

AL 116

Interviewee: Courtland Collier

Interviewer: Martha Cade

Date: April 15, 1989

Courtland Collier is an associate professor emeritus of the Department of Civil Engineering of the University of Florida and serves as a commissioner of the City of Gainesville. This interview is part of a series of interviews on the issue of growth/no-growth in Alachua County.

Courtland Collier was born July 29, 1925, in Buffalo, New York. Their family spent their winters in Florida. After high school graduation in 1942, Collier enlisted in the U.S. Navy and undertook flight training. He received an early medical discharge and enrolled at Yale to study civil engineering. He received his bachelor of engineering in 1949. He moved to California and enrolled in the Fuller Theological Seminary. He also worked for the California Highway Department constructing bridges and highways. He moved to Kansas for construction work and then enrolled at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, for engineering graduate school. Collier then went overseas, to Peru, Venezuela, and Cuba, where he worked in construction and design of roads and bridges. He later moved to Miami and Fort Lauderdale. From Fort Lauderdale Collier moved to Gainesville to work on his master's degree in civil engineering (1963).

He began work on his Ph.D. but became interested in local politics. Problems with the electric company and road paving were especially pressing at that time, and he decided to put his expertise to local benefit. He was elected for six-year terms to the City Commission in 1967, 1979, and 1988 (for four years). In the interview he discusses the problems associated with traffic arterials and housing density and how the city and county are affected by the Growth Management Act of 1985. His solution to these problems is for the city to annex or consolidate (he explains the difference) in order to provide a high level of service at a lower tax rate. He notes that a majority of the citizens of Alachua County want a change in government, although there is no clear majority of what kind of change that should be. Other topics discussed include art in public places, where he feels the problem is allowing professional artists to make decisions for the public; volunteer and governmental agencies that provide social services; and impact fees and other sources of revenue (sales tax and utility tax), which he favors.

Collier feels we need a sketch plan that would detail where development would occur and where land for agriculture and ecologically sensitive land would be set aside. He thinks the city and county should get together to provide at a reasonable cost green space, recreation, jobs – "lots of good things that we all treasure in the spirit of good fellowship and brotherly love."

[Courtland Collier is identified as CC and Martha Cade as MC.]

MC: I am interviewing Courtland Collier in his home at 830 NW 22nd Terrace in

Gainesville, Florida. It is 10:50 a.m. on Saturday, April 15, 1989. I am Martha Cade, and I am doing this interview for the archives of the Oral History Project at the University of Florida. Mr. Collier is a city commissioner in the City of Gainesville. He is also an associate professor emeritus in the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Florida. He received a bachelor's degree in engineering at Yale University and a master's in engineering at the University of Florida in 1963. He is a registered professional engineer and licensed general contractor, and he has worked in that capacity in several countries. He has written two textbooks and articles for numerous professional publications. He served on the city commission from 1967 to 1973, 1979 to 1985, and from 1988 to the present. He was also mayor of the city from 1981 to 1982 and has served as chairman on many committees in the community. We will be discussing issues that pertain to growth versus no-growth in Gainesville and Alachua County. First I would like to ask you a little about your background, beginning with when and where you were born.

CC: I was born in Buffalo, New York, on July 29, 1925.

MC: Did you live in Buffalo?

CC: No. My dad was working in Warren, Pennsylvania, at the time for a firm by the name of New Process. He was writing some direct-mail advertising for them. He was one of the pioneers in that field. The nearest suitable hospital just happened to be in Buffalo, so I lived in Buffalo for about three weeks. Of course, we went back to Warren. Then after Warren, Dad moved to White Plains, New York, for a short time, and then to North Tarrytown, New York. We had a house there. Mother finally sold it after Dad died in the early 1950s.

In the early 1930s Dad bought a house on St. Armands Key in Sarasota, Florida. We spent our winters down there and summers up in New York. That is the way I grew up. I started school in the fall in Tarrytown, New York, and then attended the schools in Sarasota during winter. Then I came back late in spring to the schools in New York. Interestingly enough, I found that they were pretty much on par. I found that the Sarasota school was usually a little ahead in math and the New York school was usually ahead in language, English, and the arts, but I did not find that there was really that much difference between the two. People at that time used to say Florida had a terrible school system. It was probably the teachers. I had some pretty good teachers.

MC: Was it hard socially to move from school to school?

CC: Well, a kid is pretty adaptable, and I did not find things too difficult socially. I had friends in both areas and seemed to make friends fairly quickly, so it did not seem like any kind of handicap to me. I rather enjoyed it.

MC: Did you have brothers and sisters?

CC: Yes. I was the next to the last in a family of six kids--four boys and two girls.

MC: Did your mom stay home and take care of you?

CC: Yes, my mother was a homemaker. That was her full-time job. She did a pretty good job at it.

MC: Could you tell me your parents' names?

CC: Dad's name was Robert Collier, and mother's name was Marcheneil. Her maiden name was Bass – Marcheneil Bass Collier.

MC: Where did she get the name Marcheneil?

CC: Well, it is a good old southern name. She was born in Temple, Texas. Her mother was born in Grantville, Georgia, so that is where, of course, she was named. It is not an uncommon name.

MC: What did you do when you graduated from high school?

CC: Well, I graduated a year early, in the summer of 1942. I took my senior year in summer school, and that was finished up in August 1942. The war, of course, had started December 7, 1941, so the natural thing for me to do was to join the navy. I went through flight training as a naval aviator. When I was a year along in the course I contracted rheumatic fever and was sent to Great Lakes Naval Hospital north of Chicago. After several months I received a medical discharge.

Well, I met a young sailor there whose dad had a fruit ranch in California, and he invited me to go out there to recuperate and do some work around the place and generally get my health back. So I hopped on a train and went out there, and I met this marvelous family. They took me in as one of their own. It was there I became a Christian. After a few months eating some of that farm food I gained about forty pounds. The cream from the cow was so thick you could not pour it, you had to scoop it with a spoon. A little bit of that and tender loving care, and I was feeling a lot better after several months.

Since I was not eligible for re-enlistment, I went down to San Francisco to ship out in the merchant marine. I made several trips to the South Pacific war zones.

Then I thought it might be interesting to see what Europe was like in the middle of the war, so I hitchhiked across the country to the east coast to ship out to the north Atlantic. Unfortunately, I contracted tuberculopleurisy, and a doctor in

New York said that I needed to take some rest and recuperation. Well, Dad had sold the place in Sarasota and bought another place in Mountain Lake, Florida, right next to the Bok Tower carillon in Lake Wales, so I went down there for several months. It was down here that Mother came across an article in the newspaper saying that Yale was preparing to accept returning veterans, and she suggested I apply.

That is how I got to Yale. I enrolled in engineering there, starting out in mechanical engineering. After talking with some of the people in civil engineering, it was obvious that civil had a broader scope, so I switched over to civil engineering. In the summer after my freshman year I went back out to California to work in a summer service project there with the Baptist ministry. We took kids up in the Sierras for summer camp and taught Vacation Bible School and had a real good time. I also fell in love, and at the end of the summer I married a very sweet girl from Auburn, California, whom I had met while I was staying at the ranch in Auburn.

MC: What was her name?

CC: Her name was Elizabeth Taylor Collier. After college I was interested in exploring more deeply into the Christian faith, and the opportunity came to study at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, so we went out there. This was in the fall of 1949. I enrolled at the seminary and was very pleased with the studies and the fine Christian scholars that I had to study under there. I studied the Bible, Greek, and some other in-depth Bible studies that satisfied me with the Christian faith as far as the place that I ought to be. About halfway through my second term we had to drop out for financial reasons, and we found out we were expecting our first child, Debbie, who incidentally is living right here, just south of Alachua. She has five kids of her own now.

MC: Oh, great.

CC: So she was born in Pasadena. I went to work in the California Highway Department for several years constructing bridges and highways out there in the Pasadena area, as well as the mountains overlooking Pasadena. That was good fun. Then I got an offer to work for a contractor in Wichita, Kansas, so I went there and worked for a while. Then we moved on to Dodge City, Kansas, and lived there for a while. That is where my second child was born, my son, Nathan. He lives next door to me. Then it was on to Texas, where I worked down along the Mexican border for several years zoning and building highways. Then we were on to Lehigh [University] to do some graduate work.

MC: Lehigh is where?

CC: Lehigh is in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. It is where I went to engineering

[graduate] school. Then I got an offer to work overseas. I went to Peru and then to Cuba for a while. Then after Cuba we went to Venezuela, and then from Venezuela to a job in [Miami and] Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

MC: What kinds of jobs did you do in the foreign countries?

CC: Construction and design. In Venezuela we did some design and construction mostly for the petroleum industry. I worked for Lummus Company in Venezuela; they did work for Shell Oil Company. Then from Fort Lauderdale I decided to come back to the University of Florida to work on my master's degree.

MC: Had you been to the University before, or to Gainesville?

CC: Well, I had been through Gainesville one time en route to Jacksonville to take the test for my Florida P.E., professional engineer's license. I had just really been here that one time. But this is a very attractive area, The people that I was working with in Fort Lauderdale saw that I was going to go to graduate school at the University of Florida, and they spoke very highly of it. It had a good reputation.

MC: So what year was that when you came to Gainesville?

CC: That was in February 1961 I came up. I had called up here to the civil engineering department. They asked, "Have you taken the Graduate Record Exam [GRE]?" I said no, and they said "I am sorry, but it is too late to apply now." I said, "Well, if I go up there to talk to you, would you speak to me?" Professor [Ralph W.] Kluge was the head of the civil engineering department at that time. He very graciously said yes, so I packed up the car and came on up here. He decided he could let me enroll.

MC: Without the GRE?

CC: Without the GRE. So I have been here ever since. After my first term here he said, "We need somebody to teach in construction. Could you help us?" I said, "Well, my background and experience is mostly in construction, so I would be more than happy to help you." I started out as a teaching associate, which is a non-faculty position, while I pursued my master's. I got my master's in 1963. I started out on my Ph.D. program, but about that time I got interested in local politics.

There were some real problems with local politics. We had a city-owned electric company that was charging one of the highest residential rates in the state. There were some obvious inefficiencies and non-responsiveness to some of the local needs. We had almost one hundred miles of unpaved dirt streets.

MC: In the city?

CC: In the city. Large areas of the city had no sewer service. Residents were using septic tanks and outhouses. It was a pretty bad situation. People were building houses in the flood plane and were getting flooded out. There were just a number of things that needed to be done. I thought well, I have only been here six years, so I do not really have any chance of being elected, but maybe I can get somebody who is qualified to run. So I went around to some of my friends that were better known and had been here for some time and suggested, "We have some real problems here in town. Why not run for city commission? I will help you." They all said, "No, I am busy doing (this, that, or the other thing). Why don't you run?" Well, I thought I did not have any chance of winning, but maybe if during the campaign we could get some good discussion going, get some attention concentrated on some of these problems, it would ultimately lead to a solution. So I threw my hat in the ring. (It did not cost anything at that time.) There were six or seven candidates for that one seat. A good crowded race.

My friends came through and did what they said they were going to do – they got their friends out to vote and worked hard on the campaign. I think we spent close to one thousand dollars on that first campaign. By contrast, I think in the last campaign we spent about fifteen thousand dollars. Back then it depended upon the people, of course, [to win an election]. You [still] cannot buy a [successful] campaign in Alachua County. You have to have the people in favor of you or else it does not go. It turned out that I had the second highest vote total on the first round. The person who got the highest vote total was a realtor and very fine man, but at that point in time if there was anything that was a handicap running for city commission it was being involved in development. So I was able to run, and I won the runoff election. So my good friends managed to get me elected in 1967.

Then we started campaigning to clean up some of the problems. On the problem of paving we were able to work together with the city engineer, and we devised a program called semi-pave. We had first gone to the DOT [Florida Department of Transportation] and asked their advice, and they said, "Well, it is going to cost you at least three or four dollars a lineal foot. There are 5,280 lineal feet to a mile, and you have about one hundred miles. That means you have more than you can handle." So I worked with the city [manager and city] engineer, and we worked out a program of semi-paving that actually costs about seventy-five cents a foot. The key to it was using the compaction that was in place rather than tearing up the road and laying it down again, as was the standard practice. We looked at the road and figured it had twenty or thirty years of traffic over it and was pretty well compacted, so it is going to stay in

pretty good shape. We made sure that there were two or three inches of limerock, and then we just put a penetration- and gravel-seal coat on top of that. We felt it would last anywhere from three to five years, but at least it would get us out of the dust and mud. Well, we finished that program in 1973, and here it is 1989, and most of those roads are still being used. Some of them pretty patched up, but they far exceeded the three to five year life span that we anticipated. That was very successful. We paved about one hundred miles of roads, including every road where we had public right-of-way.

We had to do a sewer project in east Gainesville, where most people still used septic tanks and outhouses. We sewered hundreds of homes that had been using septic tanks and outhouses. That project included almost a third of Gainesville.

As for the problem with Gainesville [Regional] Utilities, we managed to arrange for the director at that time to retire, and we found a number of competent, college-trained people. After a period of about ten years we went from [being the utility with almost] the highest residential rates in the state to the lowest residential rates in the state. At the present time we are within 1 percent of the lowest [residential electric rate] in the state, even though our electric utility pays more to the city in profit than we get from property tax. We really made some progress in all of those areas, and I am very pleased to have been a part of it. Nothing like that can be accomplished single-handedly. It took a lot of people to [do the] work. It took a lot of effort, and I am [proud to have been] a part of that.

MC: Why did you get back into the commission in 1988?

CC: Well, we have a two-term limit, so we can serve only two [consecutive] three-year terms, which means a commissioner can serve for only six years [straight] if elected for a second time. Then you have to take at least one year out [of office]. The first time I took six years out. There were some things I needed to do. I wrote a book, I took a sabbatical, I achieved, a few things like that.

Then in 1979 I decided to run again. People were kind enough to re-elect me, so I was in from 1979 to 1985. Then I was out for three years and ran again. The people were good enough to re-elect me in 1988. Once you get involved in solving local problems, it kind of gets into your blood. You find out where all the buttons and levers are and how to get things done. You have the ability on one hand, and there are real community needs on the other hand. Gainesville's biggest challenges are still ahead of us. We have come a long way, but we still have a long way to go.

MC: I understand that Gainesville has grown in population about three times since you first came to Gainesville. What are some of the problems we face in the city

right now? Are they similar to the problems we faced when you first joined the commission?

CC: Yes. Actually, the population in Gainesville doubles about every twenty to thirty years. It has since 1850. Historically we have a growth rate right around 3 percent per year, which means we double in less than twenty-five years. I see no sign of the growth rate slacking. We are in one of the fastest growing areas in the United States. We really do not need to accelerate our growth rate. We have enough problems in handling the growth we have. Obviously we are a very viable area. People [continue to] come here for the same reasons that you and I came here: the desirable location, the intellectual stimulation from the University, the opportunities for kids. We are trying to pick up our deficits in parks and recreation, and I think we are going to be successful. People here are not afraid of new ideas, and it is just a great place to live. Sunshine, orange juice. You can make a living here and do what you want. It is easy to make good friends. There is a great attitude on the part of the people here. So I am very pleased to live here, and I am sure other people will come and find the same things. I look for the greatest growth we have ever had [to occur in the near future].

MC: Because we are growing, and growing rapidly, there are a lot of services in Gainesville that need to be growing alongside the population. I would like to talk about some of the things that are important in a community, starting with the road system. I know you have a lot of experience with roads. Do you feel they are adequate in Gainesville?

CC: Well, you know [from personal experience that] if you go out during rush hour you will find that you have to wait for two or three cycles at traffic lights in various locations, not everywhere, but say on 34th Street, on [NW] 43rd Street, on Main Street, and Newberry Road. There are too many locations with clogged traffic. Obviously it is going to get worse unless we are able to devise a road-building program that can handle that. By the very nature of it, we never seem to quite catch up. If we keep [pursuing] a reasonable distance behind it, we are doing pretty well. Our biggest problem is planning ahead. We never seem to learn that you not only have to provide for today's traffic but for tomorrow's traffic, too. So what we really need to do is look at the county as it will be at the time of full development.

That is a concept a lot of people have trouble with. What is full development? You can easily visualize a subdivision with one hundred lots in it. Finally you will sell that one hundredth lot, and that lot will be built out. Then you will have a full subdivision. What are you going to do then? You do not try to squeeze more people into the same subdivision. You go next door and build another subdivision. Some day all the land that is subdividable is going to be

subdivided, and we are going to have a built-out condition in the community. People say that is so far ahead that it cannot even be imagine. However, I am sure we can imagine a built-out condition for Alachua County just as easily as we can imagine the built-out subdivision of one hundred lots.

Alachua County consists of about six hundred thousand acres. About half of that is developable, and the rest of it is going to be agricultural lands or greenspace, like Payne's Prairie or wetlands or areas of sensitive ecological [and aquifer recharge] areas that we want to preserve. Certainly we do not want to develop all the agricultural land in the community. Let us make a rough guess and suppose we have 25 percent [of the land area] for greenspace and 25 percent for the farmers, for agricultural use. That leaves about 50 percent for development of one kind or another. That means we have about three hundred thousand acres in Alachua County that we could develop at the time of build-out. This is just a rough guess, but it is better than no guess at all. It might even be in the ballpark.

So how many people can we expect? Our present density is about three units to the acre overall. That includes roads and schools and parks and so on. If you get three and a third people per residential unit, per family (that makes the arithmetic a lot easier), that means about we average ten people per acre. So you have a density of ten people to the acre overall on 300,000 acres, that means we have an ultimate carrying capacity of three million people if we do not increase the density. (If we increase the density we can hold more.) [That translates to] three to six million if we consider doubling our density.

Doubling our density may sound acceptable in the abstract. But if you agree to double our density, then how about building an apartment house in your neighborhood? That is when people [become alarmed and] come in to the meetings saying, "Not in my backyard! Put it somewhere else. It is a fine idea in the abstract, but we do not want it here." That is one of the predominant reactions that will probably keep our density low. But if we guess the three- to six-million person range for open carrying capacity in Alachua County, you can see we have some room to grow.

Okay. Now what about time frames? We do not really have to worry about time frames if you sketch plan an [adequate] infrastructure. I am talking about a sketch plan, not a million dollar plan. A sketch plan may cost about \$2,000.

Where are we going to put these people? [Let's use the process of elimination.] It is not hard to determine the undesirable locations. They are the wetlands and the places like Payne's Prairie or San Felasco Hammock that are ecologically sensitive or for one reason or another are undesirable for building on. Then there are the better, more productive farm lands that you want to

save, obviously. So [by process of eliminating lands that are undesirable for development] you can figure where you want to put these three to six million people.

Then you need a road system, which brings us back to the question that you were originally asking. We need a road system that is going to transport these people from where they are to where they want to go. Well, where do they want to go? Obviously, they want to go to work, so we need arterials that will take them to the work centers. [In addition, we need arterial access] to the shopping areas, the industrial areas, the institutional areas, and so on. From these needs we devise the arterial road map. Our principal objective is to be sure that we do not inadvertently allow a subdivision [to be constructed] right where one of these arterials needs to go and that we provide right-of-way for the roads. In the past [we have made the mistake of thinking] this is just a country dirt road now, so you can build your house right up next to it. You only need sixty feet, maybe eighty feet, in some cases one hundred feet, but you can build your house right up next to it because it is just dirt country road. In little while, a few more houses are built out there, and the new residents need a two-lane paved road. Traffic picks up, and after a while it becomes an arterial. That is exactly what happened to [NW] 34th Street [between University Avenue and NW 16th Avenue]. Then [the traffic becomes congested and you need] to four-lane it or six-lane it, but people say no, no, you will ruin our residential neighborhood. A residential neighborhood should never have been built facing 34th Street in the first place. It should have been built on the side streets off of it, with the houses facing side streets or parallel streets to 34th Street. We need wide rights-of-way so we can put up some buffers, some barriers [between residential use and heavy traffic]. A berm is one of the best barriers, but you do not have room for a berm in there now.

MC: What is berm?

CC: A berm is a large mound of earth. So 34th Street [between University Avenue and NW 16th Avenue] is a perfect example of how not to do it. [In many instances we still are not planning ahead and are] not providing for the arterial traffic that is obviously going to be there in the future.

MC: Why do they let things like this happen? For instance, there has been talk about widening [NW] 43rd [Street] for quite a few years. But just two years ago a developer was allowed to build three homes right on 43rd. Who allows that?

CC: Local government allows that. The problem is they just find it difficult to envision Alachua County in a built-out condition. It is easier to visualize Alachua County as cities and farms and dirt roads out there. They find it difficult to gear up to an urban mentality, which is why we need urban planners that can plan for the

built-out condition of the community.

MC: Is that what happened with the Oaks Mall and Newberry Road?

CC: That certainly contributed to the overloading of Newberry Road at the Oaks Mall.

MC: It seems like as soon as one road is built it is torn up to make it wider.

CC: Our arterials are seldom wide enough because it is difficult to require a 300-foot-wide right-of-way for a little two-lane dirt road, even though it will one day become an arterial carrying fifty thousand people. So they let people build houses [close to the road], and they experience all sorts of [subsequent] trauma. It is psychologically very traumatic to people to think of a six-lane highway going in front of their homes in which they grew up. There needs to be some provision for protecting and buffering these homes as the traffic increases.

MC: Will the Growth Management Act and concurrency help in this practice, do you think?

CC: I think it will. I think it certainly is a great leap forward to have the Growth Management Act in place. The City of Gainesville used to have a one-year capital acquisition program. Each spring they would think of what capital investments they wanted to make as far as the city was concerned for the next year. We finally got them thinking in terms of a five-year plan. Now we are trying to get them thinking in terms longer than that. It is a gradual process, and some people find it difficult to think beyond tomorrow. I think there are enough people around that are concerned, and this Growth Management Act is going to increase their concern because we are having to plan a little further ahead. Obviously, as grim as the picture may be, we have to think in terms of ultimate development.

What is the [ideal] built-out condition for our community, and how can we plan to make it occur? How do we want things to look [and function] for our children and grandchildren? Incidentally, if we take the population of Alachua County and double it, it gets up to three million pretty quickly. We have 185,000 in the county at the present time. That doubles to 370,000 in one doubling, 740,000 [in two doublings], a million and a half (approximately) in the third doubling, and three million in the fourth doubling. Historically, each doubling has taken about twenty-five years. Therefore, four doublings takes about one hundred years. So one hundred years from now we could have three million people here. Then double that and in one hundred twenty-five years [there is] a potential for six million people here. One hundred years ago really was not that long ago. My father was born in 1885, and that was over one hundred years ago. So it may

take just two generations, really.

MC: What provisions have we made in the City of Gainesville and in the county to protect our land from storm water drainage and an abundance of solid waste?

CC: We have taken a giant leap forward in the storm water area by starting up the storm water management utility. Previously we knew what we should do; we just did not have the money to do it with. Storm water management is not a very exciting expenditure, so historically at budget time [storm water budgets get sacrificed for more pressing needs. For instance, when] the city manager adds a million dollars for storm water management, then the police chief says, "Yes, but I need ten new patrolmen," and the fire chief would say, "I need a new fire station out here," and so on. These are pressing issues. They say, "Oh, storm water management can wait one more year. We have gotten by so far." So our new approach is to set up storm water funding as an enterprise fund that we bill people for directly once a month.

MC: This is the city?

CC: This is the city. And that can be spent on nothing but storm water management.

One of our more current problems there is that the [Florida] Department of Environmental Regulation has informed us that the run-off from the road surfaces is highly polluted, particularly for the first quarter inch of rainfall. That first quarter inch carries a lot of pollutants, and we should not drain those off in the sink holes, which lead directly to the drinking water aquifer. They are saying that we have to plan to treat the polluted run-off. Put it through settlement basins and give it some kind of primary treatment where we can skim off most of the pollutants before allowing the water to go back down to the aquifer. That is one of the things we have been dealing with, and we have that funded now. It is not overly funded. It will take a little while to get all [the work] done, but the steady stream of funds is in sight and will lead to a solution.

MC: What about the county? For instance, the Oaks Mall? There is a lot of paved ground there.

CC: The county is facing a very real problem in that they would like to be a county government but would also like to provide urban services. Well, really, one definition of city government is a local government that provides urban services. So they have been trying to be a city government as well as a county government. They were trying to administer an urban ring around the city of Gainesville, which is about the least efficient geography you can imagine. Trying to provide services to a doughnut-shaped ring with a hole that is seven or

eight miles wide is about the worst possible configuration.

What we are trying to do now is City of Gainesville annex and provide urban services for that urbanized area.

MC: Do they pay more right now than people in the city for services?

CC: Yes. There is a Metropolitan Service Taxing Unit (MSTU) which consists of all the areas outside all the municipalities in Alachua County. They have their own property tax, about six mills. The city at this time is taxing 5 and 5.75 mills, so we are a little bit lower.

MC: How do we reduce our millage?

CC: Well, we have other sources of income. We have the franchise fees from telephone, from cable TV, from gas, profit from the electricity system. At the same time we are offering one of the lowest rates in the state, so it is a well-earned profit. And we have the SMU, the Storm Water Management Utility. We have more alternatives than they have.

MC: Would we have financial benefit from annexing the [urban] fringe?

CC: It is about a break-even. Our problem is that if we do not annex, then the more affluent people tend to move to the suburbs, and the average income for the people in the city goes down. As this happens ultimately the city becomes a refuge of the poor and the low income, and the poverty rate increases. So in order to stay healthy, we need to grow. We can provide services to the people in the urbanized areas surrounding the city limits in a much more efficient manner. We can provide higher level of service at lower rates. That is the logic behind it. We need to [annex] or else stagnate.

MC: So what are the other reasons the county is against annexation, besides the mistaken idea that it would cost less if they stayed a county government?

CC: Basically turf. For every house we annex they [used to] see a loss of several hundred dollars in tax revenues. One of the big problems now is revenue. They saw it as a zero-sum game – if we won they lost, rather than what it really is. We all win if we let one government provide the urban services and the other provide the rural and social services [and other countywide services].

MC: Tell me about solid waste disposal. I know they have implemented a new program in the city and some neighborhoods for recycling.

CC: In this area there are very few suitable locations for landfill. There is a great deal of public sentiment against incineration. Those are basically the two

standard methods for disposing of solid waste. So we need to try to reduce the amount of solid waste we produce and make the landfill last as long as possible. To do that we are implementing this month a recycling program citywide. Right now recycling does not pay for itself. It is going to cost us an extra seventy or eighty cents per household per month in order to pay for the recycling program, but in the long run I am sure it is the right thing to do. As people help markets develop for recyclable items and as these markets develop, I am sure the value of the recycled materials will increase. Certainly it is going to help preserve our landfill for a longer period of time. The landfill is run by the county. The city is not in that business. We just have a contractor drive our solid waste to the landfill. We pay a tipping fee to the county and dump the stuff into their landfill. The county takes care of the landfill.

MC: How do you convince the citizens to recycle products if it is costing them more money?

CC: Well, the cost [is included in the garbage bill, and] they have to pay it anyway. To get them to recycle requires a public education program. Most people respond to that. It just makes sense not to throw an aluminum can away, to just put it in the recycling program rather than in with the wet garbage. If the public were not behind it we probably would not be doing it. It just makes a lot of sense. I think people recognize that.

MC: There has been some talk of charging individual families per pound of waste. Do you know anything about that?

CC: Well, it is an interesting thought, and it makes a lot of sense until you get down to the implementation of it. It means that you have to weigh each load that you put on the garbage truck, and that slows it down considerably. If you see the waste disposal people working out there, they are running all the time. They are on a route basis, when they get through with their route, they are through for the day, so they are in a hurry to get through. If you slow them down by having to weigh everything, it becomes a very cumbersome and expensive system. And the advantages are not that great. Unfortunately, at the present time the disadvantages out weigh the advantages.

MC: What would be the advantages? Would that help people decide to recycle more avidly?

CC: It depends upon how you implement it. Yes, if we charged for every pound taken to the landfill, that would certainly provide an incentive to reduce the solid waste stream by recycling everything possible. Just right now it is too cumbersome to implement. [However, it certainly is a system to include in future studies.]

MC: Why are people opposed to incineration?

CC: They are afraid of toxic gases. Our stack scrubbers are not very efficient just now, and there are tons of various kinds of toxins that [get by and] are released into the atmosphere. We do not know all the effects. So locally incineration is not very popular [here], although in some parts of the state it is being used.

MC: Do you see us ever using incineration when our population gets up to three million?

CC: I think it is quite possible if we can develop a system that reduces the toxins released through the stacks to a non-harmful level. That is number one. Number two is defining a non-harmful level.

MC: I would like to talk about the urban fringe problem a little bit. How do we keep from having buildings built on urban fringe in the future? It costs more to service those areas and build roads out to them. How do we keep people inside the city limits building within the city?

CC: Well, the standard approach to that is an urban services district that sets up a line that you move from time to time as the need arises, a line outside of which you cannot develop. You can build a farmhouse, a barn, or something like that, but you cannot put in a subdivision outside this line. That is the way you keep development compact. You wait until all that area is developed, or at least a high percentage is developed, because you do not want to give anyone a monopoly on developable land. If say you wait until 75 percent of it is developed before extending the urban services boundary another couple of miles, you keep the development pretty compact. We tried that back in the 1970s. We said, "Here is the line. We will not extend our utilities any further than that for the present time." The county then proceeded to get into the utility business. They bought Northwood Utilities for a considerable multiple of the [lowest] appraised value and went into the utility business. That was the way that they circumvented the standard procedure for insuring compact development.

As a result of that, the city decided – and I think wisely so – to combine with the county and set up the Regional Utility Board [RUB]. The city combined the water and sewer with electric services at that time (previously they had been separate) and bought from the county the Northwood Utilities. The city and county combined to form a ten-member board (with all five city commissioners and all five county commissioners) to formulate policy for the regional utilities. Well, that lasted from 1972 (somewhere around there) to 1979. It tended to deteriorate because the city retained ownership of the electric while allowing the ten-member board to set policy. All policies set by the ten-member board had to

be ratified by the five-member city commission, so if there was, say, a seven-three vote on RUB, with five county commissioners and two city commissioners [voting for and three city commissioners voting against], the city commission, when they sat, could still reverse it by a three-two majority. So this led to some differences of opinion, to put it mildly, and RUB finally broke up about 1980, I guess.

MC: Do you ever foresee the city and county ever getting along enough to solve some of these problems?

CC: Well, the problem there is the same thing we ran into with RUB. You can get the first ten commissioners to say, "Fine. We will work together. We will cooperate," and so on, but then every year you may get a new commissioner elected to the city commission and every two years a new commissioner elected to the county commission. This does not occur always, but frequently. The new commissioners may be uncooperative for one reason or another. They may have their own agendas. Possibly the reason they ran is because they have were unhappy with the present government and may find some fault in it. It is just human nature that sooner or later you are going to get a majority or a powerful minority that says, "This thing is not working. Let's break it up."

I think the ultimate answer is consolidation or annexation. Consolidation is not the perfect answer, but when you get through talking about annexation and unification and all the other "ations", you end up with, well, you really cannot have two levels of local government that are competing with one another and expect there to be peace and efficiency and the highest level of service for the lowest cost. It just does not work.

MC: What exactly is consolidation? How does it differ from annexation?

CC: The best example of consolidation is Duval County, Jacksonville, where they had a referendum. They said, "Any town [in Duval County] that wants to retain its identity may do so, and any town that wants to consolidate with Jacksonville may do so." Essentially what it did was abolish the city charter of Jacksonville. Say you are part of the county, and there were four small towns that opted to retain their municipal charters. The way it would work here would be similar. We would have a referendum.

As a matter of fact, we had two referenda back in the 1970s to give people an opportunity to consolidate. They rejected both of them. The analysis was they rejected both of them primarily because of the personalities involved. The first one would have done away with the collective charter officers – the sheriff, the clerk, the tax collector, tax assessor, supervisor of elections. These were all occupied by very popular people, and the public wanted to keep the sheriff and

so on, so they voted down consolidation the first time. Then the second time the proposal was to keep all the charter officers in place, but for some reason or another I guess there was xenophobia at that time. The city people were afraid the county people were going to take over, and the county people were afraid the city people were going to take over, so they said no, not just yet.

Then we had a straw ballot the last election that gave the options of status quo (stay like we are), unify services, annex, or consolidate. None of them got a clear majority. There was about 10 to 20 percent of the people who voted for status quo, depending upon the area. Most of the people that voted for status quo were living in the small municipalities, as well as some in Gainesville, which indicated that the small municipalities were doing a good job at servicing their people. But that meant that 80 to 90 percent of the people were saying to change, that they do not like the status quo. There was no clear-cut majority on what kind of a change. Nor was it really clear that the people were really clear on what they were voting for. If you asked the question "What is the difference between consolidation and annexation," the bright, young, aware person might have been in favor of any kind of "ation" they thought might be an improvement over the status quo.

MC: What would you prefer to see happen?

CC: I think we are still small enough where we need only one government. We are trying to provide urban services, and the county is trying to provide urban services. It is not working. It is becoming very inefficient in those areas. I think the easiest thing to do is consolidate. Let the small municipalities opt out of consolidation if they so desire. On the other hand, I am not at all sure if consolidation would pass because of the same problems we had before. As you were about to point out, the problem with annexation is that you can annex today, and tomorrow a new subdivision might spring up outside the annexed area, which means you just have to keep annexing. The county gets to determine the shape and the type of the new development outside the annexed area. They may make all kinds of mistakes, and the city has to administer them. It has to administer 34th Street and the other problems that the county created, but it could get out of that if annexation occurred.

MC: Is there any way that the city can entice people to want to live in the city and developers to build in the undeveloped areas in the city instead of on the fringe?

CC: Well, we are working on that at the present time. There are some areas out there where people have asked to come into the city, so we are going to schedule an election for them in June. There are two ways we can annex: (1) under the general law which says the area to be annexed has to vote [with a] majority for annexation, as well as the city has to vote [with a] majority for it; (2)

under a special act that passed for Gainesville, Alachua County, which says if you get the urban boundaries commission together which consists of the ten commissioners, and they are willing to permit it, then you can lump all the vote into one. The city and the annexed area vote together, and whatever the majority of the combined electorate says, that is what is done. But the county is not willing to do that. So we fall back to the general law.

MC: The Growth Management Act was started in 1985. Does it affect only the city, or the county?

CC: It affects [both the city and] the county.

MC: So when does it go into effect for Alachua County?

CC: May 1991.

MC: Do you see that as helping solve the problems we have in the county?

CC: Well, it is no panacea, but it will at least direct people's attention to growth management. What it says essentially is that if we have [infrastructure such as] a road that is loaded to capacity at the present time, then we cannot have any more development until that road is widened. That is going to be a little difficult to live with. The temptation there is to set low standards. [We may have to] set a service level of E or something like that, which is congestive but is not going to stop development. We will be tempted to sacrifice standards in order to stay away from the crisis of having people bang their fists on the table and saying, "I cannot develop because you have not widened your road." The same is true of the rest of the infrastructure. Anything you can set a standard on you have to meet or exceed those standards or no more development [will be allowed].

MC: Those standards are not met in the city at this time, are they?

CC: We have not set the standards yet. If you took the standards that we have traditionally used, the answer would be yes, we do not meet all of our standards. And that is sort of what by nature a standard is. It is something you hope to achieve but you probably have not at the present time. It is true for government as well as people.

MC: So when these new laws go into effect for our county and our city, will we have to take care of our existing roads and bring them up to standards before we can spend money building new roads in the county?

CC: The answer is yes. The temptation is to set the standard so low that you already exceed them. In other words, change the traditional standards.

MC: Will the state allow that to pass?

CC: That is a good question. What standard is the state willing to let us accept for ourselves? I do not know the answer to that. Several of the first few comprehensive plans that were sent to the state have been rejected. I think Broward County was one of the first. The basis on which they were rejected was that the standards were too low.

MC: As our city and county grow, how do we make sure that greenspace is set aside in the city limits?

CC: Well, that is a very good question. We are at the present time working on the greenspace element of the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is going to set the standards. It has a number of elements. It has about maybe fifteen to twenty elements, one of which is going to be the greenspace element. We are currently revising the standards for that. I think we are going to have fairly respectable standards for greenspace. We have traditionally set aside \$300,000 a year for acquisition of greenspace in the city, and we have been able to pick up some significant acreage. We devised the Recreation Funding Task Force last fall to give us a permanent, dedicated source of income for recreation and greenspace. They made their report yesterday advocating a referendum for a half-cent additional sales tax dedicated to recreation and greenspace. That would provide about \$6 million a year countywide which would, if passed, mean that we would have a continual and dependable source of income for that type of thing. That to me is the best option. A number of people are going to be working very hard for a permanent funding source. So standards and funding are the two things we need. We are working on both.

MC: I want to ask you about art in public places. There is a law stating that a certain percentage of the cost of the building has to be used for public art. It looks like a majority of the people do not approve of the art that is chosen. Something I think would be nice would be to use that money for funds for greenspace, because greenspace and parks in this area would be enjoyed by everybody.

CC: That is quite true. There was this suggestion that came in the other day – why not use the funding for landscaping when it is directly related to the building? I agree. I think that some of the items that are being purchased for art are pure junk. I think that almost literally we require fencing around better looking junk than some of the stuff they are trying to sell us as modern art at the present time. Where we have gone astray, obviously, is we have let the professional art people make the selection. They are trying to tell us that our standards for art is wrong. You might have seen my letter to the editor recently regarding the piece of art that was selected for the new utilities building.

MC: Yes, I enjoyed it.

CC: Where we went astray there is we let four professional artists select out of over two hundred entries and pick four finalists. Then the lay board was brought in to try to pick the best of the four pieces of junk. They did the best they could, but they should have had an option [to vote for] "none of the above," but they did not. I hope we can get that turned around, but I am not at all sure we can. I think your suggestion certainly has a lot of merit.

MC: Some of the other things that are necessary in a community are a good educational system and social services. Could you tell me what some of the social services are that we have in Gainesville?

CC: Well, we have a number of professional organizations and a number of volunteer organizations. The basic social services are provided by the state through HRS. That is food stamps. Housing is provided from the federal government through the housing authority, which has over a thousand low-rent units, and through the Section 8 program, which is a rent supplement. So food and shelter are provided for the most part by the state. We have some food and shelter provided on a temporary basis by volunteer organizations such as St. Francis House and the Salvation Army. There used to be two or three other smaller ones. They provide shelter for maybe two or three nights. Then you are supposed to find your own. The food will continue to be provided as long as you show up. They have sandwiches for lunch, soup for supper, and so on.

We have a lot of volunteer agencies that are doing a little this, a little that to help the drug rehab program. They are swamped. They raise funds around the community and also receive some limited drug funding. They also have a rehabilitation program that is funded by the public and private [sources]. The public, I believe, is funded by HRS, as well as private efforts.

There is a lot of youth work going on – youth soccer league, boys' club, girls' club, boy scouts, girl scouts, 4-H. For the most part [these are] volunteer efforts, although they do get some regular funds. The city supplies under \$100,000. I think \$40,000 to \$60,000 is pretty close for the Southeast Boys Club, and we probably get a couple hundred thousand dollars benefit from that because of the volunteer efforts that go along with that. But that is money well spent. We also provide funding for such things as the Hippodrome [State Theater], the Acrosstown Repertory Theater, and items that are supposed to contribute to the cultural environment.

MC: Where does the money come from that we provide for these services?

- CC: Well, it comes from the four different levels of government. The federal government, of course, funds some of the activities. We also get some through the state. The state funds the HRS with state money and federal money. The county provides social services, information referral, and is typically involved in some of the food programs. The state legislature frequently comes up with what they consider to be a bright idea, and they mandate that the counties provide the service and the funding to go with it, which poses a real hardship on local government. The city in recent years has gotten more and more into that. At the present time they are spending about \$240,000 on outside agencies. The hope is that this will be seed money which will go together with private contributions and volunteer efforts to provide much more benefit to the local community. In most cases I am sure that is true; in some cases it is probably not.
- MC: Tell me where the money comes for other spending in Gainesville, for the roads, for the schools, for the sewage.
- CC: Well, the school board raises their own funds. They have the ability to levy property taxes, which they do, up to ten mills. They also get millions of dollars from the state. The roads are done on three levels – state roads, some of which are federally funded, most of which are state funded, and most of the money comes from gas tax; county roads, most of which comes from gas tax; and city roads, most of which comes from [the general fund]. We have not done any paving in the last three years. We have done the maintenance. Maintenance costs us about \$2 million a year, and most of it comes from the general fund. I think \$700,000 comes from the gas tax, but most of it comes from the general fund.
- MC: Do you think we have adequate funds for a city that is growing as quickly as Gainesville?
- CC: We never quite have adequate funds. We try not to get too far behind and catch up where we can, but we never quite have all the funding we would like to have.
- MC: Tell me about the impact fee.
- CC: The impact fee is a good idea. I do not know why it has taken the county so long to implement it, but they say they have plans for this summer. The impact fee is a fee charged new construction to pay their share of the infrastructure. For instance, if the cost to the roads averages out to \$200 per household, each new household that is built is supposed to pay \$200 for the infrastructure part. There are limitations on how those funds can be spent. [If they are collected for roads], they have to be spent on roads, roads that represent the new home owners' share. They cannot be spent on bringing our share up to standards. They have to be spent on bringing the new home owners' share up to the

prevailing standards, not the desired standards.

MC: What about the existing growth? What about bringing it up to standards?

CC: Well, that is something we have to charge ourselves for. The easiest way to do that would be to charge a user fee, which consists of a gas tax. If the legislature now would provide for a ten-cent gas tax, that would help bring our roads up to standards. One real problem is planning now for future traffic. We are not reserving the rights-of-way for arterials. These paving and drainage needs are going to catch up to us, and the bill is going to be large. Most people who drive do not mind paying for what they are using, but they do want to be able to see it.

MC: What are some other ideas for raising revenue besides a user fee, impact fee?

CC: Well, first is the sales tax. The city engineer has suggested that just as we are going to accomplish more with the [storm water] utility, perhaps we could make roads a utility and charge people a monthly fee for roads. That is pretty much it. One of the board members has suggested a fee for recreation. One dollar seventy-three cents per month per household would provide something like \$2 million or \$3 million per year for greenspace and recreation. Somebody else suggested a tax on non-alcoholic beverages. A nickel a can on Coke or something like that would supply about \$3 million a year for drainage. There are ideas like that floating around.

MC: I have heard that Gainesville is two years ahead of its population growth in commercial and residential buildings. Do you see this as a problem?

CC: Well, I see it as an opportunity. We have an overhang in the market, certainly. We have vacancies; we have some 17 percent vacancy in the rental market. We also have about five hundred housing structures in town that are in need of demolition. About three thousand are seriously deficient and need major repairs. So this is an opportunity to catch up on those without putting people out on the street. As long as there is plenty of housing available we should be able to catch up with our housing needs without seriously inconveniencing people.

MC: So it is fine to keep building new buildings, new commercial property.

CC: Well, it is fine for the community. It is not fine for the builders, because they are losing money when they build a house and cannot sell it. That is the risk they choose to take, and they understand that. They know when they build a house in an area where there is a high vacancy rate that it is going to be a little more difficult to sell it. But that is the free market, and we do not want to interfere any more than is necessary.

MC: Tell me about business in Gainesville and how it helps our economy.

CC: Well, business in Gainesville is one of the factors that we have been trying to work very closely with. We have to encourage business. Their prosperity is our prosperity. We obviously need the right jobs for young people as they come out of the school system so they do not have to move away from home in order to make a good living. We need to provide the goods and services that our citizens need. That is business. We need to encourage them. We have recently proposed a businessmen's ombudsman. Businessmen sometimes complain that they get the runaround at City Hall with the city government. We want to give them one-stop permitting so they can just get an application and deal with one person.

MC: So how about bringing new businesses into Gainesville? There have been attempts over the years, and they have always been foiled.

CC: Well, we encourage new businesses in Gainesville. There are four or more different economic development offices at the present. There is an economic development office in the City Hall, there is one in the Chamber of Commerce, and the county recently established one. There is the Downtown Redevelopment Authority which is actively trying to gain business, and several others. There are four right there plus several others in other locations that are trying actively to bring business. They brought in [Fred] Bear Archery, which ultimately brought about three hundred people. A number of years ago they brought G.E., which is now Gates [Energy Products], Driltech [Inc.], and a number of others. They have reasonable success. I personally feel that it would be more successful if they all operated out of the same office. That way we could coordinate their efforts a little bit better. They seem to like to do their individual things.

MC: Could you summarize for me where you think our city and county are going growth-wise and what you see in our future?

CC: I think we are in the middle of a very active year. I see growth continuing in the foreseeable future. I think it is very important for us to look at Alachua County at the build-out stage and sketch plan where we want the development to occur and where we do not want it to occur, where the ecologically sensitive lands are (the wetlands), and where the most beneficial areas to retain for agriculture are. We need to sketch plan our arterials, where they need to go, so we can reserve land for those. I would plan for those so we will not have to be buying up additional rights-of-way [that is already developed and pay] extraordinarily high prices. Today the cost of rights-of-way for widening the road will frequently exceed the construction cost. This is just because somebody a few years ago did not foresee a few years into the future.

We need to learn from those mistakes. We are not at the present time; we are still making the same old mistakes. Someday maybe people will listen and start thinking of their children and grandchildren. We would like to see the city government and the county government getting together and saying, "We are all trying to accomplish the same thing. Let's just combine, with the people agreeing, so that we can adequately plan ahead." The county and the city need to get together and provide a nice, high level of service at a reasonable cost where the users pay for the services that they get. [We need to ensure] that the tax burden is fairly distributed, that we go into the future with our eyes open and make provisions for a good, high quality of life, with lots of greenspace, lots of recreation, lots of [good jobs and other] good things that we all treasure in the spirit of good fellowship and brotherly love.

MC: Did you ever think of running for the county commission yourself?

CC: I ran for the county commission one time in 1974 when I was a Republican. It was the wrong time and the wrong place. They had not had any black members [on the county commission], and it just happened to be the time when Tom Coward decided to run, too. It was obvious that they needed at least one black member. I could not really run a full-fledged campaign, and I did not win that one. They run from districts, as you know. You have to live in the district. We have always had pretty good representation from our district since then, so I have not had the opportunity. I enjoy city government.

MC: That is good. But without your input on the county commission, is there any other way to get your ideas across to the people in the county so they will be convinced of the need for some of these things you would like to implement?

CC: Well, a lot of other people are thinking similar ideas, but we will just have to get one of them to run and be successfully elected.

MC: Would the *Gainesville Sun* be helpful in educating people?

CC: Oh, yes. They usually take a pretty enlightened viewpoint, sometimes on the wrong side of things, but I think more often on the right side.

MC: Okay. Well, thank you very much for spending some time with me.

CC: It has been a real pleasure, Martha.

MC: Thank you.

CC: And good luck on your project.