L: This is an oral history interview with Dr. Lyle N. McAlister, conducted in his home in Gainesville. Today is June 17, 1993, and my name is Stuart Landers.

Can you tell us when and where you were born?

M: In Twisp, Washington. That is a little town; I think the population was 335 when I went to school there.

L: What year was that?

M: Let me see. 1916.

L: Can you tell me a little about your parents--who they were, where they came from, what your father did?

M: My father was of Scottish descent; his family came to this country from Scotland, I think probably in the 1880s. He was born in this country. Then other branches of our family, for reasons I cannot remember, moved from here back to Washington state, and my father came here because he knew there was somebody there. He came to this town, which was then just a very small community, and got a job in a country store there as a clerk. Eventually he became a partner by the time I was born, and then the name changed and he became a senior partner. But it was a small store. They sold everything there--groceries, farm equipment, clothing, fishing tackle.

L: Can you give me his name?

M: Daniel McAlister. My mother was of Swedish descent. Her father came to this country from Sweden, again, in the late nineteenth century, I believe, to escape compulsory military service. He homesteaded a piece of property in the valley in which Twisp was located; it was called the Methow Valley. My mother then was young; I think she was perhaps ten or twelve. Her mother had died in Minnesota, and she took care of my grandfather, and she would go into town to make purchases at the store where my father worked. That is the way they met, and they were married, and I was the first child.

L: And her name?
M: Emma.

L: Her maiden name?

M: Trainman. It was an Anglicization of a Swedish name which was impossible to pronounce.

L: You said you were the first child. Did you have any other [siblings]?

M: I had two brothers: Roy, who died, and another who is considerably younger than I am. He is sixteen years younger and lives in Denver, Colorado.

L: And his name is?

M: Stanley.

L: I take it that Twisp, Washington, was an agrarian, farming community?

M: Yes, it was a farming community, primarily. It was a very nice place to grow up.

L: In the north-central part of the state?

M: It was in the northern part of the state on the eastern slopes of the Cascades, quite high in the mountains, and as the crow flies not too far from the Canadian border. It was mountain country.

L: Did you go all through high school there?

M: I went to high school there, yes.

L: And you graduated [when]?

M: Well, let me see. It would have been, I guess, about 1932 or thereabouts. I am going back to a high school reunion the first of July. There were seven in my class. I do not know how many are left now.

L: The fifty-first reunion?

M: Well, it is not a class reunion. It is just all the classes. It was a small school. But it was a very pleasant place to grow up--good fishing, good mountains, good camping, so every time I got any spare days I would head for the hills.

L: Were you involved in any activities other than school, camping, and fishing?
M: Well, pretty much that. I was an avid reader. I guess that is one thing that may have led me into history. My mother started me reading, I think, when I was five years old, and I spent a good deal of my time [doing that]. When I was not outdoors camping I was reading.

L: How much education did your parents have?

M: My mother, I think, had an eighth-grade education. I do not think there was a high school there when she [grew up]. My father, as I understand it, never got beyond the fourth grade. But they were firm believers in reading. They read a lot and insisted that all the children learn how to read.

L: Was your family active in any church?

M: Yes. My mother was active in the Methodist church. My father, no. He was a Mason; that was his main activity in town, I think.

L: What did you do once you graduated from high school?

M: I worked for a year. This was in the midst of the Depression. I planned to go to college, and I stayed out a year to get the seed money to take with me. I graduated in 1938 from Washington State.

L: So you started in 1933 or 1934?

M: It would have been 1934.

L: What sort of work did you do in your year between high school and college?

M: I worked in my father's store.

L: What do you remember about the New Deal and the Depression as they affected Washington?

M: It really did not hit the valley in which we lived too hard. The thing, I think, that sticks in my mind were the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] camps which were established. There were three of them, and they really kept the valley, as well as my father, in business. I think they did a very marvelous thing. These kids came in from . . . they did not call them central cities then, but from slum areas, poverty-stricken areas. They got fresh air, [and] they learned a little discipline. I understand they still have conventions of these kids with their old campmates. I think Clinton got his idea in part from the old CCC camps for the summer jobs and that sort of thing.
L: It is his party tradition. What was Washington State like?

M: It is now Washington State University.

L: At the time it went by a different name?

M: It was Washington State College. It was the agriculture and engineering part of the university system. Since then, it has become that plus a liberal arts program.

L: What were you studying?

M: I began study as a math major, but I discovered I was not going to make it in that line, so I tried history. I do not know what happened. I was not particularly enchanted by it--I think it was the instructor--so I turned to geology, and I got my undergraduate degree in geology. While there I was in ROTC and got a reserve commission, which formed my life for about six years after I got out of college.

L: Was ROTC mandatory at the time?

M: Yes.

L: Was this an all-male school?

M: No, it was co-ed.

L: You said that the ROTC formed your life for the next six years. In what ways?

M: Well, I had a reserve commission, and when I graduated there were a few jobs in geology, I thought, and I went out to look for one. I went down to California, and I managed to get a job with an oil company there. My first work was simply what they called roustabouting--you dug ditches and laid pipe and did that sort of thing. Then I worked up to the drilling with what they called the well-pooling gang. You cleaned out the tubes and the glass. I finally graduated to the drilling crew, which was big bucks in the Depression; I did very well at that. Finally, I was promoted to junior geologist, which pleased me until I found out I had to take a 25 percent cut in pay. So that changed my mind.

I could see the war coming, and I decided I might as well get started, to get in on the bottom and go into service. I think that was in 1939 or 1940.

L: Where were you stationed?

M: Initially at Fort Lewis, Washington, near Tacoma. I think I served there a little over a year and then was sent back to the infantry school at [Fort] Benning [Georgia] for
further training. While there, I heard that they were forming a parachute battalion in
the United States Army there and were asking for volunteers, so I volunteered for
that and went into it as a second lieutenant. There I stayed until I was discharged in
1946.

L: Did you ever go overseas?

M: Well, I was in Panama for fourteen months, and then later I came back to the States
and went to the Command and General Staff school. Shortly after that I joined the
17th Airborne Division, and from there I went to France and spent the rest of the war
in the European theater: France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg.

L: That would be after D-Day.

M: This would have been before D-Day, if I get the years straight. I was in Panama on
the day of Pearl Harbor; I remember that very clearly. So I think I went to Europe in
1944.

L: I am sure there was a lot of concern about the security of the [Panama] Canal once
the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

M: Yes, there was a great deal of alarm because after the bombing of Pearl Harbor we
had lost contact with the Japanese fleet, and nobody knew where it was, and there
was some speculation it might be heading for Panama. Our unit was at battalion
strength, and we were sent out to guard twenty-five miles of beach against the
Japanese navy, which was quite ludicrous. Fortunately, they never showed up. But
there was considerable concern about that.

L: While in Europe, were you doing paratrooper activities--jumping?

M: Yes. By that time I was assistant chief-of-staff, G-2, of the division, and we fought in
Europe--the Battle of the Bulge, then the Rhine [River] crossing toward the end of
the war in Germany. [We did a] parachute drop across the Rhine.

I guess after that the next big event in my life is I met a Red Cross girl who had been
sent over from England to entertain the division, and we got a wartime marriage.
The commanding officer of my division was very fond of her, so he arranged for us
to fly down to the French Riviera for a honeymoon. The army had taken over one of
the class hotels down there for rest and recreation, and we stayed there for a week
and came back. We flew down there with a Jeep and then drove back through the
French Alps. That was quite an interesting experience.

L: It sounds like it. Your wife was English?
M: No, she was American. She was born and raised in Tennessee.

L: But she had been sent to England?

M: Yes, she was sent there from the States for whatever Red Cross people did--they entertained the troops, served coffee, things like that.

L: Can you give us her name?

M: It was Geraldine Donaldson; that was her maiden name.

L: And you were married in 1945.

M: We were married in 1945, yes.

L: Any children?

M: No children.

L: So what happened after the war ends?

M: Well, I had to make up my mind what I was going to do. I had a reserve commission, and at that time I had the rank of lieutenant colonel. I toyed with the idea of staying in the service because in many ways I liked it. I liked the discipline and the order, the chances to travel at taxpayers’ expense. I thought about the peacetime army, but I did not think I could really quite take that. It was pretty dull business in many ways. Then I thought of going into the forest service because I had been raised in the woods, but I found out that it was not a very attractive prospect because they had a low budget and they were not hiring people in any degree. So I thought I would go back to my original interest in history. Well, my third alternative was that I was going to open a bar in San Francisco, but my wife talked me out of that, fortunately. I entered graduate school at Berkeley in 1946.

L: Were your interests at all focused on Latin America at this time?

M: Not at the time. I was primarily interested in medieval history. I talked to the graduate advisor there about the prospects there. He asked me how proficient I was in Latin, and I had to answer, "Hardly at all." He said, "Well, how about medieval French or medieval German?" No, I did not know that either. He said, "Well, this is not really the way for you to go." When I first went I had had only one history class before in my life, and I was required to take what you might call a make-up course, so I think I had a course in American history (the Jacksonian era), one in European history from 1914 to the present, one in ancient history, one in the Reformation, and one in colonial Latin American history. The professor who taught
the Latin American course was really a great instructor, and he grabbed me and turned me on. Also the fact that I had spent fourteen months in Panama sort of introduced me to the area, and I had traveled around.

L: Did you have a knowledge of Spanish?

M: I picked up some there, yes.

L: What was your Latin American professor's name?

M: Engel Soyter. I think he is still alive, or he was three or four years ago. He must be quite ancient now.

L: Did he become your mentor?

M: No. I do not quite remember what happened. He was a Brazilian specialist, and I was heading toward Spanish-speaking America, so I did my work under a professor by the name of Lawrence Kinnaird.

L: What was life as a graduate student like in the late 1940s? How rigorous was graduate school, would you say?

M: It was rigorous. You worked hard, but I did not find it too difficult. After you have commanded a parachute battalion in a war it is sort of a picnic, plus the fact that I just enjoyed it tremendously. Many of the graduate school population were veterans as I was, and we had similar experiences. I made some very good friends there. We lived just across the bay from San Francisco, so every payday we would put together our pennies and quarters and dimes and go to the city, to the opera, and had nice dinners. I think those were really the four best years of my life.

L: What sort of emphasis was placed on theory or historiography or things like that at the time?

M: Very little. They had a course in historical method, but it really was not very instructive, I found. I think the main requirement we had was to prepare a paper on history and something else, and for reasons I cannot remember I did my paper on history and agriculture. It was nothing resembling the method we get today.

L: Was there any desire to branch out into the other social sciences, to use things from, say, sociology and anthropology?

M: Very little. We had to have a minor. I cannot even remember what mine was. It was mainly traditional history.
L: Sort of consensus narrative?

M: Yes.

L: At what point did you graduate with your Ph.D.?

M: Let me see. I graduated in 1950, I believe.

L: And you wrote a dissertation on [what?]

M: I wrote it on Mexico and, more especially, the military reorganization of the army in the eighteenth century under the Spanish Bourbons, my theory being that you could find some of these sources of militarism that later became very much a part of Mexican history.

L: So did your focus at this point become the military history of Latin America?

M: No, I was not interested in military history, per se. I was interested in social history, or political history; that is, what was it about the military ethos, military behavior, military law, that led them into politics? That you found out in the army itself, I think, in the society from which it sprang. I continued that interest for some time after I graduated. My first book was on the special privileges that were enjoyed by the military in the colonial era (and how they survived the wars of independence), and enjoyed by the Mexican army afterward. There was freedom from civil jurisdiction in most cases.

L: That is the book on the fuero militar [The "Fuero Militar" in New Spain].

M: Yes.

L: Which you published in . .

M: I think it was 1957.

L: That is getting a little bit ahead. What did you do upon graduation with your Ph.D.?

M: Well, the course of my graduation and employment went something like this. I was in Mexico finishing up the research on my dissertation and had started the writing when I got a letter from Donald Worcester--I guess he was the first working man who went to Florida [from the University of California]--saying that there might be a job there open in the fall of 1950, and if I was interested it would be a good idea if I came around for an interview. So I did; on our way home from Mexico back to Berkeley we went via Florida. When I got there I found out that what I had thought had been a job had not opened up, but that there might be a possibility of employment in American Institutions.
L: Which was the University College?

M: University College. I then was interviewed by [William G.] "Wild Bill" Carlton, who was quite a character at the time, and was hired and went to work there in the fall of 1950. I remained in American Institutions about five or six years, until I was transferred to the history department budget. But during that time I taught not only American Institutions but also courses in Latin American history.

L: Describe for me briefly what sorts of courses you taught for American Institutions. These are the beginning two-year [courses taken by lower-division students].

M: Yes. It was a unit of the University College. It was really a survey of American culture and American society within a historical framework. It involved American government, American culture, foreign affairs--a very broadly based subject, and I enjoyed teaching it. I learned a good deal teaching that, that I never knew before.

L: Are these the huge lecture classes?

M: There was a huge lecture, and then the class was broken up into sections which, I think, met three times a week. Each had a section leader (which I was one), who conducted lectures and [led] discussions.

L: Did you have any graduate assistants, TAs?

M: No, none of that.

L: I forgot to ask you: What did you do for a living while you were in graduate school? Did the university fund you?

M: I had the GI Bill of Rights, and my wife was working, and I had a graduate assistantship for most of the time. For my research I received a grant from the Office of Education and from the Doherty Foundation, which took me to Mexico.

L: So you arrived in Gainesville in the late summer or early fall of 1950.

M: Right.

L: What was Gainesville like?

M: It was a cultural shock coming from San Francisco to Gainesville in 1950. [laughter] It was a small country town in many ways. University Avenue was two lanes, with large oaks growing down the middle. Very quiet, very southern. I got into trouble, I think, twice when I first got here, once at Sears and Roebuck when I made a
mistake and drank out of the wrong fountain. I was chastised for it—that was for blacks, Negroes only. The other time was when I rode downtown in the back of a bus, and I discovered that you were not supposed to sit there; that was for Negroes only.

L: I take it, then, that you were completely unfamiliar with Jim Crow.

M: I had heard about it vaguely, and it did not mean a thing to me. I do not think I knew a real, live black at that time. There were none where I grew up. I think there were possibly one or two at Washington State. I never knew them. And there were not too many in the services except in certain units. I do not think we had any in my unit at all.

L: So that was the main culture shock, then.

M: I think that was it, yes, plus the southern style of living which race and race relations were a part of. Quite conservative politically [and] socially, and I must say I was not too attracted by it. I felt for a long time like I had been exiled. (I do not know if I want to put this in here or not.)

L: Well, I have heard this from other people.

M: Yes, it is not unusual. But in retrospect, I liked being here and still do. It is a very nice place to live and work. I have made many good friends here, not only at the University but also among townspeople.

L: You had a considerable amount of contact with non-University, Gainesville people?

M: Quite a bit, yes.

L: How did you make those contacts?

M: Well, it was a little hard to avoid in a small town. I was asked to appear before civic groups and talk about Latin America. I made some friends, and I would go fishing with them. My wife was active in community affairs—she was the first president of the Friends of the Library, and we met people in that way. And we had good friends and neighbors in the area in which we lived.

L: Which neighborhood was this?

M: Well, let me see. It was on 2nd Avenue, I think, about where the volleyball courts are now.

L: Okay.
M: Or the new stadium, just about in that area.
L: So I guess you walked to work every day.
M: I did, yes.
L: What sort of cultural or recreational opportunities were there in Gainesville, if any?
M: There were some, but not really too many. None that stick in my mind, as a matter of fact. That is one thing that is really amazing: what has happened here in that area just in the last decade, particularly in the performing arts. There was some drama. I cannot remember any music of any consequence. Not much. For culture you had to go elsewhere. Well, you found it at the University, but in the town there was not much at all.
L: Did you and your wife go elsewhere? Did you travel to other parts of the state on a regular basis?
M: We traveled a good deal in the state. We took our summer vacations near Naples, down on the west coast. We often went to Tampa and stayed there and had some good Spanish food. We also traveled abroad. I spent a year in Spain, I think in 1960-something. I cannot remember. I was doing some research there. My work took us to Washington and occasionally to New York. I went back to San Francisco a couple of times for professional meetings. We were not entirely isolated.
L: Were there a lot of conferences at this time?
M: Quite a few. Well, many of them, of course, are those you know about--the American Historical Association, the Southern Historical Association, Mississippi Valley. And there was one here that had a national reputation; it was the annual Caribbean conference in which speakers were brought in from all over the country to contribute, to lecture on some particular subject that was the theme of the conference.
L: That was started by . .
M: [Alva] Curtis Wilgus [director, Caribbean conferences and professor of history].
L: So that had already been going on before you got here.
M: No, I think actually he came either the same year I did or a couple of years earlier. But it was quite new.
L: Were you involved in the mechanics of it, setting it up?
M: Yes, I was very active in that, in organization, participating, chairing sessions.

L: One thing I wanted to ask about: what was the pay like as a C-1 instructor?

M: Let me see. I think I went to work for $4,200 a year; that was a twelve-month contract in those days. That does not sound like much, and it was not, but with my wife working we managed to live very comfortably.

L: What did she do?

M: She was a medical secretary.

L: So you were able to have a good standard of living.

M: Yes, we lived very comfortably. Saved a little money.

L: I know that this is a time--the late 1940s, early 1950s--when the University is expanding rapidly.

M: It had just begun its postwar expansion.

L: What do you remember about that?

M: Well, I think the thing that sticks in my mind is that the University had just become coeducational the year before I got here, and for the male student population this was a very exciting thing. They did not have to go to Tallahassee every weekend. I do not really think it began its boom until probably in the 1960s and 1970s.

L: Were a lot of your students still veterans at this early point?

M: Yes, there were quite a few. Football was a big thing then, of course. I got into trouble again when I would not stand up when they sang "Dixie" and when the band played "Dixie" at football games.

L: What do you mean, "got into trouble"?

M: Oh, I was threatened with a beating-up or with violence sometimes if I did not show the proper reverence for the flag in Dixie.

L: The flag being a Confederate flag?

M: Yes.

L: Now, these are not fellow faculty members?
M: Oh, no, no.

L: These are the yahoos sitting next to you?

M: That is right. [Laughter]

L: Okay. That is an accurate historical term, yahoo. [Laughter] I guess we should talk a little about the history faculty and the American Institutions faculty. How large was it? Who was around when you got here?

M: I think in the history department when I joined it on the department budget there were only perhaps eight or nine line items. The University College faculty, the American Institutions faculty, I think, was somewhat larger than that, perhaps twenty or thirty.

L: Total, not just historians.

M: Total, yes. They had political scientists, and a couple of anthropologists came in. But it was, I think, pretty much dominated by historians.

One of the things that sticks in my mind about the development of the department was the relationship that it had with the American Institutions, which was not always friendly. Not hostile, but not always friendly. I think the people who were in the history department budget tended to regard themselves a bit superior and as being professionals, specialists; and this attitude, I think, was somewhat resented by people who were on the American Institutions budget. There was a certain interdependence, too. [For] the history department to give a full-course offering, it had to draw on American Institutions for instructors.

L: Which you were teaching.

M: Yes. When I was transferred I still continued to teach a course in American Institutions. This tradition prevailed for a long, long time, until I think it was when Dr. [David] Bushnell was chairman [of the Department of History]. The University College was abolished, and the historians in the University College were then moved onto the history department budget. Dr. Bushnell handled this very, very well. He was a very capable person. He did not give that appearance, but everybody trusted him. I do not think I ever heard him say a mean word about anybody. That could have been an unpleasant situation, but I think the merger of the two groups really worked out very nicely.

L: And that was some time in the 1970s when that occurred?
M: It would have been in the 1970s, yes. [The University Senate voted in March 1977 to dissolve the University College. Ed.]

L: So the tensions between the historians in American Institutions and the historians on the history faculty were mainly about status.

M: That was essentially it. It was not open hostility. There was some social mixture between the two. A lot of them would have coffee together. I had good friends there. But there was this underlying inequality of status, or at least it was felt to be an inequality. Some people took it quite seriously, others did not. But it was unfortunate, I think. It did not do either American Institutions or history any good. It was just one of those things. I do not know what started it, but in the end it worked out very nicely, I think. The people who came over from American Institutions were received in the friendliest possible way. A lot of them have done very well as historians. It really made the department, I think, when that union was accomplished.

L: Who were your colleagues? Who were your fellow historians in American Institutions?

M: Well, Jack Doherty was one. Bill Carlton was chair of the American Institutions department for a long time, and then when he died Jack Doherty took over. I knew [Eugene] Ashby Hammond quite well; he was a very fine fellow. Let me see. Who else? There are not many of them left anymore.

L: John Mahon?

M: I do not know exactly what year he came here, but he came directly into the history department.

L: Samuel Proctor was in C-1.

M: Yes, he was in American Institutions. Let me see. [Augustus] Gus Burns. He came in later, I think. I cannot remember anybody who is now in the history department who at one time was in American Institutions.

L: Was David Chalmers hired straight into the history department?

M: He was one, yes. He came in American Institutions.

L: 1958?

M: 1958 or thereabouts.
L: [George] Selden Henry?

M: Another.

L: Was he in American Institutions?

M: Yes. I think George Pozzetta, and even David Colburn.

L: But this is much later. That is the early 1970s when they came. Why did you make the jump to the history department? How did that come about, and around what year?

M: I am trying to remember when it was. It probably would have been around 1956 or 1957. I am not certain. And why? Well, I felt that that was my real home. I was a trained historian by profession. I wanted the opportunity to be in a professional department, my department, and to teach more of my fields of specialization, particularly graduate work. I continued to teach American Institutions, I think. Very late I went back to teaching it just for the fun of it. I always enjoyed the course. But I never saw any reason why it was depreciated by others, but that is the way people looked at it.

L: Now, you told me you published your first book in 1957.

M: Yes.

L: How much of your time was devoted to research and how much to teaching?

M: I would say probably about half and half. This was not in terms of the assignment of duties, but actually the time I spent on the two activities.

L: Were you expected to be publishing at this time?

M: Yes. You did not get very far without it.

L: How strong of a national reputation did the history department have?

M: Well, it did not have much of a national reputation except in the field of Latin America for a long, long time. It has now, I think. We were very weak. We had a lot of people in American history, United States history, hardly any in European history, none in African history, and none in Far Eastern history.

L: Was there an emphasis on southern history?

M: Very much so, yes.
L: Okay. Well, you become chairman of the department in 1957. Is that correct?

M: Is that what it says? I thought it was later than that.


M: Yes, that sounds about right.

L: How did that come about, and what was that like?

M: This is one of the instances where the friction between the two departments appeared. By that time I was entrenched in the history department. I was nominated, and the other person nominated was Ashby Hammond, who was still on the American Institutions budget. The way the election ran I won. I am not quite sure what the issues were. It was not much of anything, I do not think.

L: Now, this was a faculty election.

M: Faculty election, yes.

L: Was the dean of the college at all involved in these decisions?

M: Not too much, I do not think.

L: What did your duties include as department chair? What are your memories of running the department?

M: They involved the establishment of the history curriculum, what courses would be offered (which I did not decide myself; we had a committee structure that handled this), assigning teaching assignments, and the most critical, of course, was promotion and tenure, which was nominally handled by a committee but which the chair had a good deal to say about.

I was also involved fairly heavily in the what they called the Institute for Caribbean Studies, which Wilgus still chaired. But the chairmanship in those days was not a particularly onerous position. I think the number of people in the budget was probably not more than fifteen or twenty or thereabouts. That was something added by borrowing from American Institutions.

L: Was there a considerable raise in pay when you became chair?

M: I cannot think of any spectacular raises. I do not think there was any pay increase that really amounted to much until probably in the 1970s. Maybe 5 percent a year in good years. Quite slow.
L: What were the requirements for granting tenure to someone at this point?

M: Service, publication, and teaching--then as now.

L: Years of service?

M: No, this meant service to the institution on committee work and other nonteaching, nonresearching functions of various kinds. In the department it meant serving, for example, on the promotion and tenure committee, the curriculum committee. I cannot remember all the other committees we had. [It was] work for the University, largely committee work.

Research was a requirement that I do not think was ever spelled out--"You must have so many pages of publication." There was a general understanding of what it required. For promotion to associate you generally needed a book.

L: To get tenure you did not necessarily have to have a book out?

M: Yes, that was important. I do not think you could have gotten tenure at that time without a substantial publication record.

L: Okay.

M: Teaching: There was a good deal of lip service payed to it, and to the best of my knowledge and recollection the people who were in the department worked hard at it. But that alone would get you nowhere.

L: Then as now.

M: Then as now.

L: What was an average teaching load per semester? How many courses?

M: Officially it was twelve hours, but then you could be given credit for research, for example. So I would say in the 1950s and 1960s and perhaps into the 1970s a nine-hour teaching load was about standard.

L: Which is three courses.

M: Three courses. Then you might do one semester with nine hours and then the next one with six. If you were very lucky you might get some time off for research, and then only if you were getting sources of funds from a foundation.
L: Did the department have funds for things like travel and research?

M: Yes. They were generally pretty generous on that.

L: To get you out and get you to conferences and things like that.

M: Yes, to see what was going on in the outside world. I do not recall when there was ever any problem in getting funding to attend a professional meeting, especially if you were making some contribution to it--giving a paper or attending a committee meeting.

L: And as you said before, aside from the Caribbean conference which was held at the University of Florida, really the only other ones were the Southern [Historical Association], the AHA [American Historical Association] . .

M: And the Mississippi Valley.

L: Which becomes the OAH [Organization of American Historians].

M: Yes, I guess that is what it became.

L: Well, I understand that the Ph.D. program was begun, I believe, in 1948.

M: That sounds about right. Of course, that was before I got here.

L: Yes. When did you start teaching graduate students? What sort of numbers of graduate students did you teach?

M: I think perhaps the middle or the late 1950s might be when I began teaching a graduate seminar.

L: This was of course after you became a member of the history faculty.

M: Yes.

L: Were American Institutions professors allowed to have graduate students?

M: Oh, yes, they could. Some of them taught graduate courses and seminars and directed at that time mainly M.A. programs. Ashby Hammond, for example, was very active in graduate work, as was Jack Doherty. Sam Proctor, of course.

L: What were the requirements for a Ph.D. at this time?

M: Let me see if I can remember. They were required to have a major field, of course, and those available at the time, I think, were Latin American history, United States
history, and European history. That was the end of it. You were required to have, I think, two minors, but I am not certain of that.

L: Inside minors? History minors?

M: Perhaps it was one inside and one out. I think you were required to have one outside of history. There was a language requirement of two foreign languages. Beyond that there was the dissertation and the qualifying examinations, which you are probably familiar with.

L: Not yet, but I am getting familiar. They were both oral and written?

M: Yes, there were the writtens and the orals. Then after that it was the dissertation, which sometimes went on and on and on.

L: I was going to ask if you could come up with a number of the average number of years it took someone to go through the program.

M: I just do not remember. The first area, I think, in which we really achieved any national reputation which helped us place graduate students was in Latin American history. There were not too many institutions doing it at that time--Berkeley, to some extent Stanford, a little bit at Harvard, but not too much.

L: So as you said, in the late 1950s you started graduate students in Latin American history?

M: Yes. A couple of them are still around. Murdo McLeod.

L: He was your student?

M: Yes. Now, he was not actually. He was Worcester's student, but he was in my seminar a couple of times. He is the one I remembered that is here now. But they were distributed fairly widely. I think probably beginning in the mid 1960s, graduate instruction became my principal interest. It was also where I was placed to do most of my work.

L: I understand that you became the director of the Center for Latin American Studies.

M: Yes.

L: In 1963?

M: I think it was in 1964.
L: How did that come about? What did that involve?

M: Well, a little hatchet work. (I may want to scratch this or modify it.) What happened was this. We still had the school of Inter-American studies, which Wilgus was running. That really was not doing too much except having the Caribbean conference. Then the University had gotten a grant from the U.S. Office of Education for a Title VI program in language and area studies, which they made to various universities that had the Latin American [programs]. And, there was a center for tropical agriculture.

Well, President [J. Wayne] Reitz wanted to do something about getting rid of support for Latin American studies, and he thought in terms of perhaps a general institute in Latin American study or a center for Latin American study. I think he approached the Ford Foundation--I was involved, I think, in the approach--and their reaction, as I recall, was that they wondered if we had three programs, why did we need another one? The decision, I guess, at the University level was simply to consolidate all of these programs into one and find somebody to run it. So things sort of went along. The gentleman who ran the Title VI program did not want to give up any turf, nor did Dr. Wilgus. [laughter] The outcome of it was that I became director, and the particular units became divisions in the center. The head of the Title VI program shortly thereafter left.

L: And that was . .

M: Dr. [John Van Dyke] Saunders. He was a sociologist. Dr. Wilgus left not too long after that. So the center came into existence as a rather hard affair, as I remember it, and I lost some friends.

L: That is unfortunate.

M: Well, I made some, so it came out about even.

L: Again, just like with the history department, what were your duties and responsibilities?

M: They were mainly developing interdisciplinary programs in the Latin American field and supporting in any way possible the Latin American programs and the courses in the several departments, particularly graduate courses. One of the main functions of the director was to obtain funding for this from the outside. It got quite a nice budget from the University, but additional money, of course, was needed for conferences, fellowships for faculty members and students, and the Inter-American Studies annual conference. We cooperated fairly closely with the Center for Tropical Agriculture, and together we got the first major grant for Latin American studies. I think was about $0.5 million. That was big bucks in those days.
L: Where did that come from?

M: That was from the Ford Foundation.

L: So you had to spend a considerable amount of time fundraising?

M: Yes. For a while I was commuting between Gainesville and Washington, DC, where I had to keep up contacts with the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; and New York, where I had to maintain contacts with the Ford Foundation [and the] Rockefeller [foundation].

L: Do you know if they are still funding the center?

M: They are being funded, but I am not quite sure what the sources are now. They are prospering, I think. But my heart was always in the history department. I was happy when my term of office there was over.

L: Who became director after you left?

M: Let me see. I think it was Bill Carter. He was director for four years, I think, and did not last much longer. He died, as you know. That [position] involved a good deal of travel. I had to attend Latin American conferences in Mexico and Peru.

L: So I take it there was a lot of contact between scholars in Latin America and scholars at the University.

M: Yes. One of the purposes of the program was to develop these contacts between individual scholars and between universities here and in Latin America. Also it became involved in Peace Corps training. We had several groups that were trained here. They tended to be oriented toward the more practical aspects of Latin American study, mainly because that is what the foundations wanted to finance, so that is the direction we took.

L: What were the libraries like in these early years, through the 1950s? Were you satisfied with what the Florida library had to offer?

M: Yes, especially the Latin American collection. It did very well almost from the beginning and became, I think, one of the major collections in the country. As to library resources in other areas, I could not speak firsthand.

L: How heavily involved were you in building the Latin American collection? Was this one of your priorities?
M: Yes. The budget people were rather generous in this matter, I thought. We did acquire really a remarkable collection.

L: Does this include manuscript collections, collections of diaries and such?

M: Yes. The Latin American program was also rather closely related to Florida history, to Spanish Florida. We really had a substantial collection of Floridiana documentary stuff.

L: Which I guess brings in the people at P. K. Yonge [Library of Florida History].

M: Yes. Several of my graduate students did their Ph.D.s in Florida history, in Spanish Florida.

L: For example?

M: Well, the most recent was Jane Landers. Did you know her?

L: Yes. She is at Vanderbilt.

M: Yes, she is at Vanderbilt. She landed a prime job there. And Amy Bushnell. I guess she was before your time. Eugene Lyon. I had some very good students in the field who wrote fine dissertations. Paul Hoffman. I did a little work in Florida history myself.

L: I understand that your interest sort of shifted to Spanish Florida. Is that correct?

M: It did for a period, yes. I do not quite know what brought that to me. I guess it was simply the accessibility of sources here. I did nothing major in the field, but I did some articles, publications. I guess my main field pretty much remained Mexican history, and then toward the end tended to shift out of Latin America towards Spain. When I finished my service as director of the Center for Latin American Studies I put together a fellowship that I got from the foundation which gave me enough money to spend a year in Spain. I got a Fulbright and then a grant from the University which took my wife and me to Spain for a year. That year, along with my four years of graduate school, I think were the best years of my life.

L: Where did you stay?

M: Most of the time in Seville. I was working in the [General] Archives of the Indies. But we traveled a good deal from one end of Spain to the other and [toured] Portugal up and down.

L: That does sound like a good deal.
M: It was. It was great. And at the time you could live like a king on the stipend I had from my fellowships.

L: The dollar was strong enough?

M: The dollar was strong, and the cost of living was low and cheap in Spain. We could do just about everything we wanted to.

L: You published the book on the Mexican military in 1957. Do you have any other books out?

M: Yes. The next one I did— I got out of the colonial period—was a study of the role of the military in contemporary Latin America [The Military in Latin American Sociopolitical Evolution: Four Case Studies (1970)]. I worked on that in conjunction with two or three other people [Anthony P. Maingot and Robert A. Potash]. I think we had one section on Mexico, one on Peru, one on Colombia, and one on Chile. At that time I also have begun work on the book on Spain and Portugal and Latin America, which I published in 1984 [Spain and Portugal in the New World, 1492-1800, vol. 3 of Europe and the World in the Age of Expansion (1984)], which is still doing very well.

L: The Who’s Who Among Historians—I think the most recent was 1982—lists only one book, so I figured that there had to be more.

M: There are more. Well, that was my major book.

L: You said earlier that your focus after stepping down as director of the center was on graduate instruction.

M: Yes.

L: What was involved in a graduate seminar at this time? What was the workload like? What were your priorities, your concerns?

M: I think it was probably oriented, insofar as how I influenced what graduate students did (and I tried not to do too much in that direction), mainly on race relations in Spanish American culture, particularly the interaction of blacks, Indians, Spanish, and Portuguese. And I continued my interest in the part that the military played in contemporary Latin American history. I continued to travel in Mexico summers part of the time.

L: Was race a hot topic when you were in graduate school? Was it much of a topic at all when you were in graduate school?
M: No. It became so I think mainly under pressure from the outside: "We must hire blacks."

L: So this is after the civil rights movement.

M: Yes. I mean, I do not think it really became an issue within the department until I was no longer head of the department. At about the same time there was a great deal of pressure to start hiring women. I was the head of two or three search committees, so I became involved in that. On occasion we made the wrong choice. Academically, no, but I was fairly criticized because one of the candidates was a very capable woman, but the committee felt that the other person had better prospects. I think it turned out all right.

L: Who did you end up hiring?

M: I think the person we hired on that occasion was Pat Geary.

L: Who is about to become the chairman at UCLA.

M: He is doing something there, yes.

L: A well-qualified historian. Were there women on the faculty in 1950 when you arrived?

M: I am trying to think. There were a few. I remember there were some in physical education because they had the women's physical education program. They had just started that. But not too many. The only historian I remember was really not a historian. She was not in American Institutions but in University College, and interested in Japanese studies.

L: Who is this?

M: Irmgard Johnson, I believe it was.

L: What do you remember about the civil rights movement, the student protest era, the turmoil of the 1960s? Did these affect your life at all?

M: I cannot say that it affected me profoundly. I was involved, and I had a fairly liberal position on it, but I do not recall that I was directly involved in much of it.

L: Either civil rights or [antiwar protests]?

M: Not like David Chalmers, among others. I was never much of a movement joiner.
L: Do you have any memories of the integration of the University in the 1960s?

M: Nothing specific. I cannot speak for the black students who came, but as far as their appearance and their participation, I think it moved along fairly smoothly. They were admitted into the University, but I do not think they were a great part of University life. They were not blatantly discriminated against, but they kept to themselves. I do not think that has changed a great deal.

L: I would somewhat agree with that.

M: One of the proudest things I ever did, I think, had to do with a black student who was in a section of American Institutions I was giving. I noticed when the class first began he sat up in the front of the room, he took notes about everything I said, and he asked all sorts of questions. He seemed a very intelligent lad. At the time of the first examination I was hoping he would do well, and he did very, very well. He had an unlimited intellectual curiosity. After class I remember I called him and said, "Don, I want you to know that the A you got was an honest A. It was not an affirmative action A." He just smiled; he was just so happy.

I kept close touch with him. He graduated. He would come around to see me and say he wanted to read; he asked me, "What do I read?" I started him simply on Time magazine and The Wall Street Journal and whatever else we read. He did that, and he went to law school and did very well there. I think he had a reserve commission in the navy. He spent some time in the judge advocate general's department. He was in Naples for two or three years, he went to Sorbonne in France. I still correspond with him.

L: What was his full name?

M: Donald Moore. I cannot remember anybody I know who had the unlimited intellectual [curiosity that he had]. He just wanted to know everything about everything, and he became so excited when he found out something that he had not known before. And he came from a very disadvantaged family. His father did not believe in education. His mother ran the family and insisted that he go.

L: Do you have any memories of the antiwar riots in the early 1970s or any other antiwar protests?

M: Yes, I remember them quite well.

L: Does anything stick out in your mind?
M: No. Again, I was not involved. I guess I was antiwar. I do not think I was at the beginning, but as the Vietnamese war went on I do not see how any intelligent person could avoid it. I became quite sympathetic to it, although I was not active in the antiwar movement. I remember demonstrations on the campus, and some of them fairly violent—not violent but demonstrative and loud—and marches in the streets, parades up and down town.

It is funny, when we think of movements, what sticks in your mind. I do not know whether I want this in the file, but the streaking movement... You know what that is, do you not?

L: That was the fad in the 1970s.

M: Yes, with people running around naked. I thought it was hilarious.

L: Did that happen a lot in Gainesville?

M: There was quite a bit of it, yes. It did not last very long, perhaps several months, perhaps once or twice a week for a while at the peak. Someway or other the word spread out where it was going to be, and large crowds—mainly of men—would gather there.

L: Were there women streaking?

M: Oh, yes.

L: Both men and women.

M: Big excitement. Well, of course, there was the assassination of Kennedy. I had a graduate seminar that afternoon, and I had gone over to get a cup of coffee just before the seminar. I came out and met one of the students who was going that way, and she was crying. I asked her what the trouble was, and she told me. So the seminar met, and nobody's heart was in it. A good deal of weeping, and that was the end of that. That stuck in my mind.

L: Do you remember the College Inn?

M: Oh, yes, very much.

M: I know the students focused an antisegregation protest at it.

M: Yes. I do not remember that specifically. I remember I used to drink beer there occasionally. At the beginning of my graduate career when there was not too much age differential between myself and the students we used to adjourn after the seminar to some beer hall and continue the discussion. That was very pleasant.
Another occasion I remember is the time of the [Cuban] missile crisis. At night you could wake up and you would hear planes flying overhead, which I knew to be bombers which were gathering in Tampa or thereabouts to get ready to hit Cuba if necessary. Then one day a large crowd appeared and traffic became jammed up. I walked over to 13th [Street] and could see these tanks, troop carriers, everybody heading for Cuba. It was really quite frightening.

L: I guess they were coming from Camp Blanding.

M: They were probably heading for Blanding, I guess. Tampa, MacDill Air Force Base, was a major player. And at the time people were building air raid shelters. The Harrisons, Jack Harrison and his wife, and my wife and I had gotten together; they had a house, and we contributed to the construction of an air raid shelter and furnished it with supplies. We never got to use it, fortunately. But that was a scary time.

L: Where were you living at that point?

M: At that time? Let me see. I think I had moved into Golfview [off SW 2nd Avenue, near the UF golf course].

L: So you were still within walking distance. Were you still walking to work every day?

M: Oh, yes, I walked part of the time, but then I could catch a campus bus right next to the law school which would get me to my office in Turlington [Hall] in, oh, maybe eight or ten minutes. And I would walk on some occasions. More often I would walk home.

L: That is quite convenient. I guess we should talk about the years leading up to your retirement. When did you decide to retire?

M: I took early retirement in 1985. Do you know what that involved?

L: Is this the phased retirement?

M: Yes, it was a phased retirement. I continued to teach, but I retired, and I drew all my retirement benefits but continued to teach half time at half pay, which was really a very nice arrangement. This was to last five years, and at time that was the end of it. You had to retire. I continued until 1983 and decided that the time had come. In my lecture courses I noticed that I had difficulty reading my lecture notes and that the students in the back of the room could not hear me as well as they should and I could not hear them. I decided I had better get out while I was ahead.

L: And you were how old at this time?
M: Let me see. I think I was sixty-eight or sixty-nine.

L: So what have you been doing since then? Have you remained active in any of the faculty events?

M: I have been active in the events. I go to the spring breakfast or the spring lunch, and I probably get onto the campus and stop at the department two or three times a month. But I have not been involved in any serious research, because my interests have sort of shifted into other fields. I decided I wanted to see parts of the world that I had missed. I traveled widely in Latin America and Spain. Last summer I went to Israel and Egypt--I wanted to see where it all started. This September I am going to Greece and Turkey.

Then one of my side interests has always been the British Empire with the British imperial system. I was trying to put together a trip which will take me to the bastions of the empire of the nineteenth century--Hong Kong, Singapore. I have been to Cairo. I have been to Gibraltar.

L: New Delhi, India?

M: I have not been to India. I tried to squeeze in and take a trip that will get me to Singapore, and then it is only a short distance to Hong Kong and Macao--I would like to see that--and then to Singapore. Then I want to get down to Australia. I am not sure why, but I would like to see it. And here my interest has turned to classical music.

L: Yes. I noticed the music in the background.

M: I always enjoyed listening to it. I decided I wanted to learn something about it, so I have done that simply through listening. I also audited a music history course last semester and learned a great deal in that. I am an avid follower of Karl Haas and channel 89 [WUFT-FM], Classic 89. So I keep busy.

L: Are there enough concerts in Gainesville these days to keep you [busy]?

M: It keeps us busy, and it is very nice to live here [at the Atrium], too, because they obtain tickets for the concert series at the Performing Arts Theater. A bus takes you there and drops you off and picks you up, [so] you do not have any problems with parking. We went to the Hippodrome [State Theater] last Tuesday. There is always action. I remarked earlier that it is really remarkable what has happened culturally in Gainesville just in the last decade, [with] the Performing Arts Theater, the Hippodrome, the [Samuel P.] Harn Art Museum.
L: Yes, I really like the Harn myself.

M: I go there quite frequently. And there are things going on here quite frequently—music concerts.

L: Dr. Proctor told me that one of you gentlemen traveled to Jacksonville to see the symphony. Was that you?

M: Yes. My wife and I used to go over there for the season. We would go over and spend the night; we would go to the symphony and then spend the night there and come back the next day.

L: I am from Jacksonville. Where did you spend the night? Did you have friends?

M: No, it was in a hotel. I cannot remember the name of it. Mainly because I just did not want to drive back after the concert. I think that the Jacksonville Symphony is really quite good. They have a fine director. I was rather amazed that a town like Jacksonville could do something like that. No reflection on your hometown, understand.

L: Jacksonville has its good and its bad qualities.

M: I always liked the town. I used to do a lot of fishing, but I do not do much of that anymore.

L: Freshwater? Saltwater?

M: Well, here mainly saltwater. I was out about month ago, I guess, with friends. I never owned a boat, but I have friends who own one, which is much better. My true love, however, is trout fishing. I grew up with it, and I go back to Colorado where my brother lives in the summer. I take a try at it occasionally.

L: That would be with a fly rod.

M: Yes, fly fishing. I like to catch them, of course, with a dry fly, but if they will not hit that I will try a wet fly. If that will not do I will use salmon eggs or worms. I like to catch fish.

L: I take it you go to Cedar Key?

M: Most of the saltwater fishing has been done out of Cedar Key, off the pier or off one of the reefs. I like to go out to Seahorse Reef.

L: Is there any good bass fishing around here?
M: There used to be. I do not know what it is like now. Apparently it is hard to fish them out. They reproduce rather rapidly. I think there is still very good bass fishing. I never did much of it. So for some reason or another I am always busy. We travel around.

L: I understand that your wife passed away.

M: Yes. That was 1991.

L: It has been recently then.

M: Yes, and I moved out here. I think it was Thanksgiving 1991. I lived by myself for six or eight months, but I did not care for it much, so I decided to move out here.

L: For the social contacts or the social opportunities here?

M: Well, that in part, but also I had begun to develop a vision impairment that made it difficult for me to drive, particularly at night. And at night, if you could not get out it got a little heavy after a while. I came out and checked this place out two or three times, and it is very pleasant here.

L: This is a nice-looking home.

M: If you want company it is here. If not I can just close the door and lock it and be by myself. As I told you, if you want to go someplace they generally provide you with transportation. If you have a doctor's appointment, wherever you go they will take you and bring you back. They must take busloads of people, oh, twelve or fifteen times a year to concerts or plays. We have social activities here. I have made some good friends here.

L: I heard pool balls clicking in the lobby.

M: Yes, there is a pool table downstairs, and I go about that once in a while. The food is quite good.

L: I take it you do not cook many of your meals yourself.

M: I gave that up. I used to do a lot of cooking. My wife and I were members of a gourmet club which formed many, many years ago. I think it was the same year I became director for the Center for Latin American Studies. It was organized by the University Women's Club, where they group couples together and then they organized these dinners. Our group was so congenial that it is still going. And I am still an honorary member, and I still cook occasionally for that. But then my wife
worked, and I took pity on her. I finally told her, "You cook during the week, and I will cook on the weekends," which I did, and I really came to enjoy it. I must say I became fairly proficient at it. Then when she quit work, for some reason or other I kept at it. It is a good skill to have, but it also makes you rather particular.

L: Yes. I guess that brings us to the present. Is there anything I missed?

M: I do not think so.

L: Well thank you for talking to me today.