was just a cheap shot by the state attorney's office. I was good, really good. I felt I was as good as any lawyer in the country in trial. The reputation of, "He's got to be doing something bad to get these results." I fed that idea. I'd always laugh or something and fed the idea that I was cheating, which I wasn't. Never did anything, as far as I was concerned, unethical or in that way.

P: Were you then developing a reputation of being slick?

L: I was developing a reputation of getting great results. Among the community, "He's good, he's real good." Among the lawyers, the jealousy factor was starting to come in, "he can't be that good." Buddy Caro had gone for years and never lost a case, and, I think, I beat him seven times in a row. Bert Lane, as I told you, was thought to be the greatest trial lawyer in Northwest Florida, I beat him in the Traveler's case...

P: Inebriated or otherwise.

L: Yes. I beat him in another major case against Pensacola Restaurant Supply, and I beat him in the case that made my reputation, the Thorshov case. I had kicked butt of all the great defense lawyers. I don't think they reacted so badly as did the other plaintiffs' lawyers. I think they felt, "God knows, Buddy Caro never lost a case, Fred Levin beat him seven times in a row." There had to be something going on. Plaintiffs lawyers themselves, my competitors, and I started to develop... there's a lot of animosity. After John Kennedy had been killed in the 1960s, 1963, there came up a few months before that, there were no blacks and members of the Society of the Bar in the First Judicial Circuit. I had recommended either Charlie Wilson or Nathaniel Dedmond. Charlie may have already gone by then. Whatever it was, I recommended him for the Bar membership.

P: What is this Society of the Bar?

L: That's the Bar Association for Northwest Florida. I remember the meeting, Bert Lane stood up, D.L. Middlebrooks stood up, Pat Emmanuel stood up, Rollin Davis, T.A. Shell, everyone.

P: All in opposition?

L: All in opposition to this. They had called my wife, and I was more proud of Marilyn – and actually, I know in the book it says Charles Wilson, but it was Nathaniel Dedmond. There were two black lawyers in Pensacola. I know it's Nathaniel Dedmond because they called Marilyn and they said, "Marilyn, in the Bar Auxiliary, how would you like to be sitting next to Nathaniel Dedmond's wife," whatever her name is. She said, "Oh, yes, that will be fine." That wasn't the answer they were expecting. They were expecting to get back to me, to tell me to withdraw this thing. But these were every prominent lawyer, every major firm.

P: Including Middlebrooks?

L: Including D.L. Middlebrooks that was with Beggs and Lane at the time. Everybody. So they had the big vote, the big meeting, and I think Nathaniel got five votes and about 100 against him. I just couldn't believe it. Then, John Kennedy got killed thereafter, I believe, and I said, "You know, it's the same kind of people. This could not be."

Election time came for the Bar Association, it was around Christmas time. We were at Mustin Beach Officers Club. They had the nominating committee, and this must have been 1963 or 1964, and they had for president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and all this stuff. The Board of Directors for the Bar Association and one member for the Bar Association had to be less than five years in practice. Fred Levin was nominated. It was at Mustin Beach Officers Club. The president moved for acclamation, this, this, and this. The Board of Directors *bang, bang, bang*. A member less than five years, I was sitting there. Somebody said, "I'd like to nominate Frank Bozeman." They wanted us to go outside. So the two of us sitting out there, I remember Frank sitting out there," I don't know why I would even think about doing this.

Nobody has ever run against anybody who's been nominated." We come back in the room, and there's all this clapping, "Congratulations Frank." I'm just floored. It was the last time I ever ran for anything by the way, the first and last time. I did not get the votes of all of the members of my firm. I really believed Dick Warfield voted with them. I got beat by about the same score that Nathaniel Dedmond had gotten beat by. That was another of the [events] that engendered in me this competitive, which even to this day that I relish the idea of somebody taking cheap shots at me. Like I say, I work off that, and I become a much, much better lawyer, and I take it and usually am able to turn it around and shove it up their....

P: How serious was the defeat?

L: It was embarrassing, it was really embarrassing.

P: Particularly if members of your own firm voted against you.

L: I may be wrong, I think I may have gotten six votes, and there were six of them there, but I always...

P: Was this because of the stand that you had taken on segregation?

L: Sure.

P: They were getting back at you.

L: Sure. I didn't believe that it would happen like that. I really thought these people...

P: From there on in, what happened to integration? This is the beginning of it, but whether they are resisting or not.

L: Yeah. And eventually it came about.

P: Soon or later?

L: I don't remember, but I remember all of these guys had stood up. They were all the preeminent members of not just this Bar, but the Florida Bar. These guys went on to become federal judges, President of the State Bar, all of them had been president of the local Bar.

P: It was a turning point, obviously, in history.

L: Yeah. It was, again, the same thing that I had done a few years before with George Stark.

P: I want to ask you something before we leave it. This organization, Society of the Bar, was that a social organization?

L: No. It would be something like the Alachua County Bar Association.

P: How could they keep even a black [person] out who had gotten his law degree and got his...

L: 1963. Blacks were members of the Florida Bar.

P: Of course it came later in West Florida than it did elsewhere, but by the 1960s the universities were integrated.

L: They did it. Legally, of course not, they could not do it. That's what I argued to them. These were the prominent members. Judge Mason was there, here are your judges, your leaders of the Bar, everything. But it was a different time. If these same people were living today.... People remember things a lot differently. I'm sure the guys who went to law school with me all saw themselves in never having participated in that shuffling and all of that. A lot of them went on to become judges, justices, friends of black lawyers. It developed, and I'm glad that happened. I recall both of the instances very well, and some day, 100 years from now, people listening to this, I guess they'll be able to listen to the tapes?

P: Of course.

L: They'll never be able to understand. That would have been 1963. About the same time, Fred Vigodsky calls me, Jack Graff's already moved to Pensacola, practicing law.

P: Fred is originally from South Carolina?

L: Newberry, South Carolina. His daughter has just been born, his daughter Holly, and he's married to a Brenda Cousins. He said he really wanted some Jewish life for them. He was in the Jewish store in every little southern town. Their family had that. Slowly but surely the big boys were coming in. So he called and wanted to know what was going on. I told him my brother David and Bill McAbee and I had just bought in to a barbeque joint, and it looked like it was going to do well. He wanted to get out of Newberry, so he went to FSU restaurant school for one semester, and then moved over to Pensacola. We were the closest of friends and we've been that for the last almost forty years, since they moved to Pensacola.

P: He's one of your very best friends.

L: Yes, and business partners. He got into Chicks Barbeque with me, and this began a business career. We got into the restaurant business.

P: Explain all this getting into the restaurant business. It seems kind of strange from your career point of view.

L: I've always been like a closet entrepreneur, I love business. A lot of this has to do with the understanding of business, how people react, dollars, how supply and demand works. This all came very natural to me, it wasn't anything I studied. It had a lot to do, going back to that law school, rule against perpetuities and options. It's how the economy works. I guess if I have anything that I've got great ability with it's the understanding of business, the understanding of marketing, and how people react; whether it be on a jury to a set of circumstances or it be to a business situation. [End of Tape B, side 3] ...The first one was. They were in trouble, and we helped bail them out.

P: What was the name of it?

L: Chicks Barbeque.

P: It was at the beach?

L: No. Eventually we had a place at the beach. This was out on the intersection of Pace and Palafox, and, then eventually, we had one in Fort Walton, we had one on Gregory Street in Pensacola, we had one in Mobile. Then, we got into the night club business, we had a night club in Pensacola, one on Pensacola Beach.

P: I don't know how you had time to be a lawyer.

L: I loved it. I would work the law practice and, then at night, sit down with Fred and have a few drinks and discuss the business. In the meantime, I'll get into Poppa Don and that story and the business. I'm kicking butt in lawsuits, really doing well.

P: Was the barbeque business a lucrative business?

L: It ends up being, yes. It's making enough money to pay Fred and his wife a salary. [She's] working in it. I eat free, travel on it, things of that nature. Reubin Askew becomes governor, and I want Fred Vigodsky to get into the food and beverage [industry], and Reubin remembered Fred from doing a lot of drinking, and he didn't want that. About this time, a dress store called Sam's Style Shop, which was owned by Sam Rosenblum, became available here in downtown Pensacola. We were wanting to get out of the restaurant business, so we sold...

P: Why did you want to get out of the restaurant business?

L: It was just a pain. It's a horrible, horrible business. They call you all hours of the night, tell you they got a bad barbeque sandwich. It finally got to a point where we sold the building that we had in Fort Walton, we sold the building on Gregory Street. We sold the restaurant to some doctors who had opened up a restaurant. In Mobile, I think we just sold the building. Anyhow, and made a little money. The dress store came open, which was Fred Vigodsky's original background, ladies apparel, so we then bought Sam's Style Shop.

P: The "we" is you and Fred?

L: Fred and myself. David...I think we took the money from Chicks Barbeque and moved it into that. What started as one dress store, in the meantime, my brother Allen had gone

to work for the State of Florida. He had been a teacher, and he goes to work in the business regulation, which included the tracks.

P: Allen never gets a law degree, he goes for business.

L: Right, he goes from business school to a couple of months of law school, realized he didn't like it, goes to teaching, and, then, goes to work for the Department of Business Regulation in the parimutuel end of it working for a guy named Richie Pallot who was a good friend of Reubin Askew. Eventually, Allen needs to get out of that, and he comes in to the dress business with Fred Vigodsky. From one Sam's Style Shop, we end up with fifty-two apparel stores around the Southeast.

P: All with the same name?

L: No. Some of them were David Fredric's, which was my brother David and myself; Brenda Allen's, which was Fred Vigodsky's wife, Brenda, and my brother Allen. Then, we had some warehouse sales. One year, I remember we actually, on an audited statement, made \$1 million, but we were in the discount business, and interest rates started skyrocketing towards the end of the 1970s, and, by the early 1980s, we were basically bankrupt. Allen and Fred Vigodsky came and talked to me and told me that it was not good. I was on a bunch of notes. We filed for bankruptcy on December 31, 1978 or 1979, somewhere around there, maybe 1980. Within three months, we'd come out of bankruptcy, we paid our creditors, ended up using the bankruptcy court to be able to sell out of the dress business. From Chicks Barbeque, all the way through the bankruptcy and the sales and all of that which would have been the early 1980s, we actually netted out almost \$5 million, which, back then, and still is, a lot of money. This is just hard work, not giving up, drive, drive, drive when things look horrible.

P: Does this leave Fred without anything?

L: Yes, except he, then, goes off into the carpet business, and I'm out of the businesses for a few years.

P: You're back to becoming a lawyer.

L: Well, I was a lawyer all the time. Some great cases, I had some million dollar verdicts, which was unheard of. In the meantime, politically, people think that I'm an absolute genius. I've gotten Reubin Askew elected, everybody who wants to run for anything kind of spread....

P: I'm looking for you.

L: Yeah. 1977 or 1978, a doctor and his wife and two children living on the bluffs on Scenic Highway, a train overturns, there was ammonia emission. The doctor dies that night, the wife dies ninety days later, and the family comes to see me. I had had a \$2 million verdict against K-Mart for a pharmacy case, I think I tried it in the mid-1970s, 1976, 1977. Let me back up. The pharmacy case came in as a result of my returning a telephone call. I always returned my telephone calls. They had called two or three other lawyers and had not gotten a return call. A couple of years later, after the case, I tried the case and won the case. The client told me the reason I got the case was because I had returned the telephone call, which I still, to this day, always return a telephone call. It goes back to my days at the University of Florida when Marci got sick, and I called a pediatrician and called him and called him, never could get a return call. This had an effect on me, and, then, as a professional, it's something that I realized that if they feel strong enough to call me, then I can at least return the call. So I end up taking this case against the L&N Railroad. They start, Bert Lane's on the other side.

P: Bert Lane continues to be one of your opponents.

L: Right. This is the third of the three big cases: that Theodore case, and, then, the case against the Pensacola Restaurant Supply, and, then, the case against the L&N Railroad. I end up getting an \$18 million verdict, and there's a whole story about that. Bert dies not long after that. It just blew him away. He turned out to be rather anti-Semitic. He was "country club," however, he had never been to college. He studied to become a lawyer. He was a big name all over the South. He represented all the big time companies. I remember, I was getting ready to go do the closing argument, and I had a Countess Me..., and he looked over there at it and saw the c.m., he says, "What does that say in Yiddish? Is that in Yiddish?" I said, "Yeah." I said, "It says I'm going to kick your fucking ass in a few minutes in this courtroom." So we go in there and I did. I destroyed him. It was not long thereafter, Bert, he got drunk a couple of days later, and they hit a car, and, then, within a few months, he died. Not as a result of the accident, just as a result, I guess, of a broken heart. So that was 1980, 1981, 1982. In the meantime, back in the 1970s, Reubin gets elected, and Broward Williams, I believe, was the treasurer and insurance commissioner, and I wanted to get into the insurance business.

P: I want to ask you something, though. Did you elect Reubin Askew? What role did you play in his campaign?

L: Worked like heck. Reubin got elected, he just happened to be in the right place at the right time from Northwest Florida.

P: He was an able man.

L: He was very able. Raised money for him and things like that.

P: Were you part of an inner circle?

L: Oh yeah. I was part of an inner circle of advisors with Tom Adams [lieutenant governor under Askew, 1971-75] who was there.

P: I knew Tom.

L: And all of these things. Had it not been that Jack Matthews was running and everything that gave Reubin just enough [votes] to get into the run-off against Earl Faircloth [Florida Attorney General, 1965-1971] that's what did it. Had it been. . . same way Bob Graham, everyone of them, always, they were able just to get into that run-off. In the early 1970s, Reubin is Governor...

P: Reubin never forgot his Pensacola friends and associates.

L: No.

P: His mother no longer had to be the maid at San Carlos.

L: Right. David really was Reubin's closest friend in life. Reubin didn't have a lot of really good friends, but David was.

P: David supported that Askew Institute.

L: No, I did. I put the half a million dollars into it. So, I got with Broward Williams, and he got me with this idiot who had a company called Orange State Life Insurance Company. Charlie Ruttenberg of U.S. Homes was part of it, Fred Fisher who went on to become the Fisher School of Accounting.

P: I was amazed when I read about Ruttenberg and Fisher being involved.

L: They had a big blow up. Anyhow, as a result of this, I was chairman of the board of the company. I didn't know what the hell I was doing, and it was going down the drain, and, thankfully, Charlie Ruttenberg had a good friend named Barry Alpert. Barry was a banker in Chicago, he came to Florida. Barry pulled the company out, and we sold it to Home Life, and I did better than I would have done had I been in the stock market. It wasn't worth all the pain and aggravation and everything else.

P: Were you close personal friends with Ruttenberg and Fisher?

L: Yeah.

P: Are you still good friends with them?

L: No. Both of them would certainly know who I am. Fred Fisher was Ruttenberg's accountant.

P: But they split, didn't they?

L: They split at U.S. Homes. Charlie Ruttenberg was a very strong willed person. Arthur Ruttenberg, of course, still has the home business, but Charlie Ruttenberg had the U.S. Homes.

P: Barry Ruttenberg lives in Gainesville and builds homes.

L: Really?

P: Arthur's son.

L: Fred Fisher got together with the rest of the U.S. Home board, and they got rid of Charlie Ruttenberg and Fred Fisher got a lot of stock in U.S. Home for having masterminded this. But Fred Fisher was an accountant. He and Charlie Ruttenberg were the closest of friends.

P: We've been very good friends of Fred and his girlfriend over the years.

L: Fred did him in. It was wrong, it really was. He masterminded this takeover. I'm now out of the Orange State Life Insurance business. I'm out of the Chick's Barbeque, Sams Style Shop business.

P: You're no longer a restaurant man.

L: No, I'm practicing law.

P: Have you ever gone back into business?

L: Oh, yeah. So I'm back up again. W.D. Childers had got elected to the state senate.

P: Who was W.D. Childers?

L: He was just a teacher who became a little businessman here who ran against Gordon Wells or somebody to become state senator.

P: He was in the right place at the right time?

L: Walks into Dempsey Barron and becomes...

P: He was not a particularly...

L: No, never had run for anything.

P: Anything on the local scene.

L: Became the "hey boy" for Dempsey Barron, and, slowly but surely, becomes the president of the Florida senate. I was against him in every race he ever had until in the late 1970s, they were trying to pass "no fault," and I was the only person against him who donated money to his opponent. The Academy of Florida Trial Lawyers, W.D. was the chairman of commerce or something and asked me to go speak. He was given five minutes. W.D. allowed me to get behind Bill Gunter [Florida insurance commissioner, 1976-1989], who was the insurance commissioner who was pushing this, and, then, allowed me to talk for almost an hour. Modestly, I did a magnificent job. The commerce committee voted down Gunter's "no fault" proposal. I went back and sat down, and I got this note that said, "Senator Childers would like to see you." I thought he had forgotten all about the fact that I had been the person who had been against him. We go, and I thank him for allowing me do this, for putting me in position and all that. I started to walk out, and he said, "Do you think," whatever this guy's name is, his opponent was, "you think he could have done that for you?" I said, "No, sir, Senator." We became fairly good friends, and, then, he gets involved with this waterfront property here and the state buying it, and there's a statewide grand jury. He's the incoming President of the Florida Senate. Dempsey Barron tells him to come get me, to use me as his lawyer, and I'm not sure whether Dempsey was doing it because W.D. was getting too big for his britches, and he figured this would be perfect because I never had handled a criminal case.

P: Had you worked with Barron before?

L: I knew Barron, and I'd always been on the opposite sides of him. He was a big insurance company guy. Never had tried a case with him. Anyhow, they come get me, and I represent W.D., and it's really bad. They're out to bust his behind, the statewide grand jury. I talk him into taking a lie detector test, I believed him. He takes a lie detector, he passes it. Instead of the statewide grand jury indicting him, they give him a presentment in which they say just the most fabulous things about him. What a great guy he was, open and honest and all of this, and everybody who runs for elections should use W.D. Childers as the example. So we become friends.

Here, back in Pensacola, cable television is just being started. For the last many years, I had been trying to talk our law firm, which is now David Levin, D.L. Middlebrooks, Leff Mabie, all these guys, I wanted to talk them into advertising. I saw what was happening in the late 1970s. All of the law firms started advertising, and they were taking business like crazy, and our firm kept saying, "We are the firm for plaintiff's

law," nobody would go anywhere else. That's not so. People didn't... what you thought they thought, advertising worked. It got into about 1983, 1984, and W.D. had a dear, dear friend who was working for Cox Cable. They needed local programming, so I came up with the idea for something called BLAB television, and that we would start, and we would do call in talk, legal, call law line, people would call in and we would answer questions. This was 1984, 1985. From there we had a sports show, and to this day, now it starts to move along, and toward the end of the 1980s, I get Fred Vigodsky to come back into it. Today it's twenty-four hours a day, it's billings are over \$2 million.

P: You own the station?

L: A big chunk, 40 percent of it.

P: But you do it personally, it's not the firm's.

L: Not the firm's, no. Nobody wanted to be a part of it. My family controls [it], between the kids and everything and Marilyn.

P: So it's more than just a couple of three hours that Mark is involved with?

L: Yeah. At one point, we were in New Orleans, we were in Mobile, Tampa, Clearwater. Now we have a little one in Clearwater that does maybe twelve hours a week.

P: Does the firm lease three hours?

L: Yes.

P: And that's where Mark is...

L: Yes. In other words, what happens is it's an infomercial station. You can buy an hour of time, and you can sell commercials if you want to on your time.

P: So the firm has bought three hours, is that right?

L: Yes, that's right. And some reruns. But it's twenty-four hours a day, and like I said, the billings are pretty strong. It's also been great for trade-outs.

P: What channel is it on in Pensacola?

L: On channel 6 in Pensacola, channel 2 and channel 38 in Gulf Breeze, we've got two channels.

P: So you think it's paid off?

L: Oh sure, sure. I've got nothing in it and I've been drawing....

P: You said you have a 40 percent interest.

L: Yeah, I mean I have no money in it. It's paid for almost anything I do, food....

P: The lawyers from the firm, they just volunteer their time and effort.

L: Yeah, but they build themselves up in doing it.

P: I forgot to ask Mark how he became a television star.

L: Yeah, and you become comfortable, and it's fun for awhile. I did it for fifteen years.

P: So far we've got you as a lawyer, a businessman, a restaurant man, in the dress business, and, now, we get you in television.

L: All of this time, I'm doing all of these things.

P: Not much sleeping it sounds like. You take it in stride?

L: Take it in stride. Debbie was born about the time Holly Vigodsky and then Martin was born.

P: You have four children?

L: Four children, and, then, Kimberly. I guess we'll get back to family.

P: Oh, yeah, I'm going to get family at the end.

L: In the meantime, I've become a big shot in politics with the Academy of Florida Trial Lawyers, they give me the Perry Nichols Award. I've passed the Wrongful Death Bill. When I got him [W.D.] out of that grand jury mess, he said he would pass the new Florida Wrongful Death Act, which has been fabulous for plaintiff's lawyers. It was the best in the country, it allowed so many great things. That caused the falling out between W.D. and Dempsey. That was a big war, but W.D. came down on my side, he had promised. So the Academy gave me the Perry Nichols Award, and I became known all over as being this guy who got the new Wrongful Death Bill, the guy who got Reubin Askew elected.

P: Could do no wrong.

L: Could do no wrong. I built a penthouse down in Destin.

P: You were jumping around a little bit too much.

L: No, this gets it back.

P: Because I want to get into a little bit more detail about some of these things.

L: In the penthouse in Destin, which was beautiful and gorgeous, we used that for political fund-raising.

P: We were there once.

L: As a result of that, Ed Addison, who went on to become President of Southern Company, had me go to work for Gulf Power, and I became, probably, the only plaintiff's lawyer in the country that was representing the power company, all kind of things. Everything good was happening. All of these things were taking place in the 1980s, the BLAB T.V., the representation of the power company, the great politician. I had just everything. Everybody running for anything, I don't care if it was Bob Graham.

P: The politicians still cling to you, don't they?

L: Yeah, but I'm a has-been. Anyhow, in 1988, and then we'll back up, 1988 Roy Jones, Jr. is in the Olympics, from Pensacola, and beats the hell out of the Korean and has the Gold medal stolen.

P: Let me take over a little bit now. When did people like Mabie come into the firm, and Middlebrooks.

L: Nixon appointed D.L. to be a judge. Before that, we had tried to get D.L. D.L. was upset at Beggs and Lane, he didn't like the situation. We wanted him to come with us, but he decided to go with Harold, Caro and Wiltshire, which was Buddy Caro and Joe Harrold. Then, he went on the bench. Then, about maybe 1974, 1975, 1976, he left the bench, I think he was the first federal judge to ever resign, and he was the same D.L. Middlebrooks who was against Nathaniel Dedmond. The reason he did not like the federal bench, it was in Tallahassee, and he was getting all the civil rights cases, and it was about to drive him crazy. He went back to Pensacola, joined our firm.

P: To get somebody like him, you have to make an offer or he comes seeking you?

L: He came and we talked. Warfield had been there. Warfield was a mistake. He looked good. He had the big hat and no cattle. He looked good, but he wasn't that good a lawyer.

- P: What about Crosby? As I remember, he was on the faculty at the law school in Gainesville.
- L: When I went through. Then he came up, and he became president of the UWF [University of West Florida], circuit judge. Then, in the mid 1980s, he came with us, he came with the firm. Leff Mabie was already here, D.L. Middlebrooks – all of this occurred in ten, twelve years. Leo Thomas came, Stanley had already been there.
- P: So the firm is growing in size and in prestige?
- L: Yeah. And in the meantime, we move over to Seville Tower.
- P: I want to ask you about the moves. The original office was in the Florida National Bank building?
- L: That was before I came.
- P: That's before you joined up. Where was it again when you joined?
- L: On Government Street, 120 West Government, I think.
- P: Then you moved to where?
- L: To Seville Tower, which is the old bank building tower.
- P: Did you own that? Did the firm own that?
- L: No. This guy, I can't remember his name, the one who said, "I don't know who to thank for this meal," but it [was his].
- P: You could afford to buy a building then if you didn't have to pay for food.
- L: Yeah. At that time, when we moved over there, that's when we started doing food everyday, we'd have breakfast on Monday morning, Saturday morning, and lunch everyday. Then eventually went into haircuts.
- P: A lot of perks.
- L: A lot of perks. Then, we moved over to this location that we're in now.
- P: The building over here, the one with all that, you didn't own that building, you say?
- L: No.

P: You leased floors there?

L: Leased floors.

P: Then, you came here. Do you own this building?

L: Actually, my children own 40 percent of it.

P: But I mean it's family owned?

L: Yeah. The majority of this business is owned by the Levin family.

P: And the firm leases space here?

L: Yes.

P: Are these floors the choice floors?

L: Oh, yes.

P: And yours is a choice office?

L: I would think so.

P: I think so, too.

L: The firm grew, and they would have lawyers and get rid of...lawyers would quit. A lot of the lawyers went in on their own. Jim McKenzie, actually Dick Warfield left, George Estess, Bill Rankin, Mike Griffith.

P: You were going to get a list of those so you remember.

L: We'll get those.

P: What is the relationship with the firm and what was the relationship of the firm in Gulf Power? Was it the firm or was it...

L: It was me, actually.

P: Tell us for the tape what Gulf Power is.

L: Gulf Power is the power company for Northwest Florida. The same as Florida Power and Light.

P: It's mainly based where?

L: Based in Pensacola, but it goes all the way through to, I guess, certainly Destin, Panama City. The president of the company is a guy named Ed Addison.

P: The president now or then?

L: The president then of Gulf Power. Jake Horton was vice-president, and Jake was a dear friend of W.D.'s. W.D. and I in the meantime had become close friends after I saved him. Jake and W.D. and I, pretty much, had a threesome. Then, I was winning cases right and left, and Ed Addison wanted me to become their counsel, litigation lawyer. His board, here in Gulf Power, said we're not going to have a plaintiff's lawyer do this. In the meantime, Reubin Askew had become governor, and he was already out at that point. As things would have it, Ed Addison gets the presidency of the Southern Company, which controls Georgia Power, Mississippi Power, Alabama Gulf Power, Savannah Power – it's the largest publicly held utility company in the world. He becomes president, and one of his first orders of business is to call down to Pensacola and say, "Fred Levin's going to do the legal work." His board had stopped it here, locally. So I started representing them and did really a magnificent job for them defending cases.

P: When you defend a case like that, are you on a fee basis or are you on the payroll?

L: Actually, I would be on an hourly basis, but they bonused me a couple of times back in the 1980s, \$100,000. Just flat bonused me. Just did, like I said, a great job for them. Also the penthouse, I was using it for politics. They would bring in, Alabama Power would entertain, you've been there, fabulous, fabulous place. Remind me, and we'll get a brochure to take to put in the thing, because it was incredible. We're doing all kinds of politics, and, as things would have it, the local IRS felt that they were using power company money to promote politicians. Actually, it exploded way out of what it should have been. My law firm was contributing more money to politicians each year than all of Gulf Power put together. They blew this thing out. Jake Horton became the scapegoat. On April 10, 1989, which I believe was a Monday, W.D. is in Tallahassee, Jake Horton calls and says "I need to see you," comes in to see me. He said, "I think I'm going to get fired." I said, "Jake, you're crazy." I called Ed Addison in Atlanta, and I could tell Ed was a little funny about things. They had worked it out, Jake was going to be the scapegoat. It'd been going on for months and months, these investigations, grand jury, IRS, and all of that. We're in my old office, and Jake's on the other side of the room, he said, "I need to use the telephone." He calls for a power company plane to come pick him up from Mississippi Power, pick him up, and take him to Atlanta. As he walks out, he tells me, "Fred, if anything were to happen to me, you make sure they take care of Francis." I said, "Oh, what are you talking about?" He

said, “ I’m going to the power company, and, then, I’ll meet you back here at 1:00.” Jack Graff had retired in 1976, but Jack was doing some work also for Gulf Power. I said, “ I’ll have Jack here, and we’ll meet again.” Jake gets on the plane, and the plane blows up between Pensacola and into Escambia County. Catches fire and crashes.

P: They never recovered the body, I don’t think.

L: No, they got all three bodies. Two pilots and.... That evening I called W.D. immediately, and W.D. comes back to Pensacola, and he and I go over to the Horton’s home. We see Jake’s ring, Auburn ring, which he never took off, and his watch. W.D. had to go to the bathroom, and there they were. What had happened without a question was Jake had decided to commit suicide. That went on for a couple of years [unclear].

P: I remember there was a lot in the papers.

L: Magazines, *Wall Street Journal*, everything. That was on a Monday. On Wednesday, I went to [interruption].

P: Did they ever solve the Jake Horton mystery?

L: Not really, but I knew.

P: Why would he commit suicide?

L: Everything, his whole life – he had no children, he had girlfriends, and his wife was very demanding. He just....

P: Just got tired of it all?

L: Yeah.

P: That left you out in the cold as far as that firm was concerned.

L: No. That Monday afternoon, after he killed himself, I went and saw the President of Gulf Power, and I said, “Listen, there’s no need to put Jake Horten through all this, his memory and all of this. Let’s just let it be.” That wasn’t to be, they blamed everything, all of the problems on Jake. I resigned, I told them I wasn’t going to be a....

P: So that ended your relationship?

L: Yeah, I told them I wasn’t going to represent them anymore.

P: And it has never been resumed?

L: No. I stopped representing them.

P: Another Pensacola firm represents them now?

L: Beggs and Lane always had represented them. They're back to representing them full time now.

P: What is it you started talking about before of the train wreck? That was the Louisville and Nashville freight trains and that happened in 1977?

L: Yes, November of 1977.

P: Why was it called the "Great Florida Train Fight"?

L: That's just what the *American Lawyer* called it. At the time, it was the largest verdict for the death of a wage earner, largest verdict for the death of a housewife. In the meantime, all during this time, I also got the first \$1 million verdict for the death of a child, and it was a black child, got \$3.6 million, which was unheard of.

P: I found here listing \$10 million punitive damages in the train wreck.

L: Yes, it was.

P: And \$8 million compensatory.

L: Right.

P: Do you get 25 percent of that? Is that a general figure, not necessarily in just this one case?

L: In that case, we actually ended up settling it for, I think, the fee was one-third. We settled it for a present value fee of \$13 million.

P: Really want I to get is not necessarily just this case, but you ranged from 25 to 35 percent or something like that?

L: Yeah, that would be fair.

P: Were there children involved in this train wreck? The father and mother died.

L: Yeah, the two children, but they're well today. Both of them are married, they live in Colorado.

- P: I have the estate of the black woman, Pamela Denise Williams, what is that case? The Allstate Insurance?
- L: That was the black...
- P: Was that the child?
- L: That was one of them that got a \$1 million verdict.
- P: What was the basis of that case?
- L: She was a University of Florida student on her way home in a rental car, a passenger, wonderful young lady.
- P: What happened?
- L: They ran off the interstate, her driver did, and she got killed.
- P: Was it the car malfunctioned?
- L: No.
- P: Who were they suing?
- L: Suing the driver and the owner, which was whatever the name of the rental car, Hertz or Avis or something.
- P: I've got All-State Insurance.
- L: Yeah.
- P: And they got \$1.2 million?
- L: Yeah.
- P: Who was killed in that?
- L: Pamela Williams.
- P: *Pamela Denise Williams v. National [Rent A Car]*. Why were they suing a rental [company]?
- L: The owner of the car is responsible for the driver. National Car Rental owned it.

P: So there wasn't anything wrong with the car, there was something wrong with the driver.

L: The driver.

P: Was the driver killed?

L: No.

P: And who pays this million dollars, the insurance company?

L: Yes, for National Car Rental.

P: Is this an unusual type of thing?

L: No. Now it is, because the laws have been changed, but, back then, rental car companies, the *Gillette* case also back then I got \$13 million, about.

P: I have another case I want to ask you about that's similar to that. February 1983, David Gillette with the University of West Florida, student, and there was also National Car Rental.

L: Yes. That was somebody up here working at the *News Journal* and drove his car, actually, he was on a through road, David was a passenger that pulled out, and they hit. David was a quadriplegic, and we ended up getting a verdict of \$13 [million], \$14 million. Eventually, it was paid after years of appeals and everything else.

P: David still lives here in...

L: In Pensacola. David still lives here, has got children.

P: He's the [quadriplegic].

L: But he had children thereafter, married this girl, and, apparently, is doing very well.

P: Who are Terry and Joyce [Darangelo]? Auto injuries also.

L: He broke both his heels in an automobile accident, this was an uninsured motorists case, got \$1.1 million or something. He's still around.

P: You sound like the battering warrior, staying up there, beating these insurance companies to their feet.

L: I did a good job against them.

- P: Both for them and for everybody concerned. Who is Helen Caldwell?
- L: I represented her... it was down near Destin. She was just a real estate agent, and a tractor trailer crossed over on her, and she got a \$1 million verdict.
- P: A \$1 million verdict, that's right. [End of Tape B, side 4] ...tell your other case.
- L: I'll get into that. You wanted to ask me, though, about the Neese case. Her husband, she had just gotten married to him, and her husband touched the fence, a power line had fallen and he got electrocuted. We got a [\$3.3] million verdict.
- P: Then the parents also got \$1 million.
- L: Yeah, so it was four point something against the Rural Electrical Coop.
- P: But that's kind of an accident that happens.
- L: I was kicking butt back then. Southeast Toyota...
- P: Jim Moran?
- L: Jim Moran. My son-in-law, Ross Goodman, had come with the firm, and somebody had come to him about suing Southeast Toyota for a Toyota dealer, and I told him he was crazy. We later found out that that Toyota dealer had settled for like \$4 million. All of a sudden, Doc Hollinsworth who owns Quality Imports in Fort Walton came to see me to represent him in a similar case against Southeast Toyota, and it had to do with tie-in. They wouldn't sell him the good cars unless he took the bad cars, and it was a whole bunch of things.
- P: And Moran was the southeastern [dealer].
- L: Jim Moran was Southeast Toyota, the wealthiest, billionaire, wealthiest person in Florida at the time. He had been an automobile dealer and Ford dealer in Chicago.
- P: He was a Gator you know, Moran, I think.
- L: I think his children, I don't think Jim Moran would have gone to college.
- P: I thought I met him at the.... He's the southeastern dealer. As I understand it, from what you're saying now, in order to get good cars you had to buy bad cars.
- L: You had to buy some of his bad cars. I sued him. On the other side was Williams and Connolly, a guy named Ray Bergan who was the head of their civil department, great law

firm. We go to trial in Crestview. Before that I took the deposition of Mr. Moran, and he and I got into it. Somehow or another at break, I saw his big boats, he said, "If you win this case, you got a week on my boat called the *Gallant Lady*," which was the finest boat on the East coast of the United States. We go to trial and I do, I got a forty-some million dollar verdict. We had a high-low, which meant that we couldn't get less than \$4 million or more than \$22 million. We ended up settling for about \$15 [million], \$18 million or something.

P: Who gets that money?

L: Doc Hollinsworth. We got about \$4 million, but the time and effort and everything we put into it, it wasn't really worth it. About a year later, I get a call from Southeast Toyota wanting to know when I would like to use the boat. We went down, a friend of mine name Max Seelig from Atlantic City and his son, Fred Vigodsky and myself, and my brother Allen, brother Herman, and I think that was it. We go into Fort Lauderdale, we fly in one of his many jets to the Abacos [Bahamas Island] where the big *Gallant Lady* is, we spend three or four days, come back. The following year I get a call, "When would you like do it again?" We go down to Fort Lauderdale, we get on one of his big jets and we fly to Martinique or somewhere down there, we're on his new *Gallant Lady*. Then, just recently, I called and Roy Jones, Jr. was fighting in Miami in January of 2002. He was at the American Airlines arena which is right next to the water, I'd like to rent his boat for a cocktail party. They refused to rent it to me, but they sent it over there, fabulous cocktail party, food, everything in the damn world. I ended up sending him a check for \$25,000 as a contribution to his foundation, but the party would have cost \$50,000. It was just unbelievable. So we became fairly good friends.

P: I was going to say, he loses a case to you and then he makes his boat available to you. Where does he live?

L: In Deerfield Beach, I believe.

P: He's still a rich man, obviously.

L: Yes.

P: Still in the Toyota business?

L: Toyota business, yes.

P: And he's still dealing?

L: Oh yeah.

P: You're looking at your watch.

L: I'm going to leave here in about five minutes.

P: Tell me about the Orange State Life Insurance Company in Largo, Florida.

L: That was the insurance company that Broward Williams got me into that I was with Rutenberg.

P: I want to hold that because that's a story I think that's going to be bigger than we can cover, so let's leave that for just a moment and come back to that. Also, I know the tobacco settlement, I have a huge number.

L: Yeah, that goes years later.

P: One of the ones that intrigues me tremendously was the Howard Hughes business.

L: Leff Mabie had a friend in Alabama, a lawyer. At the time, Norton Bond was a lawyer in our office, and this guy was sort of like just a mentor to Norton, a friend of Leff's, and he came up with the idea that Howard Hughes had these children, a boy and a girl...

P: Adopted children.

L: I'm not sure how that worked, but yeah, it was some type of adoption called common law adoption that's available in certain states.

P: Adopted children in Alabama.

L: Yeah. So Alabama has a common law adoption. Anyhow, he got us to work on the case with him. It ends up settling and the whole group gets 9.5 percent.

P: Of the entire estate?

L: Of the entire estate.

P: Which was a multimillion dollar thing.

L: Yeah. I ended up owning a quarter of 1 percent, I think Leff had a half of 1 percent. I'm not sure how that darn thing worked. I'm still getting a little bit from here and a little bit from there. Anyhow, they settled it.

P: But the court settlement was that these were adopted children, they were Howard Hughes' children.

- L: Right, but they only settled for, I'm not sure if it was a total of 9.5 percent that went to the children and the lawyers.
- P: If the estate was \$1 billion, it was still a lot of money.
- L: Yeah.
- P: Howard Hughes left a lot of money.
- L: Yeah, but they sold out way too soon. They sold all that Las Vegas stuff, the Howard Hughes medical thing is worth billions. The whole estate ended up being worth about \$1 billion back in the 1970s.
- P: You're representing the two children at the time.
- L: Yeah. We're representing a piece of the two children. I think between Leff and myself and the firm, we got 1 percent of the estate.
- P: I don't know what the means in terms of dollars, it may be a substantial amount.
- L: I'd say well over a period of time it's about... I'm not sure how that ended up being. I think it was like several millions of dollars, less than ten.
- P: On the basis of just the amount of the cases that you and I have gone over so far for the tape, do you have some special person in here to just count the money as it rolls in?
- L: No, it's not quite that easy. It doesn't come that quick.
- P: It doesn't come morning, noon, and night?
- L: No.
- P: You have to wait your turn a little bit.
- L: Yeah.
- P: But this was Leff's case to begin with, wasn't it?
- L: Yes.
- P: And it was 9.5 percent of the estate?
- L: [Yes].

P: Who was Larry Lewis, the local manager of the estate?

L: That was Cox Cable, that was W.D. Childers' buddy who was Cox Cable, got us into BLAB T.V. He allowed us to take over that channel for nothing, and that's developed into BLAB television.

P: I want to ask you about the Orange State Life Insurance Company in Largo Florida. What was that case?

L: It wasn't a case. When Reubin Askew became Governor, Broward Williams was the insurance commissioner and I had told Broward – we had become acquaintances, close to being friends – that if there were an opportunity in the insurance industry, I thought that I and some of my friends would be interested. Then, he introduced me to this guy who turned out to be a drunk who had Orange State Life Insurance Company, Bill Whalen. Bill Whalen had this insurance company, and I bought into it, and I got some friends of mine in Pensacola to buy into it. I became chairman of the board, the board included Charlie Ruttenberg and Fred Fisher and some others.

P: How'd you get involved with those two?

L: Apparently, Fred Fisher was a friend of Whalen's, and Ruttenberg was a friend of Fisher's. We got involved in the business. Whalen had a real drinking problem, and we were in big trouble when Ruttenberg realized this and brought in a guy named Barry Alpert to take over the company. Barry was with a company in Chicago, today he works with Raymond James, very prominent citizen in St. Petersburg. Barry helped make the company into something. We ended up selling it to Home Life. I probably did better than if I had been in the market, but it was an experience.

P: But Orange State spread around. You have thirty-five states that had offices?

L: It was selling insurance in thirty-five states.

P: Is it still in operation today?

L: I think Home Life spun it off. It's not called Orange State anymore.

P: It's acquired by a New York state buyer, state firm.

L: I'm not sure what ever happened to it.

P: What's happened to Charles Ruttenberg?

L: Charles Rутtenberg lost a great deal of money in U.S. Homes. Fred Fisher had some problems and he put together a group of the board to get rid of Charlie Rутtenberg.

P: He maneuvered him out of...

L: Out of the company, and they were dear, dear friends.

P: But no longer, obviously.

L: No.

P: Rутtenberg lost money as a result of the maneuver by Fred Fisher.

L: Rутtenberg, certainly, at one point, was an extremely wealthy man. He's not in that position anymore.

P: Fred Fisher, though, hasn't suffered?

L: Fred Fisher hadn't. Fred, I think, got all kinds of stock deals and, of course, made a wonderful contribution to the University of Florida School of Accounting where they named it the Fred Fisher School of Accounting.

P: Rутtenberg was chairman of the board of U.S. Homes. Is that what brought him and Fisher together?

L: Somehow or another, Fisher was Rутtenberg's personal accountant also I think, and close friend.

P: Do you see either one of those?

L: No, it's funny. I really need to see both of them, but I have not.

P: Let's talk about the tobacco settlement, that's a major, major activity. Go back to the very beginning.

L: In August of 1993, I'm a member of a group called the Inner Circle of Advocates.

P: What is that?

L: It's a group of no more than one hundred lawyers who have made a name for themselves in the plaintiff's personal injury field.

P: Only personal injury?

- L: Basically. Civil type cases from around the country.
- P: Are there others from Florida in that?
- L: Yes. Bob Montgomery, J.B. Spence.
- P: All of those are names that are connected with the tobacco settlement.
- L: J.B. wasn't. Bill Colson, Bill Hicks. They both died. Mike Maher, Booty Nance. Florida has a number of guys who were either in or are still in or died off.
- P: Go back to 1993, the very beginning.
- L: I'm at their conference in Whistler, British Columbia.
- P: Whistler, is that a resort?
- L: Whistler is a resort like north of Vancouver.
- P: When do you all meet, once a year?
- L: Once a year for a week and we exchange views and brag on each other.
- P: But it's a social kind of a...
- L: And an educational type thing. And it's a good referral source. Anything happens, they just send cases...
- P: Are you active in it still?
- L: Yes. So I was in British Columbia at this resort called Whistler. It's a big winter resort, but it's reasonably cool during the summer. I'm sitting at the bar waiting on my wife, as usual, and having a drink and a cigarette. A friend of mine named Ron Motley walks up from South Carolina, he's a member of the group, and starts talking about smoking. Ron drinks a lot, too. He said that they had been doing some focus groups about suing the tobacco industry for the state of Mississippi, would I be interested in doing that in Florida?
- P: When he said, "we are," because he's from South Carolina?
- L: But he's got friends in Mississippi, a guy named Dickie Scruggs. Dickie was a friend of Michael Moore who is state attorney in Mississippi. Legally, I basically said, "No."

Nobody's ever collected a nickel from the tobacco industry, and if the state sued for Medicaid damages, in other words the money that the state had to pay for illnesses caused by smoking to indigents in Florida, that you'd, number one, have to identify who the person was. You'd have to prove that cigarettes caused the condition; you'd have to prove what cigarettes caused it, and a lot of people smoked different brands. And that you then were faced with the assumption of risk, I should know if I smoke that I'm assuming the risk. I said, "I wouldn't be interested." That was in August of 1993.

P: Let me ask you something. There had been cases in Florida, so there was already a history of it?

L: Yeah, there had been cases all over the country. Nobody's ever collected, at that point, one cent, none by the state against tobacco. I came back to Pensacola, and, either by chance or something, I'm looking at a statute called Florida's Third Party Medicaid Recovery Act, which basically says the State of Florida – I'll give you an example. In an automobile accident, if a guy negligently causes injury to an indigent in Florida and the state had to pay for the medical bills, the state would have a claim against the negligent third party, but you have to do it in the name of the person who was injured, you have to prove that it was negligence, you have to prove that the negligence caused the injury, and you'd be subject to any defenses that they may have against the indigents such as he'd been drinking and walking across the street and all of that. I saw the statute and I realized that with a few punctuations, a few added words, a few removal of words, I could remove everyone of those problems so that the state could sue the negligent third party without having to identify the person.

They could use statistics, if necessary, to prove causation, such as: "Center for Disease Control says 8.9 percent of the illnesses for which there are Medicaid damages are caused by cigarettes." That you could use market share so that if Philip Morris had 62 percent of the business, they'd be responsible for 62 percent of the total damages, and that no defenses would be available against the state other than if the state did it. I saw that I could do this so I called my friend, W.D. Childers, who at that time he was the dean of the Florida Senate, and I told him about it. This would have been fall of 1993. I asked him, I said, "I think the Governor would like this." I said, "I'd like to go to Lawton about this." W.D. being the way he is said, "Okay." So we called and Lawton said, "Come on over," and we had breakfast.

P: Childers understood what you were talking about, what you were trying to do?

L: Reasonably. Lawton picked it up immediately. He said, "You know," I think his words were, "those bastards hooked me" – talking about the cigarette company – "when I was a kid."

P: And now he's going to get even.

- L: Yeah. He said, "I like it, let's go with it," and I remember saying, "Alright, great, why don't we have a press conference" and he said, "Let me tell you something, if they find out about it, it will never see the light of day." He said, "Fred, I can't get a five cent tax on tobacco, they are that strong. What I want you to do is go to the attorney general and ask [Bob] Butterworth [Attorney General of Florida, 1986-present], will this meet constitutional requirements." I think later that afternoon, W.D. and I went to see Butterworth, but he turned us over to, I can't remember the guy's name, I think his chief assistant, he said, "You'll never get this through." I said, "Okay." "But if you do, we'll...."
- P: What would have been the opposition?
- L: Tobacco. They had forty lobbyist.
- P: They had big lobbyist in Tallahassee? [interruption]
- L: That was the fall.
- P: The assistant to the attorney general thinks you could not get it through?
- L: He said, "Tobacco's just too strong." Apparently it remained quiet, and I'm not sure who they let know about the bill.
- P: The bill would have to go through the legislature.
- L: It had to go through the legislature, and W.D., I think, added it onto some attorney general stuff, liberalizing the Medicaid Recovery.
- P: It got hidden a little bit.
- L: Got hidden all the way, and, then, they cleared it on a voice vote. It passed the Senate 39-0, I believe in the House 120-0.
- P: And the lobbyists never heard about it?
- L: Never realized it until afterwards. Then, either I announced or somebody....
- P: Did they try to put pressure on Askew to veto it?
- L: You mean on Chiles?
- P: I mean Chiles. I kept saying Askew, but we're really talking about Chiles.

- L: The governor had a health insurance thing that he wanted, and I thought he would give that up if they'd give him his health insurance for indigents and for poor people and things, but he stuck to his guns, he said, "No, he wasn't going to agree to veto the bill." He signed the bill into law, and a tremendous amount of publicity. "This was a payoff to Fred Levin because of his relationship with Childers and with Chiles." I got it.
- P: Why did the press think it was a payoff to you?
- L: Keep in mind, tobacco, this was the spin they wanted to put on it. They controlled the press, too, so they're getting their spin out.
- P: I can see why they're saying it, but I was just wondering what the justification for it was.
- L: This is all over the papers. Everything is going on. I still never dreamed there was going to be any money out of this thing for the lawyers. I got everything I wanted which was the great publicity. I did this, Fred Levin and his buddy Lawton, all that. So I told W.D. that he had to go to Lawton and get me out of this thing. Lawton said, "I'm his lawyer." The Attorney General said he couldn't handle it, it was going to be too expensive and too time consuming to handle it for the state. I said I would go and call and select the dream team of lawyers. So I started calling lawyers around the state. I got about one out of every three that agreed to get involved. Then, I had W.D. come and talk to them as a group and explain to them why I could not be part of this.
- P: Where were they meeting?
- L: Somewhere in Tallahassee. I could not be part of this because of my relationship and that this... I'd love to do it, but I would not be part of this.
- P: I still am not quite sure in my mind [interruption]
- L: I didn't, I didn't want to get involved. I got what I wanted out of it, and that was publicity. I never dreamed that this thing was going to end up with money.
- P: A lot of money.
- L: A lot of money. I knew it was going to take several million dollars a year in out of pocket costs to fight these people. It was going to take twenty-five to thirty lawyers. I was happy. So I got W.D. to go talk to the group.
- P: And you didn't want to be on the dream team, then.
- L: No, I got everything I wanted. In the midst of all of this, I brought in Ron Motley and his group who started, and they were going to get 46 percent of the fee. I told Ron, "If

you ever get anything out of it, you can take care of me.” Basically, that was the extent of it, never dreaming anything would ever be anything.

P: Why were you bringing out of state people into it if this was a Florida...

L: This was his idea. Remember this is the guy who told me about Mississippi.

P: I know he told you about Mississippi, but the law that you are passing, the bill that passes is only in fact for Florida.

L: It's just a relationship. So then, it gets on into the State hires the dream team. I guess that was in early 1995, the bill was passed in 1994. Early 1995, they hire them and they enter into a contract. Now, tobacco has gone in full force, put a lot of money and a lot of people.

P: When you say the state entered into a contract, did they specify in the contract what the cut would be for the legal [team]?

L: Twenty-five percent. Tobacco has put a lot of money in lobbying, and the legislature repeals the act with W.D. Childers leading the way.

P: Why?

L: I never said anything to him that I recall. He took lobbying money like the rest of them. They repealed it big time. The governor vetoed the repeal.

P: Lawton Chiles is still the governor?

L: Yes. We now go into 1996, and they're going to override the veto. Some lady senator who they expected to be on tobacco woke up the morning of the repeal, and in debate changed her vote, said her daddy died from smoking, she just could not bring herself [to override] regardless of everything. So they withdrew, they knew they'd lost it, the repeal was lost. The tobacco team went on, and Florida led the way. Had it not been for the Florida statute, none of this would have ever taken place because the cases without the statute in any state subjects them all to the same questions I had from before.

P: Had other states by this time began to pick up the ball?

L: Mississippi and Texas had brought... but it was on what was called a common law theory. They didn't have all the defenses of [the] Florida statute. Once the Florida statute was in, and Florida was going to win based on the statute, if Florida wins, no other state – I mean they could stop it in other states with lobbying, but not if Florida gets \$13 billion. It's too late. So it was this little statute that Lawton Chiles passes at a suggestion by me that made for the whole tobacco industry that they say will save in thirty years 100,000

American lives a year. 450,000 Americans a year die from tobacco, and they think they can save a minimum of 20 percent of those people by new smokers that they're preventing, and it is. It's dropped [the death rate for smokers] more than 20 percent. So we run through 1996, and, I believe in 1997, the Florida Supreme Court rules 4-3 that it's constitutional. 1998 rolls around, we're ready to go to trial in August. The case is settled with tobacco, it becomes a national settlement, and part of the national settlement is an attorney's fee provision of \$500 million a year maximum to be divided among all the states. They'll keep paying it until such time as....

P: Did this wipe out the 25 percent for the Florida dream team?

L: There was a big fight that went on, but in effect, they ended up getting an arbitration of at least 25 percent, but to pay that over years and years.

P: Where does this leave Fred Levin?

L: One guy on the dream team, a lawyer named Bob Kerrigan from Pensacola, voluntarily told me all the way that when I brought him in that it's a 25 percent referral for me. I never thought anything about it, and I ended up getting 8 percent from the law firms out of state, South Carolina and Mississippi firms that were handling it. I, individually, because the firm was so kind, get the 1.5 percent, personally, directly, from Kerrigan to me.

P: So you get 1.5 percent.

L: Of the Florida fee directly, and the firm gets 8 percent.

P: And that amounts to what?

L: 1.5 percent of \$3.43 billion or something like that, it will end up being, I guess, \$50 million over a...

P: Fifteen year period.

L: Yeah.

P: And what is the firm's amount over the period?

L: Almost \$300 million.

P: And that's divided up. Does everybody in the firm get a piece of it?

L: Everybody who was in the firm at the time got a piece of it.

P: I know Mark was involved.

L: Yeah. Everybody's got a nice little nest egg coming in for the next....

P: How has the tobacco industry reacted to all of this? Are they still fighting it? Are they taking it?

L: No, they went ahead and settled everything around the country.

P: How many of the states have [settled], every state?

L: All the states have come in. Now they got individual cases that still are....

P: Have you handled any individual cases?

L: No.

P: Would you turn them down if they came to you?

L: Yeah. Just that they're tough cases.

P: You're smiling.

L: I'm just looking at all the names of the guys who came in the firm. What I'll do is give you this list. Seems like they either skip number twenty-nine or they forgot who number twenty-nine was. I'll let you go through this, and when you come back tomorrow, you may ask me specifics about individuals, and this is the order they came in with the exception of Dick Warfield and myself. I came and Jack Graff came before Dick Warfield did, but when Dick Warfield came with the firm, they gave him number three.

P: So you end up on the tobacco case a settlement...

L: A very wealthy man.

P: And you're a satisfied person.

L: Very satisfied person. All this took place in 1998, which leads to the University of Florida if you want to get into that now.

P: I'm going to get into that in a minute. You found that this was obviously a happy ending. Have you had a lot of criticism since?

- L: Yeah, there [were] a lot of different things that smokers, the amount of the fee, a lot of things occurred that were not, you know...I guess a lot of jealousy, an awful lot of jealousy among other lawyers.
- P: Some of them who had the opportunity to turn in and didn't.
- L: Yeah, turned it down.
- P: Before we get into the university thing, I want to ask you about the fen-phen case. I think that kind of fits in.
- L: Those things lead into the mass tort field. I'd never been a mass tort lawyer, I've shared in the benefits. That all gets into Mark Proctor and Mike Papantonio and all those guys. That's more into the business of the law firm where I used to run the law firm until Martin got here and realized just how little I knew about running a law firm until he got here. Then he and Mark started working together, and then when Martin left, Mark took over and helped. Both of them have done more towards organizing the law firm business-wise, ethics-wise, and have built this really major law firm, not so much by numbers, but by influence. It's one of the real influential plaintiff firms in the country, in the mass tort field, and I'm still totally removed from that. I still do the individual cases.
- P: Mark plays an influential role in this firm?
- L: Yes, very much so. Mark and Mike Papantonio would be the two people that would be the most difficult to replace.
- P: Neither one of them are going anywhere.
- L: No, they're not going anywhere. I'm still the rainmaker, even though I...
- P: The firm and you are one and the same.
- L: ...never touched a mass tort, but they think I do. In other words, it's Fred Levin and everybody does a wonderful job of promoting that. There are things that have happened in the Roy Jones arena, you have to understand that a chief in the country of Ghana, all of these things built the... we're not just a law firm. We've become somewhat above it and it's hard to explain, but it's really worked out well. They've done a great job. Mark in organizing, Mike in going out and shaking hands, rainmaking, using me as the rainmaker. I'm never there, but he's always saying man, Fred. Have you ever met him? He's so great, he's this, he's that.
- P: It's your reputation.

L: Yeah.

P: We were getting into the fen-phen case.

L: Fen-phen would not be anything that I had anything to do with.

P: But it was a firm case.

L: Firm case and they did extremely well.

P: How did it come to the firm?

L: It was just part of Mike Papantonio's mass tort thing.

P: I'm a lay person, what do you mean by mass tort?

L: Where they go out and advertise to get a bunch of cases where a lot of people were hurt by the act of a company.

P: A huge number of people.

L: Yeah.

P: But somebody has to come to the firm and say we want you to represent us.

L: They advertise and they've networked. They've got firms all over the country that network with Levin Papantonio.

P: What was the final settlement on the fen-phen case?

L: I don't know. These were well in excess of \$100 million.

P: Is that paid over a period of time too?

L: That's paid.

P: Do you get any of that?

L: Oh, yeah.

P: Fred Levin, plus the firm.

L: Yes.

P: Is it similar to the...

L: No, I won't get as much as that because the percentages change each year, and fees that come in during that year are determined by the percentages. It's a big formula that goes into it.

P: None of them get poor as a result of this.

L: No. All of the guys have done extremely well.

P: You think Mark can afford to take us to New York?

L: I hope so.

P: I hope so, too. What are these people suffering from that took fen-phen?

L: I have no idea.

P: All you're doing is just cashing the check.

L: I'm cashing the check and I'm building a reputation in other arenas, in other cases.

P: The only other case I want to ask you about is you've really mentioned this before is that drug that Parke-Davis...

L: Chloromycetin. That goes way back. About mid 1960s, a lady came in to see me. Her son had acne, sixteen years old, only child, and had gone to see a Dr. Holmes, Grant Holmes, a dermatologist in Pensacola. Dr. Holmes gave a prescription for chloromycetin to her son and his name was Jim Cosper. Jim had taken the drug, had come down with aplastic anemia, leukemia type condition. I think when she came in to see me, he had already died. She had remarried a guy named Ira Heinberg, who was a friend of the family's. She came in to see me and she said she'd been listening on the radio and she heard that there was a causal connection between chloromycetin and the condition her son died from. I didn't have an awful lot to be doing, this was mid 1960s. I then went down and started doing some research and found out that chloromycetin was an antibiotic developed by Parke-Davis in I think the early 1950s. It was described as a miracle antibody that by 1960, they were spending \$6 million a year advertising this drug, a prescription drug. Back then, they didn't advertise prescription drugs in *Life* magazine or *Look* or things like that. They were advertised only in medical journals.

There were two factories doing nothing but going twenty-four hours a day manufacturing chloromycetin. Every time a doctor turned a page in a medical journal they would see: Does your patient have urinary tract infection? Prescribe

chloromycetin, the miracle antibody. Does he have acne? Prescribe Chloromycetin. I got into it and I realized that this was the drug of choice in only one condition and that's something called Rocky Mountain spotted fever, yet they were selling – I think 5 million Americans each year were getting a course of treatment with this drug. I got to researching it, and I found out about an advance man for the drug [End of Tape C, side 5] ...He told me I'm not going to go through this whole thing with you, but this is my whole file you can go through it, boxes. I started to go through it and I found a little memo and the memo said that one in every sixty people who took this drug are going to develop a blood dyscrasia, which is a condition, it's usually reversible, just some kind of disease of the blood. One in 1,000 they estimated would die from aplastic anemia/leukemia. If 5 million Americans a year were taking it, that means 5,000 were dying each year. It was a drug of choice in only Rocky Mountain spotted fever and I don't know, about a handful of those people.

I file a lawsuit toward the end of the 1960s, maybe early 1970s. Went to trial and asked for punitive damages. For the first time that we know of, the court allowed punitive damages to go to a jury against a drug company. Park-Davis said that if they did this, they would probably have to withdraw the drug from the market because there were other cases around the county, they told the judge this. The judge said that might be a good idea. Unfortunately, the case went to the jury, the jury did not return punitive damages. The verdict for the death, they found the death was caused by chloromycetin, but the verdict was less than what I'd settled with the doctor for. In effect, I lost. But not long thereafter, the drug company withdrew this drug from the market and it's only available today in a hospital setting in a very specialized situation. The drug is still being sold almost everywhere else in the world, except in this country. The effect of this was, although I really lost the case, that over the last more than thirty years, you look at 5,000 people a year, 150,000 lives, that are still living. The 150,000 lives, to put it in its proper perspective, to bring it home are three times the number of American lives than were lost in Vietnam all because of Fred Levin having discovered this and having got punitive damages charged even though we never collected them. Never did anything, I lost the case, yet saved three times more lives than were lost [in Vietnam].

P: Is Fred Levin's reputation...does the world know about these things? Or is it just the money they know about.

L: The money basically. But not only is that three times the number of American lives that were lost in Vietnam, you go back and look at tobacco, all that tobacco settlement included a monstrous tobacco campaign against teenage smoking. If you look at 100,000 lives a year that are going to be saved, and you say God knows both of those are directly the result of something I did and you begin to realize the number of lives and that maybe it's not so bad that the law school has that name on it. That makes me feel good that in one situation like I said, I really lost the case and saved [lives]. This whole country went crazy over the loss of lives in Vietnam and I saved three times that many.

P: I think tobacco settlement case in Florida, wasn't there a stipulation that there had to be a certain amount used for education of young people?

L: Yeah, and there's a big battle going on about that. There is more than a 20 percent drop in young people starting to smoke in Florida. A lot of lives saved because of that. Does anybody know that about Fred Levin? No. Not really.

P: Everything gets covered up by the money part without seeing the more positive results.

L: Yeah. I guess all of that came to a head in the law school naming. I've had a career that I can't imagine that there are, I imagine maybe Dr. Jonas Salk [developed the polio vaccine], he saved a ton of lives.

P: This is a continuation of the Oral History interview that I'm doing with Fred Levin at his office here in Pensacola. This is now July 2, [2002]. Fred, I want to talk to you about your giving now. Enough of the business of the firm's cases and so on. When did you start making contributions to the University of Florida? Was David the first?

L: Not really, I'm trying to think what I did at the University of Florida. I know I gave some property. My brother David and our law partner Leff Mabie and myself had some property south of Tallahassee, some waterfront property. We gave it to the University of Florida College of Law and they sold it for \$1.2 million or \$1.3 million. It's the Levin, Mabie, Levin chair and the first recipient of that was Dean Rick Matasar. When he became dean, he also became Levin, Mabie, Levin professor, I'm sorry.

P: I've heard long before Matasar arrived on the scene.

L: Yes, and it took that long for them to sell it and everything else. At the same time, we gave some property to Florida State University, or I did, and became a member of their president's council. At the same time, I gave property to the University of West Florida for their first professorship. They sold it and I think that professorship is several hundred thousand dollars, named that for my daddy, the Abe Levin professorship at the University of West Florida. That was the first major giving and I think that was back in the late 1970s probably.

P: I remember at the beginning of the 1980s when we were reorganizing the Center for Jewish Studies, and I was writing a solicitation letter to lots of people around the state and to you. I remember that you wrote back and said that you had recently given or was giving some land in Franklin County to the University of Florida, and if it was ever sold, something off the top of that could go for the Center for Jewish Studies which didn't happen, but I was just wondering if you're thinking about the early 1980s.

L: It could have been the early 1980s, late 1970s.

P: Was this the land then that created the chair?

L: Yes.

P: Levin, Mabie, Levin.

L: Yeah, I think they made it a professorship. It got \$1.2 million, \$1.3 million. It wasn't quite enough for...or maybe they weren't matching back then or whatever.

P: Had David given money before that time?

L: Mainly athletic type things. Nothing this size.

P: But he had been giving support to the athletic department?

L: Yes.

P: Anything to the medical school?

L: I think maybe we gave part of that land to the medical school too, but no major cash contribution. Of course over the years just having been raised in the kind of family, I gave to everything, nothing major. I was always the largest contributor to United Jewish Appeal.

P: Don't get into that yet. I want to stick first to the University of Florida.

L: Then, the situation with tobacco in 1998, and in December of 1998 we were about to receive a major payment from tobacco, the state of Florida was. I had 1.5 percent individually and the firm had 8 percent. I was sitting in my office when Rick Matasar who was dean of the University of Florida College of Law and Jeff Ulmer was marketing or whatever it is for the University of Florida law school fund raiser. They came into my office...

P: Unannounced?

L: I'm sure they called. They were sitting there and I had over a period of time, for whatever reason – I hope it was jealousy, but there may be some other reasons – the organized Bar had jumped me about so many things and even the courts had taken away two major verdicts because they said I was unethical in my closing arguments, the most ridiculous things in the world. Anyhow, they had done this and the organized Bar, and I guess it has a lot to do with – if I can go to an aside for a second because this had to do with the giving. Instead of acknowledging whether it be in a lawsuit or anything else,

instead of acknowledging that I am that good at what I do, I give the impression that I've cheap shot it or cheated or took advantage of the other side. Instead of just being honest and saying listen, I really am that good at what I do. My daddy and my brother David used to say why you'd rather climb a tree and make somebody think you're a crook than to stay on the ground, he said it's just unbelievable, and this is so. I had gotten some amazing verdicts. You get a great verdict against somebody and he thinks you cheated him and it just drives him... I don't know. Whatever it is, the organized Bar was very much against [naming the law school Levin College of Law].

P: The organized Bar in Florida or in this area?

L: In Florida and the area. Reputation-wise, you have to realize I passed basically the wrongful death bill, I passed the cigarette bill, I had received as a result of this the highest award from the trial lawyers of Florida, the Perry Nichols Award. All of a sudden, I'm sitting in the office and Jeff and Rick are there and we're talking about trying to get a major gift from Bob Montgomery who's a good friend, philanthropist, down in West Palm Beach.

P: So they came to talk to you about somebody else.

L: How to get Bob Montgomery to do this. In the midst of the conversation, they said what we'd like to do is try to get about \$6 million from him to build this big, beautiful new building and to be called the Robert and Mary Montgomery building at the Spessard Holland College of Law or whatever the heck. In one or the other, Rick said heck, tell him \$10 million, we'll name the law school for him.

P: This just came out of the blue?

L: I had just received notice that the checks had come in from tobacco. I was going to do something for the law school anyhow and within about five minutes, my mind was going through this mind game of what a great way to number one, spend the money, number two, I was financially in great shape, the kids were all in great shape....

P: You didn't need the money.

L: I didn't need the money and this was sort of payback. At the same time, I've always been one, in fact I told David, David when he died last January left a nice sum of money to the University of Florida. They'll come to it over a period of years. I always told David, David get the enjoyment of giving while you're living. I don't want to leave anything in my will for all right. I really feel that way and I said God knows, and it's proven to be true. Within about no more than fifteen minutes, I told them, I said I might give the \$10 million. I want to check with my tax lawyer and it was as if I'd shot both of them right between the eyes, like oh my God. I said we'll meet later today, which we

did, we went to Skopelo's restaurant that evening for cocktails. They had called John Lombardi [president, of the University of Florida, 1990-1999] and gotten permission. I had called Bob Kramer, my tax lawyer, and he said it could be done. My son Martin, myself, Bob Kramer the lawyer, Rick, and Jeff went and had dinner Skopelo's and shook hands on my doing this.

P: You had not been approached by Paul Robell at all earlier for a big gift? Not necessarily this, but...

L: I don't believe so, no.

P: This kind of just came out of the blue.

L: I doubt if there's ever been anybody who contributed this amount of money in this short of period of time.

P: Not in this kind of short period. They didn't have to woo you at all.

L: In fact, I think it's probably the largest cash contribution the university's received.

P: What happened to your friend down in Palm Beach?

L: Bob Montgomery? We went back recently. There was a big war over the gift obviously, but this past year, 2001, they decided to raise – they used this \$10 million to hire professors, discretionary funds, which has really done a lot toward bringing the law school [to national prominence]. Now they needed a new facility, they went out and raised \$5 [million] or \$6 million last year.

P: But not from Bob Montgomery?

L: Bob Montgomery gave \$250,000.

P: That's a long way from your \$10 million.

L: I know. I gave \$250,000 more. They raised the money, it's going to be matched, and we're going to do over a \$20 million facility.

P: Why did Montgomery give such a small amount?

L: At that point, that's what we asked for.

P: But originally, you all were talking about \$5 [million] or \$6 million.

L: They were talking. Bob's got a lot of other interests. He's very much into the cultural things. He's got museums named for him down in West Palm, a lot of other things.

P: He's not a graduate of the university...

L: He is a graduate of the University [of Florida] Law School, and mentioned then that when things get straightened out, he would give more money to the university, and I'm sure he will.

P: How did they justify naming the school for you when it was already named for Spessard Holland?

L: It was the Spessard Holland Law Center.

P: Did they know that at the time? Did that come up in the negotiations?

L: It's called the Fredric G. Levin College of Law.

P: I know what's it's called now, but I thought that during the negotiations...

L: And then it's the Spessard Holland Law Center at the University of Florida.

P: But that's true now. At the time of the negotiations, did that come up in conversation?

L: It was always called the University of Florida College of Law. There was the law center there, the Holland Law Center, but it was always called the University of Florida College of Law and they changed that to the Fredric G. Levin College of Law at the University of Florida.

P: What would have happened if they had asked you for more money?

L: I don't know. I don't know what to tell you.

P: The \$10 million just kind of came out of the blue.

L: Came out of the blue.

P: It was later suggested that they sold it too cheap.

L: I paid more for that than they paid for the school of accounting, the school of business.

P: I understand what you're saying and I agree with you completely, but I'm just saying, later when the criticism began to evolve.

L: And the criticism immediately started.

P: Where was Lombardi in all of this?

L: He came down on my side and that added to his troubles. In the meantime now, Jeb Bush goes in 1999, in January.

P: You had not supported him?

L: No, I supported Buddy MacKay. But Jeb Bush goes in. The dean of the law school gets a letter signed by a number of former presidents of the Florida Bar complaining that here is somebody, why would name your school for somebody like this?

P: This letter came where, to Lombardi?

L: I know it went to Rick Matasar.

P: And to Jeb Bush?

L: I'm sure it ended up there. There was a movement afoot in the legislature to give me back my money in 1999 and rename it the University of Florida College of Law. There were a lot of people that were upset.

P: For the record, tell me what the two instances were of censure from the Bar or whoever it was that they handed that out in condemnation.

L: I guess it was in the early 1980s, a guy named Dean Baird who was actually a friend of my family's, he turned out to be a bookie, booking football. I would bet on football with him or his group. Dean gets arrested for bookmaking, and this is a big deal in Pensacola. If it happened in Miami, Jacksonville – they slap his wrist and let him go. But in the state attorney's office here, they charged him with racketeering and all of this stuff.

P: They charged you with racketeering?

L: No, Dean Baird. At that time I was doing my BLAB television show. I made some comments that the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and all of this, there a lot better things they can be doing than picking up bookies and charging them with racketeering. At the same time, the Bar Association was notified that there were a number of lawyers, judges in Dean Baird's little black book as betters. This again is a situation where my mouth got myself in trouble. They sent a notice to all of us, everybody in the book, to come take a private reprimand.

I went down to the Bar Association grievance committee and made the statement that it is inconceivable to me that Reubin Askew and the governor of Massachusetts bet a

box of oranges against Maine lobster when Miami played Boston College, that that is a crime, the same crime that basically we all, we bettors, are charged with. I said when two judges are out of the golf course and bet a dollar on a hole, that's the same crime that they allege I did. It's nothing but a third degree misdemeanor. I said there are five lawyers in this town practicing law right now who have been charged with stealing from their clients, and they're still practicing law. I said you bring me down here to give me a private reprimand over betting on a football game, I said it's absolutely insanity. Take care of these guys who don't care whether they win or lose, I mean I went into a real tirade. I was upset and told them that I was at a bar having a drink the other night and I was watching two lawyers laughing about having lost a case, a criminal case, a murder case. I said this is just...anyhow.

The Bar gave everybody else private reprimands and then they brought charges against me wanting to make a public reprimand. I demanded that the trial go on in public. It was headlines every day in the local section. I did repeat my speech that I thought it was absolutely ridiculous what had happened. The case, the judge found, that I should have a public reprimand. I went to the Florida Supreme Court which affirmed on a different ground than the betting, they affirmed on the ground that I had brought the Bar into disrepute because of my comments about why in the hell aren't you worrying about these damn things, here you are running around getting somebody betting on a football game. I also had pointed out that Justice Rehnquist had his regular Wednesday night poker game in Washington. They took the supreme court decision from Florida and petitioned for certiorari to the United States Supreme Court where they held it for about a year and a half and finally they turned it down. Came back to Jacksonville for the Board of Governors meeting and stood there in the middle of the room of the Board of Governors while they chewed me out and all that.

Then it was a few years later where I kicked butt in a case of *Stone v. Sacred Heart Hospital* and the jury awarded almost \$5 million. In the midst of the closing argument, I said the defense in this case is ridiculous. These doctors acted like, you know... in that case all I said was the defense in the case is ridiculous. It was an automobile accident. They didn't object. There was a motion for a new trial, they never mentioned this in the motion for a new trial. Then on the appeal, they said that this was an unethical comment because I had put my opinion into the case. The district court of appeal reversed the case, said the conduct was unethical and sent it back for a new trial that we later settled reasonably, probably somewhere between \$3 million and \$4 million.

When this decision was coming down, it came down the day that I was getting ready to make a closing argument in the case of *Rawson v. Baptist Hospital*. It came here and they didn't want to tell me that the case had been reversed on this. Anyhow, in the Rawson case, I again said the defense in this case is absolutely ridiculous. This is a medical practice, *Rawson v. Baptist Hospital*. These doctors were idiots. They were sitting there fooling around while this guy who had had a diving accident and had the bends, they needed to get him to a hyperbaric chamber. That case goes up and they reverse that, an \$8 million verdict, send it back for a new trial saying this conduct is the

second time Mr. Levin has made unethical remarks. I'm notified by the Bar Association they're bringing charges. By the way, the \$8 million verdict ended up being \$31 million the last time it was tried.

They bring these charges, again I've demanded a public trial and I had testifying for me J.B. Spence from Miami said it was absolute insanity that they would object. I had Morris Dees [Director of the Southern Poverty Law Center] from Montgomery, a dear friend, testify for me that what a great lawyer I was and this is absurd. I had the chairman of the American Bar Association Grievance Committee state that he had looked through a million possible [unfinished thought]. Anyhow, this was the first time anybody had ever been charged with a closing argument as a violation. The judge found in my favor, the supreme court affirmed that there was nothing unethical about it.

P: So these are the two cases in which they, the critics...

L: The critics said Mr. Levin had been charged with. A lot of people say it's just an absolute factor that these guys, they're country club elite, and here Fred Levin is doing all of the things that I'm sure they would like to have done, all of them would love their name on a law school. We're going to go into another arena when we start talking about the Roy Jones situation and how all of that, I think, probably led to a lot of the jealousy. The political connections with Reubin Askew and W.D. [Childers] and becoming the trial counsel for the power company. Then the Roy Jones situation, being the chief in the country of Ghana, just everything. The children have turned out so well, I could not ask for more in life. A lot of the things that upset other attorneys, upset a lot of the social elite, that here's a guy who just didn't care to be with them.

P: A lot of the criticism comes out of a group of lawyers, mainly out of Jacksonville.

L: A lot of it out of Jacksonville.

P: Who are these people? Who is Rinnaman for instance? He became very vocal.

L: I was in law school, he was a year ahead of me.

P: I read his letter.

L: Yeah, his letter was horrible.

P: Vitriolic.

L: It was what kind of person I was that all I thought about was money and unethical and what an image for the law school. I thought during that time, what an image for the law school you think of the Chloromycetin case and savings and the tobacco, how many lives

all of this is going to save. I think I'd rather have Fred Levin's name than Rinaman's name on that law school.

P: You had not been on any cases with him or anything that got him upset?

L: No. I may have been on the fringes...

P: Did you know Mark Hulseley.

L: I knew of him.

P: But you didn't know him.

L: No. All these people were big high time society Bar lawyers. Keep in mind that they're sitting there and Reubin Askew and the influence I had there with W.D. Childers all those years. They had to come running to me if the Bar needed something.

P: And they weren't giving any money either.

L: They weren't giving any money. If the Bar or the university needed anything, "Fred, can you call W.D. and get this thing done." That's a little rough on them because I never went to a Florida Bar meeting in forty-one years.

P: What role does Marshall Criser play in all of this?

L: He just looks down his nose at me.

P: You all have never been social friends?

L: Oh, no, no. Since giving this money, now I go to any of the presidents' box, any of the football games. Before, the money I'd given allowed once every couple of years they'd invite me. Somebody introduced me last year and said, "Marshall you know Fred Levin, don't you," and he sort of just, "Yeah," just turned around. I don't even think he shook hands, walked away.

P: Sounds almost as though he had a personal grudge against you.

L: I think they're upset. They don't want that name on that law school, that's their law school.

P: But it's there.

- L: Yeah, but I don't think any of them have ever given any money of any significance. I think they found out Rinaman had given either \$50 or something like that.
- P: The Crisers have given money to the arts program, to the Harn Museum.
- L: Really?
- P: But to my knowledge they have not given to the law school, but I don't know. Is this the first time you and Matasar are coming together?
- L: Yes.
- P: You had nothing to do with his appointment, then?
- L: Oh, no. I didn't even know who he was. I had met him before the event of the giving. He had come here, he was a good dean compared to those in the past. He knew how to raise money, and every time he'd come to Pensacola he'd call. We'd go out and have drinks. You know what's amazing? I'm sitting here thinking, Bernie Sliger at Florida State University, every time he'd come to town, he would do all of his rounds with the FSU alumni, then he'd call me, and he and I would go out drinking together, just the two of us. I look at it as I must be a lot more fun than these fuddy-duddies who run the Bar and things like that. Bernie Sliger was President of Florida State University. I'm glad I did it. It's created a lot of problems for me, but at the same time, there's a group of people out there that are saying, "He's one of us, I'm glad his name's on that thing."
- P: What was the problem, to your knowledge, between Matasar and Lombardi?
- L: It had nothing to do with me, I understand. The problem was that it was a question of money for the school, money for the university. Matasar stood up for the school and stood up against the provost, and there were a lot of things. Supposedly, Rick called me and told me my naming had nothing to do with his dismissal.
- P: Lombardi feels that it did have something to do with it as far as his ouster was concerned.
- L: Yes. Matasar had some friends, so when he fired Matasar, it created... Some people in pretty high places, it's sort of funny, it wouldn't be the group that... I think that the Criser's and that group blamed Lombardi for allowing Matasar to do this, and I think he's right. I don't believe, at one point they said, "Matasar's friends." Matasar, at that point, didn't have any powerful friends.
- P: He hadn't been here very long.

- L: But, I think that's why Criser and all of that group thought that Lombardi should never have allowed this to happen. Lombardi, I agree, when he came down on my side and stood up to these people, I think that was the beginning of the end for him. That plus the Oreo remark.
- P: But I think upon reflection, Lombardi felt that Matasar had overextended himself in getting the money from you. That he did it really impetuously, he didn't ask for enough and all of those kinds of things.
- L: That's possible. Part of the reason was he didn't slap Matasar down and Lombardi always told me that he was very much in favor of what I did.
- P: He told me that, too, and he thinks very highly of you, very highly.
- L: I appreciate that, and I think highly of him.
- P: As recently as three weeks ago he said that to me in an Oral History interview. The naming goes through, and you have a celebration here in Pensacola at the restaurant, what was that?
- L: In the meantime, Lawton Chiles died that December before. We had a nice event, Reubin Askew came in, John Lombardi and Rick Matasar were there. Paul Robell came, and it was a really, really nice affair. I had some friends of mine that came in, it was a real nice affair. Then, of course, all hell broke loose with Matasar.
- P: Where was the restaurant, what was the restaurant?
- L: Skopelo's. The same restaurant [where] I agreed to give the money.
- P: So this was a luncheon meeting?
- L: A luncheon meeting, and I felt real good. My brother David, I designated part of that money to put a chair in the David H. Levin Chair of Matrimonial Law, and they've hired an outstanding professor, Woodruff, I think, is her name, to head that.
- P: So part of the \$10 million, part of it went to this chair?
- L: Went there. Then, half a million dollars went to the Reubin Askew [Institute].
- P: So half a million dollars went to the Askew, \$1 million went to David's chair.
- L: \$1.5 million I believe.
- P: So that's \$2 million. \$8 million is left for the law school.

L: All of it indirectly is the law school.

P: The Askew Institute is not.

L: I think it is because I think that was designated to come – part of it is at the University of Florida, part of it is at FSU.

P: David Colburn is [the director].

L: Find out, I'm not sure. My understanding was it was going to come within the auspices of the University of Florida.

P: I didn't realize FSU had anything to do with this.

L: Maybe it doesn't. Maybe it's the University of Florida, but it _____.

P: I think it's all University of Florida. When Matasar left, did that come as a surprise to you?

L: Yes.

P: How were you notified?

L: He called me.

P: What did he say?

L: He said, "You're going to be hearing that I'm resigning or something and it has nothing to do with you, I don't want you to feel that way." He's going to teach somewhere, and then of course he got the job at New York Law School. He called me, and I called some people in New York for him. Then, Jon Mills [current dean, Levin College of Law] came on. He's done a great, great job fund-raising.

P: Did you hear from Lombardi at the time of the Matasar resignation?

L: No, I don't think so. I'm trying to remember, I just don't remember.

P: Let me go to this Reubin Askew thing. I know David was very supportive of it right from the very beginning, and that's because of this relationship with Reubin Askew.

L: Yes.

- P: Has he left money for Reubin Askew in his will?
- L: I think it's going to the University of Florida College of Law.
- P: All of his money going to the college of law?
- L: Yes.
- P: Was there support for the medical school? Somewhere along the line, I had the idea that David had given money to the medical school.
- L: He had in the past. I think there's a small piece.
- P: You and David have been very supportive of the University of Florida. How about the other members of your family?
- L: All five of us are graduates of the University of Florida. Five brothers with all degrees.
- P: Yeah, but I'm asking about their support.
- L: Oh, financially? Herman couldn't afford it and Stanley couldn't afford it. Allen, up until this point, could not afford it. The only two that could actually afford to support it...
- P: I don't mean to talk about giving millions of dollars...
- L: I don't even know if they are members the alumni association. I think Stanley did give like \$1,000 when one of his professors, Freeland or one of them died, or maybe he committed \$5,000.
- P: Have you given up now on the university?
- L: What do you mean?
- P: \$10 million is a lot of money. Did that wipe you clean for your...
- L: I gave them \$250,000 last year over and above that to help towards the building campaign.
- P: Is this for the building? The Lawton Chiles building?
- L: Yes.

P: Have you been active in fund-raising on that?

L: Yeah. I got Bob Montgomery to give, I got a lot of the tobacco lawyers, too.

P: Is that going to be a library or is that going to be a classroom building or what?

L: I'm not even sure. [End of Tape C, side 6] ...I've been to dinner with Mrs. Chiles. Lawton stayed at my home a couple of times, I believe she did, too. [interruption]

P: There were a lot of people who were unhappy with the critics, and one of those was Ray Ehrlich.

L: I heard.

P: You know Ray?

L: Just to have met him. He was a Pi Lam, and he was down and I received the Big Pi Award which is from a fraternity standpoint, and he came in for that. That was from Tampa. Back for the Chiles family, I worked rather closely with Mrs. Chiles and the Chiles Foundation, and I guess you'd call her Rhea Junior, which was running the Lawton and Rhea Chiles Children and Mother, Mothers and Children Foundation in Tampa. I also got the young Mrs. Chiles to do some fund-raising for the University of Florida College of Law in regard to the Lawton Chiles.

P: Are you on that committee?

L: No.

P: And so you're not co-chairing it or anything?

L: No.

P: You gave your check of \$250,000.

L: It's \$50,000 a year for five years.

P: And you encouraged some of your tobacco lawyer friends to do the same thing.

L: Yeah.

P: How much have they raised, do you know?

L: I think it was right at \$6 million, which was matched by the University and matched by the legislature, and it got about \$22 million for the building.

P: They haven't started building yet.

L: I think they have groundbreaking in the fall.

P: You're not on any advisory committees or anything for the law school?

L: No.

P: One thing we have not talked about in regard to this naming and the criticisms that came up is the role that anti-Semitism has played. Did it play a role?

L: Yeah.

P: Fred Levin is a Jewish name.

L: You'll have to ask Rick Matasar. Somebody called, and I don't know who, it was a rather prominent individual. Have you done an Oral History of Matasar?

P: No.

L: And you probably won't either.

P: We won't, he's gone.

L: Yeah. They did not realize that he was Jewish.

P: They didn't know he was Jewish?

L: Matasar, who had ever heard that? It isn't Goldberg.

P: When he first came, he became actively involved in the Jewish community.

L: But somebody, some big shot in the Bar Association made the comment to him in regard to putting a Jewish name on a law school not realizing that Rick was Jewish. There are a number of people who believe that there is certainly more than just a touch of anti-Semitism. I don't.

P: You don't think that anti-Semitism exists?

L: I don't. I think it's anti-Fred Levin.

P: But Fred Levin is Jewish.

L: I know, but it gets back to all of the things that were happening about that time. I held, at one time, the record for wrongful death of a house wife, wrongful death of a wage earner, wrongful death of a child, the highest personal injury verdict in Florida. Here I was getting all these damn verdicts up here in a conservative area that, in addition, and this perception of being this great political power who all he's got to do is cross his legs and he can get anything done through Lawton Chiles or W.D. Childers and Reubin Askew.

P: Was that true?

L: No. Actually, if you really analyze it...

P: So you're denying that you were a political power.

L: The perception was, and I enjoyed the perception because it gave me the image and things of that nature. Also, one of the major things in the country was this Roy Jones, Jr. situation. I was the National Manager of the Year in boxing in 1995 or 1996 or something, and all of a sudden at the United Nations, he's in school, there's a chief, and just everything was going on. You can imagine what these people... all this is happening all about the same time.

P: Lombardi thought that anti-Semitism played a very specific role in the...

L: I never saw it. I thought it was jealousy, and I thought these guys would come home at night, the big social type guys... Anyhow, I just felt there was a lot of jealousy. I can tell you this, I went to one University of Florida function other than the beautiful function that they, the dinner – Matasar was there then.

P: Matasar was there that night because we were there.

L: Did he come back or had he...

P: He had not left yet.

L: That's right, he had been notified.

P: Not yet, I don't think.

L: That was fall of 2000.

P: A little bit earlier than that, 2000 or 1999 maybe. It's been three years.

L: Alright, so it was 1999.

P: Matasar had not been notified yet. Everything was swimming along beautifully.

L: I just felt that it was basically jealously. I was going to tell you, I attended one University of Florida event, and that would have been in the annual meeting in West Palm Beach.

P: You went to that meeting? The annual meeting, the President's Council meeting?

L: In the year 2000, in June.

P: That was, I think, 1999 at the Breakers [Hotel], maybe?

L: I think it was 2000.

P: 2000, okay.

L: Lombardi introduced me, and I remember sitting there thinking, "Holy crap," because this was black tie, all of the elite in the University of Florida, not lawyers I mean, but University of Florida, and I got a standing ovation. It was not just a little tap, tap on the hands. I thought it was meant and I felt very good about it. 1999 or 2000, one or the other.

P: Doesn't make any difference, we can easily document that.

L: Anyhow, I felt good about that.

P: It was a successful recognition.

L: I thought so.

P: I wanted to talk to you in addition to the law school business about some of your other philanthropy, I want to get that on the record. What is this foundation that you and [Papantonio]...

L: Martin came to me. Martin saw the future of this firm heading into mass torts. He realized that Mike Papantonio was going to lead that image, that field.

P: Mike Papantonio, I know, is a partner at the firm, who is he?

L: He's on the fourth floor, runs the mass torts. He's out front.

P: He's a Pensacola man?

L: No, he grew up somewhere.

P: Not from the University of Florida?

L: No. At the time the tobacco money came in, Martin felt that we ought to set up a foundation. Mike was starting to do very well, and Martin felt that it would be [interruption]

P: This foundation that you set up, why did you do it with him?

L: With Papantonio?

P: Why not a family foundation?

L: This was Martin's idea, and it's very, very bright. Martin saw Mike Papantonio as the future rainmaker. Mike is going to be that.

P: What do you mean by the rainmaker?

L: The guy is going to go out and bring business into the firm. Whereas that was me and still, Mike has got enough sense to use me as that King Kong who doesn't show up very often, but oh, if he does. Anyhow, Mike has started to make good money. Basically, Martin suggested we call it the Levin and Papantonio Family Foundation, Mike's very charitable.

P: Mike's not in the family.

L: No.

P: Is it a family foundation or not?

L: The money comes from Martin, me, and Mike Papantonio.

P: \$2 million?

L: Started with and, then, there's probably been maybe another half a million, million dollars.

P: What's the money used for?

- L: \$500,000 is going to the Kid's House here in Pensacola. It's a central location for abused children so they don't have to go through ten or fifteen different agencies, they'll all be contained in one.
- P: Psychologically, ethical and all of those things.
- L: Yeah, and it's good.
- P: Is it in existence already?
- L: I was having a drink last night and the guy in charge of it told me they're signing the papers today to buy it. \$250,000 to the children's cancer camp. A lot of different, \$5,000, \$3,000.... Martin would be able to tell you.
- P: So it's a three man operation?
- L: Actually, the foundation, I've never been to one of their meetings. I don't guess I'm on it. Martin is on it, Flack Logan, Sue Strawn from channel WEAR television, different people around the community.
- P: Not necessarily people just in the firm?
- L: Oh no, no. They may turn down an awful lot of people on different things. They do a great job.
- P: What else in addition to that? You've supported activities at the University of West Florida. Give me that list.
- L: Basically it was the Abe Levin professorship in, I don't even know, humanities.
- P: How much was that money?
- L: It's over \$300,000. It was a piece of property I gave to them.
- P: You gave them the piece of property which they sold?
- L: Yeah.
- P: And that was matched by the state or hasn't that happened yet?
- L: I don't know.
- P: Usually a chair is \$600,000.

L: No, this wasn't a chair, it was a professorship.

P: Is that your one and only gift to West Florida?

L: \$1,000 here. Of any substance, yes.

P: What have you done for Florida State University?

L: Basically at the same time I gave the piece of property to UWF, I gave property to the Florida State University Foundation. I'm a member of their President's Council at Florida, UWF, and FSU.

P: What is the draw for Tallahassee for you? You're not an alumnus of that institution.

L: Bernie Sliger.

P: Personal relationship?

L: Yes. We developed a relationship. Actually he testified for me in *Thorshaw v. L&N Railroad* as an economist. I had met him at a Board of Trustees meeting for the state. They were doing an event at the Ramada here in Pensacola, and the University of West Florida was hosting the Board of Regents. They were doing a Mark Twain review, some guy acting like Mark Twain, and it was boring as hell. They had a bar in the back of the room, I didn't know Bernie Sliger from Adam. The only reason I was there, I came right after the University of West Florida, I gave the professorship, so I had to be there, Morris Marks, no, it was the president before that, Robinson or something, wanted me to be there. I'm at the back of the room at the bar, and this little sort of stout guy is there at the bar and it was a Sunday. We're having a drink and he said, "Is there any place in town open on a Sunday we can get away from here?" I said, "You and I got the same idea." We were right by the kitchen, and we just snuck out through the kitchen and left. The President of Florida State, that's how I met him.

P: And you're meeting him for the first time?

L: Never knew who he was. So we went off and we went to drinking and we really tied one on. And he can drink. Anyhow, that's how I met Bernie Sliger and then, as a result of that, he testified for me in 1980, 1981 at the L&N trial, and from there, anytime Florida/FSU football games there, I would go sit in his box.

P: But Sandy [D'Alemberte] is the president now.

L: And a good friend, but not as close as Bernie and I.

P: So you get invited to the president's box in Tallahassee, also.

L: Yeah. Through SmartCOP had become a good friend of the School of Criminology, Dan Maier Catkin, who's head of the School of Criminology.

P: What do you do in a major way as far as the City of Pensacola? Any of the cultural events here? Do you support those? I'm talking about big money.

L: No.

P: But small support.

L: Eh, you know. Just piddling. I do for like cerebral palsy, cancer, children's issues, things like that. But as far as the symphony, and the ballet...

P: When you say for cancer and the children, what are you talking about? A \$5,000 check? More or less?

L: Children's Cancer Society, \$250,000.

P: That's a big support.

L: Yeah.

P: Would you say that you're the largest philanthropist in Pensacola?

L: Yeah.

P: You would?

L: Yes.

P: In terms of the dollars that you distribute annually?

L: Yes. I'm far from the wealthiest guy.

P: I understand, but you answered the question. You figure you're the most generous in many ways.

L: Yes.

P: What do you do for the Jewish community?

- L: My daughter is the president of the synagogue, this is her second year, and the two years before that my son-in-law was.
- P: Who is your daughter?
- L: Marci.
- P: Marci and Ross?
- L: Marci and Ross. Marci Goodman, who's circuit judge now.
- P: Is there anything named for your father at the synagogue?
- L: The big dining room or whatever you call it, the meeting room. There's a big star out front that I donated. I donated \$15,000 to put it there, and it's supposed to be the Abe Levin... I've never seen a plaque. In fact, I mentioned to Ross, I said, "Ross, you know I gave this money," I just gave them \$60,000 a couple of weeks ago.
- P: You were the largest gift to the synagogue?
- L: Oh, yes.
- P: What do you do for United Jewish Appeal?
- L: I'm the largest giver.
- P: What is your annual?
- L: \$20,000, somewhere around there.
- P: They just had an Israeli emergency campaign. Were you involved in that?
- L: They've been to see me. What I did, instead, was gave \$60,000 to the synagogue here, and I figured just to make sure they're still going to be around years from now. I'm more concerned there than I am with Israel. I can do more for Israel through some friendships than donating money.
- P: I'm going to jump around for some things now that I want to make sure that I get onto the [tape]. Tell me about that penthouse. We were there one time, beautiful facility.
- L: E.W. Hopkins who was president of First Mutual, they had loaned the money for the Mariner, which was a condo in Destin, and they had this half of the top floor that...

Anyhow, he was going to sell it to me at their cost and I, as usual, not realizing what I got into, I went ahead and bought the darn thing.

P: Was this you or the firm buying it?

L: Me. I was just going to do something.

P: You didn't know what, but something.

L: And I hired decorators, and it got to be very, very expensive. Fortunately, somebody came along and bought it out.

P: What did you use it for?

L: Family, politics mainly, fund-raisers, friends.

P: Was W.D. Childers one of the supporters of this acquisition? Being a politician I thought he might be able to use it for politics.

L: No, I never used it in that way. He showed up for some of the events like we had an event for Gary Hart, Bob Hope spent a week there, he and his wife, several movie stars. It was available for big shots who came in, things like that.

P: Sam Proctor visited there. He didn't spend the night, but he was there.

L: Well, he was able to come through.

P: Brought in by Mark Proctor. You said that you're not involved except as a supporter for this new law building project at the University of Florida, \$250,000, \$50,000 a year over five years. Beyond that, you're not involved in it?

L: No. It will be the Lawton Chiles whatever it is at the Fredric G. Levin College of Law.

P: The fund-raisers aren't after you to get after people?

L: They've raised the money, it's done.

P: It's in the house already?

L: Oh yeah, the money's in the house. It was approved by the legislature. They're designing the building now.

P: Tell me about your own home, that in itself I understand, is a story.

L: It was just like the penthouse. I'm very happy, I'm at my house. It was in the late 1980s, my house that Marci and Ross now live in on Menendez where the kids were raised. I was very pleased, I didn't need anything, and Dean Baird, the guy who was the bookie, had told me that a developer in Pensacola was having a lot of trouble, it was in the 1980s.

P: Is this Tom Underwood?

L: Tom Underwood.

P: He was the developer?

L: He was the developer, and he had built the house. Beautiful exterior, it was horrible inside. What happened was he was trying to get it finished in time to get a certificate of occupancy to protect the homestead from all of his creditors. Anyhow, Dean told me that – and this was after the fact, after he'd gotten away with his bankruptcy or whatever it was – “that the house was for sale and you could buy it for a song, and why don't you fix it up, you turn around and sell it you'll make a fortune.” I bought it and bought a little piece of property next to it, and brought in the same decorators. All of a sudden, it got out of hand. It was just my wife and I in this 20,000 square foot home, beautiful home, so we've been there ever since.

P: Do you still have that Picasso?

L: Actually I gave that to Martin, and he's got it in his home in Cambridge. I've got a Dali and I've got maybe six or seven original LeRoy Neimans. LeRoy and I are good, good friends, and he's a world famous sports artist, contemporary artist.

P: So you're an art collector?

L: Only with Neiman.

P: But you do have a Dali.

L: I have a Dali.

P: Authentic?

L: Oh, yes.

P: A lot of Dali's are not.

L: No, this is.

- P: What happened to the house, I remember there was a hurricane that did some damage?
- L: The house I'm living in, hurricane came through, wiped out the bottom floor. We redid it, put in a new dock, new downstairs. They're still working on it to this week.
- P: Were you not an antique car collector that got damaged?
- L: The antique cars, all but one got destroyed.
- P: Are you out of that business now?
- L: I still have the Jackie Kennedy and Aristotle Onassis. It's a Rolls-Royce limo that they used. Aristotle used it from 1952 to his death, I think, in 1975 in Monte Carlo and Paris. When she got married, it became hers. It's a limo with just two seats in the back. I've got that, it's being redone and ought to be back here next month.
- P: So the hurricane that did the damage was Hurricane Erin in August of 1995?
- L: No, Opal. After Erin, a couple of days after Erin, I had air conditioning, and I had my father come over, and that's the night he died, he died at my home.
- P: I wanted you to tell me about that for the record, about your father's death. You were all together that night.
- L: It was a couple of three days after the hurricane. I think it was on Friday or Saturday, I'm not sure.
- P: Were you gathering there because of the light situation?
- L: The lights, and I had staying over my brother Allen and his wife. Fred Vigodsky and his wife, my father, David did not come, Stanley did not come over, Martin came over, my son. Daddy cooked salami and eggs, and we all sat around and ate salami and eggs and talked for a long time. He said, "Well, I'm going home tomorrow and 6:00." I said, "No you're not, wait around here." "No, I'm going home at 6:00 tomorrow," he kept saying that. A little after 6:00, the alarms went off all over the house, I jumped up and ran through the house looking. It was a fire alarm, the thing just kept saying danger, danger, danger. I ran all over the house and ran into the room he was staying in, and he was just laying there and he was dead.
- P: On the bed?

- L: On the bed. Covers still over him, his right hand was out, and his mouth was open. Never even had gotten out of the covers.
- P: He died in his sleep.
- L: Died in his sleep.
- P: And the reason for the alarm?
- L: Never know.
- P: That's kind of strange.
- L: Yeah.
- P: So you discovered your father.
- L: Yes.
- P: How old was he when he died?
- L: Eighty-eight.
- P: So he'd lived a long life here.
- L: Yeah, and he was driving. In fact, I drove him to my house, told him to leave his car here. He had driven down. He was driving the day before he died. Lived by himself. Every Sunday morning we'd have breakfast, mullet, and grits, cheese toast, and sliced tomatoes. Every Sunday morning. All the kids would come over and have, friends in advance.
- P: The family revolved around him?
- L: Yeah.
- P: He was the focal point?
- L: He was the focal point, yes.
- P: Was your father an affluent man?
- L: [When] he died, his estate was \$1.5 million.
- P: So he collected a sizeable amount. I suspect much of that went to the synagogue.

L: No, that was one of the surprising things. I don't think there were any charities. I think a lot of it was very similar to my will, and that is I'm going to do during my lifetime.

P: That's a smart thing.

L: I'm going to enjoy it.

P: Enjoy the giving.

L: Enjoy the giving.

P: Your father was very close to his grandchildren?

L: Yeah.

P: I want to ask you about the television and radio again. How did all of that come about?

L: BLAB.

P: What does that stand for?

L: Basic Local Audience Broadcasting.

P: It seems strange. It came about because of the advertising?

L: Yeah, that's how it started, and, then, it became a business.

P: Start from the beginning.

L: I was looking to try to get the law firm to do some advertising.

P: Was that considered undignified?

L: Yeah, they said that basically everybody knows the Levin Middlebrooks firm at that time, and everybody would always come to us. I said, "That's not the case, the people who are advertising are getting business." When Larry Lewis at Cox Cable mentioned to W.D. Childers he needed programming, I came up with the idea we'd do a call-in talk law show. At that time, I was representing Gulf Power and Gulf Power had a little studio we could use and we microwaved from the studio. We started off Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 7:00 to 8:00, and, then, had a guy one night a week, Ronnie Joyce do a sports show. Then, five nights a week, we finally started doing Dr. Frank Biasco, University of West Florida, doing Around the Town or something and people

would call in. It started to generate business and finally we got other people to do [interruption]. It seemed like it could generate [more business]. More and more people started talking about it, so the firm had been doing it, and it was costing a little bit of money. You had to have people there. It ended up, I took it over and got Fred Vigodsky to come run it.

P: Fred's been in a lot of different businesses, hasn't he?

L: Yeah, got him out of the carpet business which he hated.

P: From dresses to carpets to T.V.

L: This has made money every year.

P: Does Fred still operate it?

L: Oh, yeah.

P: Did you also branch off into radio?

L: About the same time, a good friend of mine, Don Schroeder, had found religion, came back to Pensacola. He was a Grammy Award winning record producer. He came back to Pensacola and got a little radio station and explained to me that we could take this little AM radio station, and there was something called an AM, FM grant deal in Congress, and we could get the FM license. I put the money in, and we had a little Contemporary Christian radio station that eventually did lead to me getting another license that I sold, but today that little radio station is CNN radio here in Pensacola, and it's doing quite well.

P: How did my Mark get involved as a T.V. star? Mark Proctor.

L: Just as all of the guys here at the office started doing the shows, and it became very popular. Mark would walk down the street and people would recognize him.

P: When you go into restaurants, people will think, "You look familiar."

L: Yeah.

P: I want you to start at the beginning and tell me about Roy Jones. That's been an important part of your life.

L: And it's led to a bunch of different things.

P: Who is Roy Jones?

L: Roy Jones, Jr. was a local amateur boxer [who] went to the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, Korea. Absolutely destroyed all of his competitors including a South Korean in the finals. Somehow or another they cheated Roy out of it and gave the gold medal to the South Korean. It was very embarrassing, it was a terrible thing for the Olympics, it was said to be the worst decision ever made in amateur boxing. Roy came back to town. His father, a very domineering person, came to see me, wanted to know if I would represent Roy.

P: His father had been his trainer?

L: Yes. I told him I loved boxing, but I didn't know anything about the sport, the business. He said that's the reason he came to see me, he'd help me learn.

P: He just came out of the blue, then?

L: Yeah. So I started representing him.

P: Had you seen Roy Jones fight?

L: I'd seen him on television in the Olympics. I started representing Roy along with my brother Stanley. That would have been actually in the spring of 1989.

P: When you say you represented him, how does a lawyer represent a boxer?

L: It's a like a manager type. Negotiate fights for him.

P: In other words you negotiate a fight, a place, a time, the money end of it.

L: The promoter does that. It started we were the promoter and the manager. [We] got introduced around to some very prominent people in the television networks.

P: Sports people?

L: Sports people, national people.

P: Had Roy Jones, now he had fought in the Olympics, did he continue boxing?

L: Yeah, then he became a professional.

P: And you as the lawyer, you helped arrange these bouts.

- L: Bouts and prices, and put my money and Stanley's money into. Slow, but surely, Roy became by 1993, within three or four years, he had become a world champion. Then, by 1994, there were those who said that pound for pound, in other words he's 160 pounds at the time, that he was the greatest boxer that ever lived.
- P: When did you come aboard?
- L: Right after 1988, right after the Olympics.
- P: And you've stayed with him ever since right?
- L: Yes, still with him.
- P: What does a boxer need money for?
- L: We were doing our own promotions. We were having to fight here in Pensacola and might do 600 people at the gate at \$10 a head, that's \$6,000. It'd cost money to pay the opponents, the place, and everything else.
- P: It's an expensive sport?
- L: Expensive sport until he won in 1994, and at that point I negotiated a contract for him with HBO, a multimillion dollar contract, and it's been renegotiated.
- P: He's the world champion by that time?
- L: Yes, and he's still considered to be the greatest boxer in the world today.
- P: Tell me about his relationship with his father. I read something about a dog incident?
- L: Yeah. I kept trying to push him toward a championship, his father didn't want him to, and he was holding him back.
- P: Why?
- L: I don't know.
- P: Was he an autocratic...?
- L: Yes. I think he didn't want his son to go on to become... and I think he may have had a little fear that maybe his son was going to get beaten, and as long as he had Stanley and Fred Levin putting the money up, that this is a pretty good situation for him.

P: Were you making any money out of this?

L: No, no. We were getting deeper and deeper in. We were throwing good money out of the bag.

P: Tell me about the father and son's relationship.

L: Their relationship was such that the son was starting to get upset. They lived next door to each other, and Roy junior had a dog and the dog bit his sister on the arm. Roy junior was gone, and Roy senior came out with a shot gun and killed Roy's dog. Then, Roy said, "That's it," and he left him and not only moved away, he said that he was through. He did not talk to his daddy for several years. We still handled him.

P: Did the father have any investment in this that he was drawing in anything?

L: No. Very, very stubborn too.

P: He'd been his trainer, however.

L: Yeah. We brought in another trainer that Roy had known in the Olympics, and we, then, got these big fights for him, negotiated this thing. Stanley and I were national co-managers of the year in boxing, national, 1995, 1996.

P: Where were you boxing now? Not in little ole Pensacola?

L: Oh, no. Las Vegas, Atlantic City, New York City, Madison Square Garden.

P: Big time.

L: Big time. Los Angeles, Reno, Lake Tahoe. All the big events, we were there.

P: Were you negotiated with the national NBC...

L: Actually HBO was what we eventually ended up doing.

P: Pay-per-view.

L: And some Pay-per-view, we did all that.

P: This in some way, and I didn't understand it when I was reading the notes, became involved in some issue in Congress with Senator [John] McCain [Republican, Arizona].

L: Senator McCain, he loves Roy Jones. He thinks he's the greatest fighter that ever lived. He's a boxing fan, and he was upset about Don King and Bob Arum [boxing promoter] and those guys taking over.

P: Taking over the boxing?

L: Yeah. Basically, as promoters, they do, and so both Roy and I went and testified in front of his committee, and they passed the Mohammed Ali Boxing Reform Act, which has gone a little way towards cleaning up the sport.

P: Is the sport kind of a crooked sport?

L: Yeah.

P: Because of the people promoting it?

L: Yeah.

P: Betting on it?

L: No. They can determine who fights who, and if you don't side with them, you don't get to the championships.

P: Where is Roy Jones, Jr. today?

L: I'm sure he's here in Pensacola.

P: He lives in Pensacola?

L: Yes.

P: And you and Stanley continued to...

L: Stanley quit a couple of years ago. He just felt like there was a personal situation that he was... Stanley did this out of love for Roy. He knew Roy long before I did. Stanley's son and Roy were in Boys Club together, and Stanley was doing all of this out of love, and I was doing it not for money so much, but as image. This goes along with the same, "God knows, here's this guy, he's the greatest lawyer in the world, he's a politician, and he's the national boxing manager, what the hell have we got there?" All of this. The publicity was incredible. Any sports fan knew Fred Levin manages Roy Jones, Jr. There were some other champions we took on at the same time.

P: In other words, you went beyond just Roy? You had others?

L: Yeah.

P: I've heard the term "owned."

L: That is not the case, I don't own a boxer. I was getting a piece of the action for negotiating.

P: Are you the main person as far as Roy Jones is concerned?

L: Today Roy has basically taken over himself. He still pays me to go through the contracts.

P: So for arranging a fight, Roy Jones arranges them himself or you do it?

L: Basically, he does his own.

P: But you go to the fights?

L: Yes.

P: Do you know when he's scheduled this year?

L: Supposedly the first week in September.

P: Is Roy Jones a wealthy man?

L: I don't really know. He's made an awful lot of money, but he spends a lot of money. I think that had a lot to do with why Stanley quit, too. Stanley thought Roy needed to be putting away a lot of money for the future.

P: Does Roy take care of himself physically?

L: Oh yeah, he's not a drinker or a druggie.

P: What's he spend money on?

L: He's got cars, he's got three or four homes, he flies wherever he goes in a private jet and those kind of things. It gets to be expensive.

P: So what is the future of Roy Jones' relationship with Fred Levin?

L: I'm sure I'll continue to be, basically, his lawyer and basically to look at his contracts, things of that nature.

P: What is the Square Ring... [End of tape D, side 7].

L: ...The corporation that Roy Jones owns totally now. That is the promoter. It's like Don King. Square Ring is Roy's promoter, Don King is promoter for some other fighters, and Top Rank which is Bob Arum is promoter. Anyhow, this is Roy's promotion company now.

P: Sounds like he's kind of shrewd. Smart?

L: Yeah, Roy is.

P: Is there a Roy Jones Gym here or anything?

L: Yeah.

P: Is that where he trains?

L: Yes.

P: People can go watch him?

L: Ehh, yes.

P: What else about Roy Jones should we say?

L: As a result to representing Roy, I got a call one day from some people in Washington wanting to know if I'd be interested in representing another world champion and [I] said, "Yes." The people brought in a guy named Ike Quartey. He was the world welterweight champion, he came from the country of Ghana making about \$65,000 a fight. I took him over, and within a year, got him a fight for \$4.8 million.

P: That's a lot of money.

L: That's a lot of money. He fought a guy named Oscar De La Hoya, which was a big name. Lost the fight. Anyhow, right before that fight, I didn't realize the people who surrounded Ike Quartey were the relatives of the royal family of Ghana in Africa, a very democratic country. This would have been maybe right after the law school thing.

P: It was right after the law school.

L: And they gave me a call and said they had nominated me to become a chief in the Country of Ghana.

P: Because of your relationship to the boxer?

L: To the boxer and just the way I handled the whole thing.

P: But you had never been to Ghana.

L: No, and still hadn't.

P: And you had not met anybody from there up until this time except the boxer.

L: And then what they did, I went to the United Nations...

P: You were invited to go to the United Nations.

L: And they had a ceremony they called an instoolment.

P: Did you treat this as a joke?

L: I first I thought it was like becoming a Colonel in the Florida Highway Patrol. It wasn't quite that way. In this particular thing, there were only two other Americans that had ever, and one was Shirley Temple Black, and the other was Barbara Jordan, I believe, from Texas, and Fred Levin.

P: Don't you think that's kind of strange, when you think about it, that Fred Levin would be made a chief in this tribe, this organization, this government?

L: Yeah.

P: Did you wonder if they had an ulterior motive?

L: I really think a lot of it, and also I got a commendation from the Black Caucus. You go back through and you look through that career, the career with George Stark, Nathaniel Dedmond, Roy Jones, Jr.

P: But they would not have known all of the George Starks.

L: I'm not sure what they knew and what they didn't know, but they knew how I treated them. I didn't know who they were, but they were treated... They came to Pensacola right after the call, they stayed at my home. It's how you treat people, I guess, I don't know.

P: You must have been flattered by this, this recognition.

L: Oh, yeah, and when I realized the seriousness of it, it was big time.

P: You went to New York.

L: Yeah, and in the meantime, through Roy Jones, this would have been 1994, 1995, LeRoy Neiman – the reason I thought about this was he was at the United Nations and did some artwork, I'm not sure you're familiar with him...

P: I know who you're talking about.

L: He's an outstanding artist.

P: Famous artist.

L: His work would sell for as much as \$1 million a painting now. I called him out of the clear blue sky, love his work. He didn't know who I was, and I said I want him to do a picture of Roy Jones, Jr. and he agreed to do it. Then we met, must have been 1995, and have become very, very good friends. Every time I go to New York, we go out to dinner, and he's been in my home, stayed in my home. When he comes in to New Orleans he'll call and say, "Come on over". So he was at the United Nations. I was just thinking of the people.

P: Who all went to this affair?

L: A lot of the law firm, a lot of Ghanians.

P: You had to charter a plane or something?

L: I think we did, I'm not sure the firm did. The head of HBO, some people from NBC.

P: Ceremony was at the United Nations building?

L: United Nations, they had a nice...

P: I have a date here, January 22, 1999.

L: That would have been it. Then, I think a couple of weeks later, I came back to Pensacola and got the whatchamacallit, well I know I did, within two or three weeks came of the luncheon, we had the University of Florida law school, everything coming together.

P: What became your name as the chief?

L: I have it in there, I'll go get it.

P: Your title as chief is Nana Ofori Agyeman.

L: The First.

P: The First. I hope they have a short nickname for you.

L: Actually, after I was instooled, they actually, I mean, the Ghanians came up and they bowed, and they would back [up]... [you] never turn your back on a chief. After I die, Martin will become chief, and, then, after Martin, his son Dustin.

P: So it's an inheritable title.

L: It's an inheritable title. It will always be. He will be two, Dustin will be three.

P: Where in Africa is Ghana?

L: Ghana is on the Gold Coast. A democratic... there's no coups or civil wars or anything.

P: Is it a productive country?

L: Yes.

P: They've invited you over there, I'm sure.

L: Yeah, but I got so many things going now. Eventually I will get there.

P: You'll be a superstar coming in.

L: Oh, gees.

P: The chief is here.

L: Yeah.

P: So you began taking this seriously after the event in New York. What did you do at the United Nations? Who was there besides the firm and the _____?

L: There were a bunch of celebrities mainly from the boxing world. You have to keep in mind, the Secretary General, Kofi Annan is a Ghanian.

P: Was this followed by a luncheon or a reception or something?

L: Yes, there was a luncheon right afterwards.

P: So everybody had a wonderful time.

L: Yeah, we really did.

P: I saw the pictures of you.

L: With my outfit on?

P: With your outfit on. They had one ready for you?

L: Oh yeah, they wrapped me. I had my own aids who...

P: So you didn't have to bring that up from Pensacola.

L: Oh, no, they did all of that.

P: Do you hear from them now?

L: I just got through writing a letter to the American consulate to get visas for a number of Ghanians that are coming to the country that needed some kind of something from me. I wrote a three page letter where they could get visas.

P: Let's talk about some of your strengths and some of your weaknesses. What are some of your weaknesses? You're not a major drinker, you're not an alcoholic.

L: No, but I'm too quick to say something and, then, regret making remarks.

P: Your mouth gets ahead of you?

L: Yeah. I can't bring myself to hurt somebody, and you say, "Well, that's not a weakness," well it really is a weakness. I've never been able to fire anybody. People who, "Oh, God, I should've gotten rid of them." I have a number of hanger-ons. When I say hanger-ons, I'm talking about bums that really, it would drive you crazy. Without naming them, these are just people that I listened to and they feel very comfortable. I'm talking about one of them's retarded, two or three of them are the rottenest people in the world.

P: But you're unable to bar the door.

L: I cannot do it. Last night, I had the family over and Martin and the baby. There were, by the time everybody was together, probably twenty, twenty-five people, and had a maid, a

cook that used to be with me that did the cooking, and the kids are just, “Oh, gosh daddy, you got to hire her and get rid of the one we’ve got.” The one that I’ve got there just sits around and reads the Bible all day, and cooks, and I just don’t have the heart to get rid of her. That’s a terrible, terrible weakness.

P: You’ve got your own social security system.

L: Yeah. I’ve got thirteen employees at the house, at my house.

P: Kind of falling over each other.

L: It’s a big house, but still, there’s no need for that. I’d say that’s my biggest fault.

P: Are you still smoking?

L: I only smoke when I drink. I was able to get that.

P: Then that means you have to limit drinking?

L: What happened is, and that would mean maybe two or three days a week I would smoke. Since I got involved with SmartCOP, I meet every night, and the CEO, I’m the majority stockholder.

P: What is [SmartCOP]?

L: A couple of years ago, three years ago, somebody came into my office, a guy named Wayne Stephenson. Wayne’s brother is Kay Stephenson, actually it’s George Kay, but everybody calls him Kay. Kay was the former head coach of the NFL Buffalo Bills, he was also NFL football player and went to the University of Florida. He actually was second team quarterback, he was under Steve Spurrier at Florida. Outstanding coach, but he’d been married for the second time and wanted to get away from football, come back to Pensacola. Wayne was the CPA for this small little company that just started. What it is, it’s software for police. What would happen is a police officer in a car could get on his computer and put the tag number in, and it could tell them everything about the car within seconds. If somebody called 911 and said, “Go to Mark Proctor’s house at such and such, he and his wife are having a fight,” it would immediately tell him the history of the house. Mark has got a gun, it would tell him everything. That’s how it started. It sounded like a great idea. Kay wanted to come home and Kay would run the company.

P: Did he know you already?

L: Yeah, I had known him. At the University of Florida, he was a few years younger than me. He's about 58, he's my brother Allen's age. We got to talking, and I put some money into it, and it was very similar to the Roy Jones, Jr. thing. I kept putting more money in. Kay's big buddy was Jack Kemp [unsuccessful Republican candidate for Vice-President; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, 1898-1993; U.S. Representative from New York, 1971-89]. They had played football together. He got Jack to come down here, Jack looked at it, Jack liked it, and Jack's big buddy was Bill Bennett [Washington, D.C. attorney]. Got him involved in it, and, then, some other relationships, Bill Bratton was the police commissioner of the City of New York. Actually, COMSTAT, he developed the computer for police. He's known, he wrote the book. Then, I knew Terdema Ussery, he was former president of Nike sports management. We got Bobby Kennedy, Jr. on through Mike Papantonio. So [it's] this great board, and I've put a lot of money into it. I'm basically the person funding it, it's probably right at \$10 million. It's more in the research and development. We're just going into homeland security. We do the Florida Highway Patrol, we just got the contract for Georgia Highway Patrol, it's going to develop. We teamed with some of the major companies in this country, Dell, Nextel, ACS, EDS, TRW, Qualcomm. We've got basically forty employees now, it's here in Pensacola. We're right on the edge of maybe hitting it real big time.

As a result of this, I have become very good friends with Jack Kemp. We've traveled together, a week ago Jack was staying in my house, maybe two weeks ago, a week before the trial. I've traveled with him, we've gone to football games together, boxing matches together. Wonderful guy, should have been President of the United States, brilliant. His problem is he can't do the sound byte. If you ever watched him, he's an economic genius on the economy, great friend of Israel, I mean great friend. Netanyahu [former Israeli Prime Minister] was in Dallas and my friend Terdema Ussery, the black guy, went up to him at this dinner. Terdema is, as I said, former president of Nike sports management, is the president of the Dallas National Basketball Association team, went up to him and he said, "Mr. Prime Minister, I am a good friend of a very good friend of yours." He said, "Who is that?" He said, "Jack Kemp." The Prime Minister said, "Jack is not a friend, he's a brother." Jack's been over to Israel several times, just got back. SmartCOP has been over there. If it wasn't for so much going on now, we'd be putting the SmartCOP concept in over there.

P: It sounds like it has a great future.

L: I think so, we think we have the Country of China. Getting back to smoking, I've got that kind of money in it. I am the majority stockholder in that company. There are a lot of spinoffs of that, things called red light enforcement. We do the software for cars running red lights, photograph the tag. This is available in many states, we think it will be available in Florida shortly. It's like a parking ticket except it's seventy-five bucks.

P: And you can pay it through the mail.

L: Pay it through the mail. There's a lot of potential there, a lot of future. Great friendships that I've developed as a result of this.

P: What role does Bobby Kennedy, Jr. play in that?

L: He's on the board. He and I are the only two Democrats on the board. Everybody else are Republicans.

P: I know Mark said he's met with him several times, he's never said what.

L: I don't know. We use his name. We worked with him on the law firm, Mark would be meeting with him in the law firm business. This has got nothing to do with that.

P: What about your smoking? We haven't finished that up.

L: Now, every night, I have drinks so I'll smoke about a half a pack.

P: A night?

L: Yeah.

P: Is that good or is that bad?

L: That's bad, but it's a heck of a lot better than smoking three or four packs, which I used to do years ago.

P: So you drink and you smoke.

L: Probably five nights a week. But the drinking is limited to two or three cocktails. I don't sit around and drink all night. I'll get there about 5:15, leave about 6:30.

P: When you say get there, you're not talking about home?

L: No, the cocktail... I'm going to start having Kay meeting me at my home, we both live in Gulf Breeze...

P: So you meet some place at a bar.

L: Yeah. And we talk business.

P: It's really kind of a business meeting in a way.

L: Yes. He's just bringing me up to date on what's happened.

P: Is he a smoker also?

L: Yes.

P: So you fall prey to the smoking thing.

L: Yes.

P: You've had no health problems, though, have you?

L: Not that I know of.

P: Are you watching that carefully?

L: I try.

P: I shouldn't call it a weakness at all because if it's what you like to do. You've always liked gambling. Is this going back to the time that you were a kid?

L: Yes, watching daddy play gin rummy.

P: So you think you inherited those gambling genes?

L: When I say I enjoy it, I used to enjoy it a lot more than I do now. It's an hour and a half away. I can go to Biloxi...

P: But do you do that?

L: Once every six, seven, eight months.

P: How about Las Vegas?

L: I went back [when] the law firm had a seminar there, and that was in November before _____.

P: Mike said that was very successful.

L: Yeah. Before that it was three years maybe before I had been. Then, when I'd been there, it was for a fight.

P: When you go to Las Vegas or Biloxi or whatever, what do you gamble?

L: I shoot dice.

P: Is Marilyn a...

L: Marilyn likes...that's the only thing she enjoys really, other than the kids, is she likes to play Black Jack.

P: So she goes with you occasionally?

L: She'll go, and basically, the first day or two, she stays in the room like she does at the house and gets room service, and, then, we'll go out for dinner one night and she'll play Black Jack that night. Then, the next night, she may play and then we go home the next day.

P: So gambling, we won't call it a weakness, we'll call it an activity.

L: It's an activity. I don't jeopardize money or life and limb.

P: You obviously can afford to gamble.

L: Right.

P: And you're not gambling millions of dollars.

L: Right.

P: Have you had large real estate investments here in the area? You're not with Allen on this Portofino are you?

L: I owned the property where the Portofino was. I owned, I'm not sure what percentage, but I think I owned probably, between me and the kids, I probably owned 50, 60 percent of those forty acres. Then, I sold them to Allen, or twenty-eight of the acres I sold to Allen and to a group which includes my children, Fred Vigodsky, these are the developers. These are the guys that are going to make big money out of it.

P: So you don't own any of that property or you own very little of it. You sold most of it to Allen and the rest of it to your kids and the others...

L: They're developing it. I own the property, but I sold it and I'll end up...

P: What about that apartment complex Mark lived in?

L: Triston. I don't think I had any...

P: Were you the developer of that?

L: No, Allen and Dean Baird. Then, Allen went off and started developing things on his own. My children have always been investors with him, and they've done well with it.

P: You've taken good care of your children, haven't you?

L: Financially, yes.

P: They're all well off?

L: Very well off.

P: Can you think of any other weaknesses that we can attach to Fred Levin's reputation? He's a gambler, he's a drinker, and he's a smoker.

L: What would have been my strength is, of course, that you work, work, work all the time. I don't have any hobbies. If I see something I want, I buy it right then, I don't waste a lot of time. I think that between politics, business – keep in mind, Orange State Life Insurance Company, Chick's Barbeque, the dress business, BLAB T.V., SmartCOP, Roy Jones. SmartCOP takes up a tremendous amount of my time. All of that, full time practice of law, the politics, the sports.

My wife suffered a great deal as a result of this. I was constantly the center of attention, I was constantly... it created real problems for her, and I think as the children grew and they became stars in their own right, they were all really good kids, and I think that even made things worse that, "What am I to do in life?" Just sat there and raised children and prepared the meals for "my husband when he'd come home." She suffered, I'm sure, emotionally, she's has all kinds of stomach problems, physical, and emotional problems. That clearly has been a problem. I don't have the kind of life that most people would have programmed for themselves. At the same time, I'm as happy as anybody I know, I'm as pleased as anybody I know. I do everything I can to make her life a pleasure. I've got thirteen employees at that house, and she's basically in charge of the house. She has like a secretary, it gives her something to say that, "I'm doing." Whether or not she accomplishes, I don't know. All of them love her, she takes care of their personal problems. It gives her something in life other than being the wife of Fred Levin and the mother of these kids.

P: The questions I want to ask you now deal with your family. Start with your children and go down the list. Give me their full names, their married names, their birth dates, place of birth, if you can remember it, and also their children, your grandchildren. Start with the oldest, Marci.

L: Marci Lynn Levin married Ross Goodman. Marci was born in Gainesville at the Alachua General Hospital on April Fool's Day 1960, while I was a law student. She has two children, Jacqueline who's fifteen, and Brenton who's twelve. Marci graduated law school at the University of Florida, did her undergraduate at Tulane, and, I believe, it was in economics or business. Got a law degree, was married to Ross.

P: When did she get her law degree?

L: I'm not sure. [She married] Ross Goodman from Miami.

P: Is that his full name to your knowledge?

L: Marci went to work for the state attorney's office in St. Petersburg. Then, when they moved to Pensacola, she started work for the state attorney's office in Pensacola. In November 2000, she was elected unopposed to the circuit judgeship. She's now the circuit judge in Santa Rosa County specializing in juvenile. She's also president of the synagogue and is a big leader in the community on children's rights.

P: And her husband Ross Goodman is also a graduate of the University of Florida law school.

L: He went to work with our law firm, and, recently, has retired or resigned to go teach at the University of West Florida.

P: Do they have a law school there?

L: No, he teaches paralegals. The next was Debra Lorraine who was born September 20, 1962 in Pensacola. She attended the University of Texas, and she got a masters degree in business administration at the University of Florida. She married Mark Dreyer and they have one child, Jacob. Mark's a lawyer, but they got a divorce. They both still share custody of Jake.

P: What does Debra do?

L: Debra teaches, actually. She's a computer genius, and she does private teaching at Bay Medical Center there, at the Air Force Base there. She goes in and teaches on an hourly basis. I was talking to her, she makes \$40, \$50 an hour. She lives in Panama City.

Then, my only son Martin was born December 11, 1964 in Pensacola. Martin was pretty much everything, president of the student body, vice president of the state, he was a big soccer player, made all "A"s and one "B+" in high school even though he was pretty wild. His SAT score was like 1000, got accepted into Stanford where he graduated with the highest honors in economics. Then, went to the University of Florida

law school where he graduated number one, then went to work for Judge Davis as a clerk in Miami, and, then, came up and started practicing with our law firm, was an outstanding lawyer. [He] married Terry. Martin and Terry just recently, in April of 2002, had their only child, a son, Dustin. In January of February of 2001, Martin probably is as good a trial lawyer or overall lawyer as I've ever seen, came in and announced he was very disheartened with the law practice. He applied and got accepted at the Harvard School of Divinity where he's attending now and thinking very seriously of also getting his masters in law, and then, he wants to teach.

P: You have academics in your family.

L: The fourth is Kimberly. Kimberly was born March 3, 1969, in Pensacola. Different from the other three, she started at the University of Florida and, then, moved over and graduated Florida State. She met and married Gary Brielmayer who was a student in the FSU School of Hotel and Restaurant Management. He moved through the hospitality industry with the Hyatt and the Hilton and others. He's now the food and beverage director at the San Destin Hilton in Destin, Florida. Kimberly also teaches computers when she has time, very similar to Debbie. They have two children. Tyler and Alexandra, Alexandra is a girl. The four children are very, very happy. Unfortunately, I'm sure a lot of this is from... let me put it this way, Martin and Marci, certainly, they're happy with their success. Marci said, "I can't believe I'm being paid to do this." Martin is, of course, extremely well off financially, Martin did tremendously well in the law firm. Kimberly and Debbie are extremely close, one lives in Destin and one lives in Panama City. They every day talk, every weekend they're together, and they bring the children together. I'm not sure how much of their happiness is because they're so financially secure. They can do whatever they want to. Both of them have two homes in the area. Debbie has two homes on the water, one that her ex-husband lives in, he was living in a real bad neighborhood, and she didn't want Jake to visit him there, so she had had that house up for sale, and she just stopped the sale, and told Mark to move in there and take care of expenses. Then she just recently built a home on the water, Kimberly likewise. They had a little home in Destin, and, then, they've just built on the water, and they've got their home up for sale.

P: Are you close to your children?

L: Yes. Like I said, they're very, very happy. That pretty much sums up the situation with the family. I think we've probably covered almost everything.

P: We have. I want to ask you some questions about yourself. Do you have any leisure time or is it all work, work, work?

L: It's pretty much work. That to me is...I wouldn't know what to do if I was just sitting around.

P: Are you a reader?

L: No.

P: You don't read books?

L: No.

P: Magazines?

L: Yes.

P: Newspapers?

L: Yes. Magazines and newspapers.

P: You go to the movies?

L: Only at home.

P: You're not a theater person.

L: No.

P: A music person?

L: No.

P: Do you work outside in the yard at all?

L: No. I workout.

P: You do have an exercise area in your house?

L: Yes.

P: Are you a boat person?

L: I've got two boats, but I don't drive either one.

P: They just sit there?

L: They basically sit there, and I let other people use them. Rarely, like once every two or three weeks, I might take the boat out to go somewhere with a bunch of people.

P: But mainly for decorative purposes.

L: Yes.

P: Are you an art collector?

L: Not really.

P: Are you an antique car collector?

L: No.

P: Are you a collector?

L: No.

P: Are you a happy man?

L: Very. Very happy.

P: And you're satisfied with everything that you've accomplished? Which has been obviously very great.

L: Yeah.

P: You haven't left anything undone?

L: I don't plan on going anywhere.

P: Of course, you've still got many years ahead of you.

L: Hopefully.

P: Are there goals that you set in earlier life that you have not achieved?

L: I never dreamed in my wildest dreams that I would have accomplished what I did.

P: By accomplishing do you mean your wealth or you mean your position?

L: Position. I honestly believe that I am as good as there is in what I do and that I've accomplished way more... I mean it's been a rather varied career. Whether it be in politics, whether it be in law, whether it be in sports, I have reached the pinnacle.

P: You sometimes wonder if you have any place left yet to go.

L: I'd like to enjoy the fruits of all of this. I don't travel, I don't enjoy that.

P: You like getting up in the morning and coming to work.

L: That's about it.

P: So you don't feel depressed or anything?

L: Oh, no, gosh no.

P: One of the things we haven't talked about, and I'd like to get a little reflection, and that's the role you've played in politics both on the local scene and the state scene. I know you and the governors have been close, what about locally? Have you ever thought about running for office?

L: Oh, no. Martin was very much involved in marketing, and he's done several studies. I have, almost, if not greater, certainly greater name recognition than any of the politicians in this area. They've done study after study. I have basically 100 percent name recognition because I hit all areas. In other words, you might find some people who are very much involved in boxing who could care less about politics or law. They did studies and actually in Northwest Florida out of 400 people I had 100 percent name recognition, and I think Clinton was next, and, then, it was a big drop to the governor, Bush and all of that. I just selected a jury, and the other side, there were forty people there, and they said, "How many of you have not heard of Fred Levin?" Not a hand was raised. I'm not sure that's good. How many have heard of Hitler?

P: I don't think anybody's going to put you in the same...

L: No.

P: Do politicians come to see you?

L: Yes.

P: They're looking for support and they're looking for money?

L: Money and support.

P: That's both true on the local and the state and even the national level.

L: Yes.

P: You've always voted Democrat?

L: I voted for W.D. Childers who's a Republican.

P: But he started out as a Democrat.

L: Anytime they think of politics they will...

P: They were knocking at your door.

L: Yeah, they'll come see me.

P: You've been particularly close to W.D. Childers?

L: Yes.

P: Is he your senator? Has been?

L: No. You mean does he represent the area that I'm in? No.

P: But if you wanted something in the legislature.

L: I would go talk to him although he really hasn't done that much.

P: How are you and Dempsey Barron?

L: We were on the other side. We're on opposite sides.

P: So you were not a good political friend?

L: No. In fact, I promoted Vince Bruner [Senator, Florida Legislature]. I was the one who talked him into running against Dempsey and of course he beat Dempsey and that was the end of the reign of Dempsey Barron.

P: What about statewide?

L: They give me way more credit than I deserve.

P: In other words, you're not a governor maker?

L: No.

P: A lot of people think you are.

L: I know, but it's not true. I'm perceived that way.

P: How about U.S. Senate? Bob Graham, is he a friend?

L: Yes.

P: I remember being at your house at an affair that he was in. I guess it was a fund-raiser.

L: Yeah, I've raised money for Bob, for Bill Nelson, I guess for all of them.

P: Mark told me recently you had Jack Kemp down here.

L: Yeah, that had to do with SmartCOP.

P: And he's a Republican.

L: I know. I had a fund-raiser for Charles Clary, senator.

P: But not for Janet Reno.

L: I don't support...I don't see Janet winning, and I think that she's going to destroy the chance of the only guy who could and that's McBride.

P: Has anybody from Janet Reno's agency approached you?

L: I think I told them that I had already committed to McBride.

P: That erased that with their hand out like that. Can you think of anything we have not covered?

L: Only one thing. I'm not sure what year, I guess it was early 1998, I brought Mohammed Ali to Pensacola not to speak but to be present at an event with Governor Chiles and Roy Jones, Jr. to speak to all of the highschool seniors, maybe all highschool students, we had about 10,000 people in the arena, on the subject of tolerance of others. There was a lot of animosity toward me for having done this.

P: Even in this day and time?

L: Unfortunately, they looked at Mohammed Ali as being this Muslim, but it was a fabulous event. He stayed at my home the night before. The morning event I was master of

ceremonies and Lawton made a real nice talk, Roy Jones, Jr. made a nice talk, it was really a beautiful affair. Mohammed Ali's wife did a fabulous job. The main thing was, the evening before, we had a little dinner party upstairs, Lawton stayed over and Mohammed Ali stayed over at my home that night and I was MCing the show the next morning. Somehow or another, I left the two of them in my kitchen. It was a cocktail party downstairs where they all just took pictures with Mohammed Ali and all of that. I left Lawton and Mohammed together and I went upstairs, went to bed, got up the next morning and did the thing, and then they went on. They came in a limo. I got a note from Lawton, and I don't know where the darn thing is, I'm going to find it, in which is was basically Dear Fred, I appreciate so much spending the night at your home and all the events and things like that, and I want you to know the conversations that I had and the comradery with Mohammed Ali was one of the most fabulous nights of my life.

P: You ought to find that note.

L: Anyhow, that's it.

P: Who's been your role model?

L: I guess growing up it was my dad.

P: You had a strong relationship with him, didn't you.

L: I admired him greatly. I didn't realize until later that he was extremely well respected in the Jewish community. In the non-Jewish community, he was like the good Jew. I'm not sure that when I realized that that that's such a great thing and maybe that's got a lot to do with my contentious nature, that I'm not going to be their good Jew, I'm going to bust their ass. Maybe that's got a lot to do with why I want them to think not that I've beat you, but that I cheated you and I got to you or something, I don't know. I guess I could give a psychologist one hell of a great story on my life, and I really don't know.

P: But you consider that you've led an honest life? That you have not cheated, you have not taken advantage of people?

L: Oh, that's right. Oh, God, if anything, I bent over backwards the other way. Why is it that I would want to give that damn impression? It doesn't make sense. I'll sit there and create situations, like David and daddy used to say, he'd rather get up in a tree, climb a tree to make somebody believe you're lying or cheating, than to stand on the ground and win and let them know you did it on your own ability.

P: Well, I think we've come to the end of this.

L: I appreciate it, I really do. It's been a great opportunity.

P: Even with all the interruptions, I've enjoyed it thoroughly.

[End of interview]