

**CENTER FOR FLORIDA HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

INTERVIEW WITH: E. Snow Martin, Jr.
INTERVIEWER: Dr. James M. Denham
LOCATION: Lakeland, Florida
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M=James M. Denham (Mike)
S=Snow Martin, Jr.

M: I am here with D. Snow Martin, Jr., on Lake Morton Street in Lakeland, Florida, and today is April 16, 2004. Good morning, Mr. Martin.

S: Good morning, sir.

M: We're here today to talk a little bit about your memories of Lawton Chiles. But before we do that, I'd like to get some general information from you, if you don't mind. Can you give me a brief biographical sketch of your life, when you were born, and that kind of thing, please?

S: I was born in 1933 in Ocala, Florida, and moved at the age of six weeks, I think it was, I was told, to Bartow, where we stayed until the early part of 1942, [and] moved to Lakeland. I went to Lake Morton Grammar School, Dixieland Grammar School, Lakeland Junior and Senior High Schools, University of Florida, and have a Bachelor's Degree in Business and a Law Degree [in] 1957. I came back here in 1957 and I've practiced law here ever since.

M: Can you tell me a little bit about your family, where they were from, your father's parents, your mother's parents?

S: My father's folks were all from Wildwood. My mother's folks were all from Wauchula. They were both working in Tampa. My father studied to take the Bar Exam and my mother was [in] some sort of business situation, I'm not quite sure what it was, and they lived in the same boarding house and met and were married. [They] had six children. I have five brothers and sisters; all of them are living.

M: Do you know how far your family goes back in Florida, how many years, how many generations?

S: I'm told that my kids are fifth generation Floridians; I think that's accurate.

M: So you grew up actually here in Lakeland. You went to Lakeland elementary schools.

S: I started at Lake Morton.

M: Lake Morton?

S: I started school in Bartow and moved to Lakeland, my recollection is in the second grade I think it was.

M: And you went to Lakeland High School?

S: Yes sir.

M: What year did you graduate there?

S: 1951.

M: 1951. Now you grew up with Lawton, I would imagine. Can you remember the first time that you met Lawton Chiles?

S: My most vivid recollection of Lawton is the first time I met him, and it was on the playground at Lake Morton. It was my first day. I was a total stranger to Lakeland and to the school and Chiles. I think I was in the second grade and I think Chiles was probably in the sixth grade. I can take you to the oak tree this very day where I was standing, frightened out of my wits, and Chiles approached me, recognizing that I didn't know what I was doing, befriended me, we bonded, and remained bonded as far as I'm concerned until his death. I must have been probably nine and Lawton would have been about 12. So that's how long that's been.

M: So that's your first memory of Lawton.

S: Yeah. He lived next door to Lake Morton Grammar School, where the Public Library is now.

M: Do you have any vivid memories, other than that meeting, of his elementary school years that you can remember? Would you say that you became friends after that? Obviously second to sixth grade is kind of an age gap but can you remember when you first began to really pal around with him, I guess?

S: Truthfully, probably at the University of Florida. Because of the age gap, in grammar school and high school, seniors don't mess around with freshmen.

M: Exactly.

S: But at the University of Florida, Lawton, between Undergraduate School and Law School, my recollection is, had gone into the service, so when he came back, we were both in Law School, although he was in charge of the ATO Rush, as far as the Lakeland guys were concerned, in 1951. Although at that point, Lawton was married and living close to downtown with Rhea. So he didn't live in the Fraternity House, although he hung out there as much as anyone could with a wife and child.

M: So it was in Law School rather than Undergrad that you met him. Were you both in Law School at the same time?

S: Essentially.

M: At that time?

S: Yeah. Yeah. I knew him all the way through, you know, but to pal around with him, it was primarily I suppose in college.

M: Can you remember his parents, in his early years?

S: Oh yeah, quite well. Oh yes.

M: In his early years, before you went to college.

S: Well his mother and father were fixtures here, you know.

M: Can you give me some memories of them, any specific things that stick out in your mind other than the fact that everybody knew them and they were fixtures?

S: Well, Lawton's dad was the guy who brought the ducks to Lake Morton. It was during World War II and meat was rationed, you had to have coupons. But wild game was not included in the prohibited list. Whether it was true or not, I have always understood that he instituted the ducks on the lake for the purpose of providing food.

M: Now, how did he do that? Did he just go out in the woods and capture them and bring them there? How did they manage that?

S: I think they induced them to land there with [food]. The original stock was all mallards. And they'd come and go, but they got to the point where they were fed so well they didn't leave, they didn't go back north.

M: Did you know Lawton's sister, Jeannette?

S: Yes.

M: Was she older than you as well?

S: Yes. We called her J.J.

M: J.J. Okay. Was she very active in high school?

S: Well see, there again, I probably knew her better after I came back. She was married to Joe Ruthven and we lived about six doors down from them when I first came back to town.

M: So, can you walk me through, back to the ATO Fraternity, did you pledge the ATO Fraternity?

S: Yes.

M: Okay, and Lawton was a fixture, I guess, in the ATO Fraternity by that time.

S: Yes, he was.

M: And you were probably in ATO Fraternity as an Undergrad, certainly.

S: Oh yeah, all the way through. I lived in that house I guess for three years.

M: Were there any other Lakeland ATO's that you remember besides Lawton that were very instrumental?

S: Well, everybody [in Lakeland seemed to be in] ATO.

M: Bill Ellsworth?

S: Ellsworth, well I roomed with Ellsworth. Harry Coe was, Art Wright was, David Lyons was, Chuck Lyons. It goes on and on and on. Most people from Lakeland who were asked to be ATOs were in fact ATOs. We had a couple Sigma Nu's but I think that was more by elimination than by choice.

M: Can you talk a little bit about the presence of the ATO Fraternity in UF, what kinds of fellas were involved in that, what kind of stature did they have at school, what were they known for?

S: Well, you know there were probably a dozen fraternities that, in retrospect, were essentially equivalent. Fraternities then tended to draw from specific geographic areas, and ATO was very, very strong in Lakeland and in part of Tampa, we were heavy in Orlando and oddly enough in Jax Beach. The SAEs for example were heavy in Tallahassee and Orlando. The Phi Deltas tended to be heavy, or KAs would tend to be heavy in South Tampa, the Plant High School crowd. The ATOs drew the Hillsborough crowd. I think most of the Jesuit-type guys were probably either ATOs, SAEs or Phi Deltas. But truthfully, there were no real distinctions between them; they were all real good houses, really.

M: Now, when you got to know Lawton through the fraternity and also reconnected with him because you all were from Lakeland and all that, did you sense that he had any real big interest in politics?

S: No.

M: Or was that something that you were kind of taken with later on, or struck by later on, that all of a sudden he's

S: When he decided to run for the House, I don't know how much of this you really want to hear, but you know, I think the absolute world of Lawton but let's face it, the brains behind it all were Rhea. Okay? Chiles didn't have a snowball's chance in hell of beating Roy Surles until she decided that they would go door to door throughout this entire county. Lawton took one side of the street; Rhea took the other side of the street. They banged on doors. The day of the election, we had a crowd [and] we went to every house in Polk County that was in our District, and we stuck a flyer in their door. "Today is the Day to Vote for Good Government". This was all her doings. And he busted Roy Surles' butt. Yeah, he enjoyed doing it, but without her direction and sense of how to do things, Chiles just would have been another one of us lawyers, truthfully. Skilled, but his political, I don't know, accomplishments I guess you would call it, were essentially of her doing. Incredibly intelligent woman. The walk, the statewide walk, that was all her. I mean, Chiles had to suffer it and do it, in the back of a damn camper, but it was Rhea who orchestrated all that. Remarkably well, as you might know. There was nothing really to distinguish Lawton from a lot of other people.

M: When Lawton returned back to Lakeland, can you go through his business relationships, and also yours, by the way, too, your firm? Did you go right into practicing with your father right out of school?

S: I went with Bryant, Martin, and Kibler. And Lawton went with Colonel Bentley, it was Bentley, Miller, or something or another, I've forgotten, and then he and George Carr and Bill Ellsworth started their own firm, Carr, Chiles and Ellsworth, which was in the basement actually of the Thelma Hotel, which is now gone. Our office was up the street on the corner of Main and Kentucky, and Lawton's would have been on the corner of Kentucky and Lemon, I guess that is.

M: Who were the biggest lawyers in town in Lakeland back then? Who were the ones that everybody deferred to as far as the leading lawyers?

S: Mr. Tom Bryant, Gordon Petteway, Colonel Bentley, maybe Judge Love, Benny Love, that'd be about it.

M: And when you went to work with your father, you did general, just about everything. Did you do criminal and civil?

S: I worked for the State's Attorney, actually the County Solicitor, for about six years.

M: Who was?

S: Jess Wilson.

M: Not Clifton Kelly?

S: No, Clifton had been elected Circuit Judge, and then Jess Wilson was appointed to replace him. I worked with Jess until he became a Circuit Judge and then Gordon Petteway was the County Solicitor for a while, and I worked for him I guess a year or two.

M: We could go back to Surles, I guess. What kind of a guy was Surles?

S: Unpleasant.

M: Unpleasant.

S: In retrospect, he was properly named, because he was very surly. It was difficult to warm up to him. He was a little bit righteous, holier than thou. Chiles kickin' his ass was good for the community very frankly. Oh he served well, I don't mean to be too critical of him, but he wasn't the sort of person you'd warm up to.

M: He was a lawyer too, right?

S: Yes.

M: And he was scheduled to be in a leadership position, he was very powerful, entrenched in a position to be speaker.

S: He may have been the Speaker of the House pro tem or something of that sort, yeah.

M: What did you think the first time you heard that Lawton was going to run against him?

S: I didn't think he had a prayer, honestly. But, what the hell, he was a friend so we thought we'd try it, you know. And it worked, in retrospect.

M: And you've already discussed Rhea's role in the campaign, which was –

S: Rhea's role in his life was typically more significant than most wives are in political careers. Did I say that in a nice way?

M: Who would you consider his most loyal supporters in those early, early years, friends but also people who would have contributed money or time to his campaign?

S: Well, probably Bill Ellsworth and George Carr, I would think, yeah, those two more so than anyone else.

M: Was there anybody in the community in these early years that you could think of that didn't like him, that didn't like Lawton, that is, and would've thought this was a brash guy who basically was –

S: Well, all the crowd that hung around with Roy Surles probably thought that.

M: Yeah.

S: Because Lawton was much younger, and just a different cut.

M: So you were surprised, I guess, when he got into politics. It sounds like you really had no inkling that he was interested in politics.

S: Not really. You know, it's not the sort of thing where you can draw a line and say, yeah you realized it that day. I think the first time, I remember we were sitting in a drugstore downtown, there's a pizza place there now, it used to be the Palace Theatre and after that it was a drugstore, and we were sitting in the drugstore one day. My office was right across the street and his was down the street, and we were sitting there, and Rhea was talking about it. I don't know. I'm not going to tell you it was hatched in the drugstore, but that's kind of where I first became acquainted with what he wanted to do, was in the drugstore. It was a coffee shop, though, it wasn't just a drugstore, you know.

M: Do you remember if there were people that worked in the campaign, like managers or press people or anything like that in those early, early years? It wouldn't have been very sophisticated stuff, I'm sure.

S: I think the first professional type person he had was probably Canady, but that was way later.

M: Does the name Jack Pridgen ring a bell?

S: Oh, Lord, yes. Yes, yes, yes. Jack was involved always. Right. And Jack's sister was married to, who?

M: You may have gone to high school with Jack.

S: Yeah, I was a little bit younger than Jack. Jack may have married one of the Coe girls.

M: Okay, can you remember the day of the election, well you obviously mentioned the day of the election you all helped with the brochures and everything, were you surprised when he won? Or how did it look going into the election?

S: You know truthfully, we probably weren't sophisticated enough to know. It turned out well but you know when you've been up since two o'clock putting out brochures on people's doorsteps, there's not a whole lot of recollection of what happened the rest of the day.

M: Once he was elected, did he ever talk to you about things that were up for the Legislature, things that were going on? Did he ever ask your advice on things or your comments on legislation or anything like that?

S: Never.

M: Not really. Okay. Can you go through, to the best of your recollection, what kind of activities he was involved in with the law firm at that time? That would have been I guess 1958 to say 1966.

S: They had a general civil practice. That was at a time when most lawyers did most things without any real high level of specialization. Lawton was certainly an adequate attorney. He served his clients well. You've got to remember that Chiles' most outstanding attribute was always integrity. He had an incredible level of integrity, and I think more so than anything else, that enabled him to do well. I'm not knocking him intellectually. No one would ever confuse him with a brain surgeon, but you always knew that he would speak the truth as he knew it and he was that way in his legal practice. And that's about 98% of it, you know. If you can read and write, you can get by in this business with very little knowledge if you have integrity, and Chiles had it.

M: Let's go through those years, during 1958 to 1970, when the big change came with running for the Senate. If he was out with his best friends hunting, half a dozen people let's say, who would they have been besides you?

S: Well I never hunted. Probably George Carr would be my guess, 'cause Ellsworth never hunted either, but George did. I think George probably would've been involved with more activities like that. He probably hunted some with Burke, 'cause Burke's family had a big ranch where that sort of thing went on and whatnot, you know, and I think they went down to Jim Walters' place on 62 with some frequency.

M: Bob Waters?

S: Jim Walter, Walter Homes.

M: But Bob Waters, Robert Waters. I'm asking.

S: Yeah. I never really knew him well. I went to school with a brother of his named Billy. We were in the same class. I knew him fairly well, but Bobby was enough older that I didn't know him well until actually he was a Ford dealer when I came to know him well.

M: Okay, I guess we're moving along a little faster than I thought we would here.

S: I tried to get specific with you and I realized that one-day just kind rolled into another, you know. I had lunch with him and Ellsworth one day at the Yacht Club, and he had just gotten out of the hospital. He had some surgical procedure, and that was when he was thinking about running for Governor. That probably was the best thing he ever did for Florida, was be Governor. I mean, hell, anybody can be a United States Senator; they don't do anything but quack.

M: Shuffle papers, shout.

S: I interrupted you, I'm sorry.

M: Well, I want to cover that, I do want to get your thinking on that. Is there anything within the years, I want to try to keep in chronological perspective here, anything that stands out in your memory in terms of his business career or legislative career in the State House, which would have been 1958, I guess, through 1970? Anything you can recall? Did you ever go to Tallahassee to visit him up there?

S: No.

M: No. Not really. Did you ever lobby him on things in the State House?

S: No.

M: Did he ever talk about any things that he was working on in the State Legislature that you remember?

S: No. See most of my recollections of Chiles were social in nature.

M: Yeah, well we want to [cover] some of that too, as much as you want to do. I'm trying to get the whole person here, not just the guy in the suit.

S: There was a bar in Gainesville called The Kit Kat Club and the front door was two doors, side by side, and both of them had a circular glass in the middle of them, so you could see through and wouldn't pull the door open in the face of somebody. It was a circle that probably had about a 12-inch diameter, and Chiles knew how to break it with one punch by hitting it and withdrawing real quick. And after coming under the influence of alcohol, he would demonstrate this. I can recall twice he showed me how to do it.

M: Was this when you were in school?

S: We were at the University of Florida, yeah.

M: Okay, you were in Law School.

S: No, we were probably in Undergraduate School, because it was after we were in Undergraduate School that Chiles went off to the service.

M: Okay.

S: And we were both members of a group called Lapche Dance Society, which was composed of nine members from the nine big fraternities. And the initiation ceremony involved drinking a pint of whiskey and walking around a circle of the members, each of whom would hit you with a two-handed paddle. That was the initiation ceremony. And thereafter, you'd wear a black shirt with a red dagger to school dance functions. We were in that at the same time. Most of my recollections of Undergraduate School have to do with raising hell, frankly. Then of course when Lawton came back, you know, he had a wife and kids and this and that and you know. He was like an adult and didn't pal around with the college kids as much.

M: Now did he ever mention to you, or from your inferences of things, did he ever say 'well I really admire that guy' or 'that's a person that I really look up to', political leaders, people in the community other than obviously his parents? Would there be anybody that you would think Lawton would really have admired and maybe tried to model himself after?

S: I don't have any recollection of that.

M: Spessard Holland for example.

S: Well, yeah, I mean, but that for Chiles was natural because you're talking about, Senator Holland was a quality person, and Chiles was a quality person, and whether he would knowingly model himself or whether he was just that type anyway, I'm not sure I would say to you that Chiles set out to be like Senator Holland, but he was because he was that sort of character.

M: Can you go through the time just before he decided to run for the Senate, which would have been 1960, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969? Those were pretty tumultuous years in all of that.

S: I think there again, that was a judgment that Rhea made, that it was time. I can remember sitting in the drugstore one day and something was said about a car or something like that and she said 'no one needs that until they are in the United States Senate'. Yes? And yes. I mean it was clear at that point that that, in her mind, was the next step in the progression.

M: While you were not in Lawton's law firm, you probably had an inkling of what was going on in the firm at the time.

S: We two conferred all the time.

M: Yeah. From your perspective on the outside looking in, what was the feeling of the firm with regard to his political activities? Do you think there might have been any tension about his activities?

S: Oh no, no, no. Bill and George both liked it.

M: The time he spent away and all that?

S: It's a business carrier, I mean people like to be associated with successful politicians, and Lawton clearly was. But he did not try to exact a pound of flesh in exchange for it.

M: Now, this was about the time the Red Lobster issue came along. Can you go through that a little bit and let me know how that was organized?

S: Well that was all Ellsworth's doings. He built the first one for them and leased it to them, fixed rent, percent of gross. Ellsworth told me one time that every meal there, he made a quarter, and he and Lawton were partners in it. Lawton's participation was nominal only; Ellsworth did it all. They did a mobile home park together out there east of town. Bill Ellsworth's financial activities on behalf of them enabled Lawton to afford to be in politics. He couldn't have lived adequately either in Tallahassee or in Washington on what they pay. I'm not knocking that, but Ellsworth made additional income for Lawton, which made him able to enjoy these things.

M: Did Lawton invest in the enterprise himself? Do you know the answer to that?

S: I don't think anybody had a dime in it. That was what leases were all about.

M: So was this a franchise out of Orlando?

S: No, these guys –

M: There was some connection to Gary's Duck Inn, correct?

S: It was Woodsby's who were, I don't know whether they owned Gary's Duck Inn or whether Long was a cook there, but they're the same people that have got two or three restaurants in Orlando now and they've got one in Tampa. It's the Woodsby family. I guess they did own Gary's Duck Inn.

M: I remember going there when I was a kid, for example.

S: Yeah, and I know Lawton and Bill owned one here, they owned one on Cortez Road in Bradenton, and there may have been a couple more. But I knew they threw off cash like you would not believe.

M: And this was just an unusual idea. It was a great restaurant and everybody wanted to go there.

S: Oh yeah.

M: And it was the time. The time was right for something like this.

S: Well, Ellsworth is a financial genius, really and truly. Bill and I were roommates at the University of Florida, and we've done a lot of things together too over the years. We built Casa Loma. We built Casa del Mar. I guess that's about all, those two things. I went to school with Ellsworth's sister, Peggy, out in Shore Acres, so I've probably known Ellsworth longer than most of my friends really.

M: Did you know Bill's cousin, Jean Edwards?

S: No.

M: She was Lawton's age, which meant you might not have known her, but they went –

S: I know who you're talking about.

M: She's like my mama. When I grew up in Orlando, she was on my street. Her sons were like brothers to me. We grew up kind of together, and that was kind of a weird connection.

S: Well, Ellsworth's mother's sister was married to Senator Holland's brother.

M: Yeah, well that's Jean's family.

S: Okay, okay. I'm gonna' tell you something, as you get older, this world gets so small it's almost scary.

M: Yeah, it is. It is. So, we're moving in to 1970 and Lawton's got a little bit of a cushion with the Red Lobster revenue. What did you think when you heard he was going to run for the Senate? Were you surprised?

S: No, not really, that was the natural progression. You had to either run –

M: Do you remember the first time you heard it?

S: It was in the drugstore.

M: In that drugstore?

S: Yeah, on Kentucky Avenue.

M: And Rhea was with you.

S: Rhea was making some reference to a personal item, I'm not going to tell you whether it was a car or clothes, but it was something you didn't need unless you were in the Senate.

M: And she just said that, winking and smiling?

S: Well you had the –

M: Or was it serious?

S: Well you knew that that was what was going to happen next. Nobody said 'I'm going to run for the Senate', you know.

M: Can you remember what went through your mind when you heard that and how the whole race for the Senate began to progress? Did he enlist his friends? Did he get them all together and say 'hey I'm going to do this', or were there people in the community that were kind of in this clique of supporters?

S: I don't recall any gatherings for that purpose. In my recollection, it was just one of those things that, one day it was just there, you know. You've got to remember, everybody had their own lives, I mean, you know I had four kids and two jobs and all that.

M: Now Chesterfield Smith is somebody that Lawton really looked up to. Do you remember his presence in the community, and also whether he would have been involved in this Senate process?

S: Oh, I'm sure he was. I'm sure he was.

M: Yeah, as an advisor?

S: Yes. Yes. And, you know, fundraising and that sort of thing.

M: Fundraising? Who do you think he would have called first, including Chesterfield, for that kind of thing, the fundraising side of things?

S: More than Chesterfield, he probably would have turned to Burke. I had forgotten this. Back then Burke, Lawton and I were in the same Reserve Unit and Burke was the Commanding Officer of the Secret Service Unit, or some such thing.

M: Yeah, that's interesting. I've heard about that. Can you go into that a little bit, what that was like, how that worked?

S: They met on Monday night in a room about this big and there were only about six people in the unit.

M: Was Chesterfield involved in that at all?

S: No, it was Burke, Lawton –

M: What about Homer Hooks?

S: No, Homer was a Colonel of some sort. But I would think, probably more than anyone, he would have looked to Burke to get financial things going, 'cause Burke has always had real good connections. I'm talking about pre- Holland and Knight days, honestly. He came from that pre- War crowd at University of Florida.

M: And his father-in-law was really involved too in that kind of thing I bet.

S: Well, Mr. Bryant was his father-in-law.

M: Right, that's what I mean.

S: Yeah. Well see, Burke's family was/is extremely wealthy. They were in the phosphate business in Dunnellon

M: I've probably done eight hours with Burke like we're doing now.

S: He's an interesting person.

M: He is just amazing. For example, we did probably three days of two-hour sessions before we even got into Lawton Chiles, so as part of the Center for Florida History Oral History Project, I've got all of that wonderful stuff. You know, his early childhood in Ellenton, for example, you know, and all that. It's great stuff.

S: He taught me the difference between good whiskey and bad whiskey. I learned to drink V.O. and water because of Burke.

M: Okay. Well, let's go back to 1970. Charlie Canady would have been a main figure then.

S: Yes.

M: Jack Pridgen.

S: Yes.

M: Now, did they work together?

S: Oh yes.

M: Or did they have certain jobs that they shared, or he did certain things and they did certain things?

S: I know they must have had separate functions, but I don't think you could distinguish them.

M: Now, 1968, 1969, the whole country just about erupted, you know, the Viet Nam War, the Civil Rights Movement, and all those kinds of things. Were there any things during that campaign that you can recall that Lawton addressed specifically about civil rights, Viet Nam – Watergate hadn't hit yet, of course, but were there any things that you can think of that came out in that campaign that addressed those types of things?

S: Not specifically, but remember that Lawton, in the scheme of things, was a political liberal. On today's scene, you would identify him more with the Kennedy's and John Kerry than you would with the present Republican officeholders.

M: Even then, in 1968, 1969?

S: Even then. But you know, you didn't make that distinction then.

M: 'Cause everybody was Democrat just about.

S: Yeah. I registered Republican -

M: And that's one of the things I want to address.

S: It was on the front page of the paper, it was so unusual. People didn't do that. I was in Law School with Lawton –

M: When was that, by the way?

S: Oh, I don't remember. I was in Law School and I'll never forget we were meeting at a John Marshall Bar Association and Attorney Gene Roberts who was a friend of ours, stood up and said that segregation is morally indefensible, and I got goose bumps when it was said, and I get goose bumps every time I repeat it. And that was the sort of thing, Chiles

didn't say that, but that to me was the sort of thing that Chiles would have understood and believed in, morally indefensible.

M: And that would have been when you were in Law School.

S: Yeah. And Chiles was in Law School about the same time I was, and I think he was in the gathering that day. But that's the sort of person he was, you know? I mean he wasn't out here beating around and carrying on and throwing up signs at the U.N., and things of that sort. But he knew what was right, you know? He really did.

M: Do you remember, when you first heard that he was going to walk the State, what you thought about it?

S: I thought it was brilliant.

M: Brilliant.

S: Yes. Absolutely.

M: Did he tell you first, or did Rhea tell you, or did you just kind of learn it from somewhere?

S: Just learned it.

M: It must have been a pretty exciting time.

S: Well it was a dreadful time because he'd be out there days on end with very little communication. They didn't have cell phones, you know. You had to use payphones or wait until you got to someplace where they had a damn landline.

M: And of course he's in Century, Florida, which is the panhandle.

S: Oh God he started out there in Alabama.

M: Right in Alabama, on the border of Alabama, yeah. And there's a story about -

S: And he didn't always walk, but he was either walking or in that damn camper.

M: So you thought it was a brilliant political ploy rather than a gimmick.

S: It elected him. It elected him. Just like the door-to-door thing here in Lakeland had worked. No one had ever banged on every door before. People do it now but because Chiles did it first, he was far more effective.

M: Do you remember following his progression, reading the newspapers, checking in?

S: Oh yeah.

M: Would he call in from time to time and say 'hey I'm here in Crestview, Florida, wish you were here', that kind of thing?

S: No. Not with me.

M: Did you do any of the walking yourself?

S: No.

M: Did you ever go meet him at specific locations when he was coming in?

S: Oh I went to his rallies and things of that sort, yeah.

M: So would you say it kind of built? There wasn't much attention at the beginning but then when he got to Tallahassee and then he began to come down –

S: He was probably north of Orlando somewhere before it really, really kicked in that he wasn't bullshittin' about doing it, he was in fact doing it. And then they started covering him on a daily basis, 'he's here, he's there', and just whoosh. It was like a tidal wave.

M: In the Primary, he ran against Farris Bryant.

S: Yes.

M: Do you remember if Farris Bryant had any support around here, or were people primarily on Lawton's side?

S: Well, Farris Bryant was in ATO about the same time Burke was, okay? And Farris used to come to the ATO House in Gainesville, so there was a lot of inner connection there.

M: I got a sense that Burke really liked Farris too.

S: Oh Lord yeah. Well to know him was to like him. But Chiles was us. I mean we didn't consciously have to make a choice because Chiles was one of us.

M: And he was close to Farris too I guess when Farris was Governor, correct?

S: Yes.

M: So he won.

S: Yes.

M: It must have been just a remarkable, remarkable event. It must have been extremely exciting.

S: Well it was incredible then because he did it at about half price on top of everything else.

M: And he wasn't an insider, and all those little donations, and all of that.

S: Well, see that was Chiles' appeal. He was never a big dog. He was but didn't act it. You know, being a United States Senator is prestigious; let's face the facts.

M: Did you ever have a chance to go up to Washington to visit him?

S: No.

M: Or did you ever go to events here, I guess you did go to events here when he was running.

S: Oh yes, that sort of thing. Well, I used to see him out at Anna Maria Beach. We knew his son [had] that restaurant and that sort of thing. We always hung out down there.

M: Can you comment on the kids and their role in the campaign, as well as later on? Were they involved?

S: I don't think they had a great deal of involvement because they weren't old enough. Lawton had an adopted daughter who was probably more involved with him politically. The oldest boy, Bud, was involved. Ed, I don't think was involved except peripherally. Of course he's had that restaurant down there for years, and that's a 7-day-a-week job.

M: Did Rhea enlist your support, for example, in the Florida House activities?

S: She didn't enlist anybody's support. She told you what you were supposed to be doing. There was no enlisting involved. You were given an assignment.

M: Who would you say were Rhea's closest friends here in Lakeland?

S: Maybe Bobby Water's wife.

M: Nitzi?

S: Nitzi, Burke's wife, Nell, Sally Allsopp that crowd, some of the Junior Leaguers.

M: Juanita Black?

S: Yes, Juanita Black would have been. Marilee Truitt.

M: Sarah McKay?

S: Sarah, yes, yes. Sarah is one of my oldest and dearest friends. She would have been. See, they were [in] about the same class in high school that Lawton was. They all came back and stayed and did well; their husbands did well.

M: Yeah, Sarah is one of my great advocates.

S: Good. I want to tell you the first thing she did at Southern College was get that lady down here. My God, what a stroke of genius.

M: Yeah, we're really optimistic.

S: Are you on the staff there, you are, aren't you?

M: Oh yeah.

S: Okay. Well, you know, what's the female enrollment, 70%? It makes all the sense in the world that they should have a female president there, and the guy that they've got right now has been the best president they ever had, honestly. I hate to see him go.

M: Yeah. I remember the first time we met, you don't remember this probably, but the first time we met down at Mosswood, we had just hired Reuschling and I think you made the comment that you were really expecting good things out of him.