// NOTICE

Materials in our digital Oral History collections are the products of research projects by several individuals. USF Libraries assume no responsibility for the views expressed by interviewers or interviewees. Some interviews include material that may be viewed as offensive or objectionable. Parents of minors are encouraged to supervise use of USF Libraries Oral Histories and Digital Collections. Additional oral histories may be available in Special Collections for use in the reading room. See individual collection descriptions for more information.

This oral history is provided for research and education within the bounds of U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.). Copyright over Oral Histories hosted by the USF Libraries rests with the interviewee unless transferred to the interviewer in the course of the project. Interviewee views and information may also be protected by privacy and publicity laws. All patrons making use of it and other library content are individually accountable for their responsible and legal use of copyrighted material.

Land Use Oral History Project
Patel Center for Global Solutions
University of South Florida

Interview with:	Dr. Chip Hinton
Interviewed by:	William Mansfield
Location:	Seffner, Florida
Date:	Feb. 28, 2006
Transcribed by:	Wm. Mansfield
Edited by:	Wm. Mansfield
Audit Edited by:	Kyle Bradford Burke
Audit Edit Date:	January 30, 2008
Final Edit by:	Nicole Cox
Final Edit Date:	January 30, 2008

WM: I always put a label on the disc by saying: This is Bill Mansfield from the Patel Center for Globalization Research [Patel Center for Global Solutions], on the Land Use Oral History Project, talking to Mr. Chip Hinton— or Dr. Chip Hinton on February 28, 2006. We're in the office of the uh—Strawberry Growers Association?

CH: We have three organizations: The Florida Strawberry Growers Association, which is a trade association; the Florida Strawberry Patent Service Corporation, from which we run all of the Florida Patents. We have a licensing agreement on all Florida [Strawberry] patents. And the Strawberry Research and Education Foundation, where we run all of our research and all of our scholarship funding, for youngsters and our education programs.

WM: So that's what all this office does?

CH: That's what we do!

WM: We always get people, when we're doing these interviews to start out stating their names and telling us when they were born and where they were born, so let her go.

CH: Okay. This is where the real embarrassment comes. Not with the date, actually— July 25, 1947. I consider myself a Florida Sand Crab but due to a death in the family, my family was up in Nashua, New Hampshire, when I was born. So I spent a grand total of six weeks in Nashua, but unfortunately I'm a Yankee. (laughs)

WM: Well that's you were born, but—

CH: You're absolutely right

WM: I don't think you were there long enough for it to take.

CH: (laughs) It didn't take, no.

WM: You were raised here in Florida; you grew up here in Florida?

CH: I'm a Sand Crab. I grew up in Pensacola, Florida.

Pensacola is a great place to grow up. During the summers I worked for the commercial mullet fishermen and during the winters I went hunting in Eglin Air Force Reservation, so my aspirations were to grow-up as either a commercial fisherman or a game warden. And if I couldn't have played football I probably would have been one of those two. But I happened to get a scholarship to the University of Florida and played Gator football during [Steve] Spurrier's playing days. So we had a lot of fun during that time.

WM: And you got into agriculture?

CH: The irony [of that], there was a really attractive gal, a blonde gal, that was a pre-vet major happened to catch my eye. And I found that if I took more classes in animal science I could spend more time with her. She became my life long soul mate, of 40 years so far. She never made it to vet school, but she put [me] through his Ph.D. and actually ended up getting her degrees from Florida Southern [College, in Lakeland, FL].

WM: This project is about land use, particularly the growing metropolitan area, and the changing of agricultural land into subdivision land— commercial development and residential development. So would it be a good place to start, to talk about who the players are?

CH: Can we give a little bit of a historical perspective? That [way you] would understand why in the world I'm involved in this.

WM: Okay.

CH: In 1972 I became this community's first specialist in poultry. Poultry, like any confined animal situation, is one of those areas that tends to have difficulty as populations increase around them. One of the first responsibilities I had, as an extension agent with the University of Florida, was to oversee the brand-new growth management program, [as determined by] Guy Spicola. [It was] the template for growth management for the entire state.

You may, or may not, remember that when Guy was successful in getting the growth management legislation approved in the early seventies, he volunteered Hillsborough County to be the first county to be involved in this growth management program. The product of that was Horizons 2000. And so Horizons 2000 our brand new state charter planning commission came together with the concept of where we would be year 2000, versus the early seventies. And what changes would occur and how many of those changes could we have an impact upon.

As a young extension agent, [with] a fresh Ph.D., who looking forward to a long career in agriculture I was told that in the year 2000, instead of the 440,000 people we had in Hillsborough County at that time, that there would be over a million people. And our rather strong and firmly based agricultural community, of roughly fifty million dollars, would be non-existent. I found this a little distressing for me. And so I started checking around to see if this was, in fact, "set in stone" or if we were doomed to follow the model that southern California was providing and all of the challenges that we have when you have urban influences upon agricultural commodity use.

During that time this took us through quite a bit of research and a little bit of trial and error. One of the areas that we looked at rather quickly was the state of Oregon. We found, in Oregon, that they had studied this particular issue. They found that in some communities that what you'd expect to occur, with increasing urban population, did occur. That there was a reduction and finally a destruction of agriculture as suburban/urban communities increased.

But then there were some areas where the stereotype just didn't work. Where not only did agriculture survive, but in some cases it actually thrived as populations increased. The common denominator that they found within these success stories was that in those communities where agriculture was able to thrive, in an increasingly urban surrounding, the agricultural community was very proactive. There was, in fact, a leadership development aspect. Of course, they didn't know at that time exactly what they were doing, but they knew that they were in duress and if they didn't take the bull by the horns, so to speak, they would be history.

The unfortunate nature of agriculture land use is that it tends to be a constant battle. It's like pushing water upstream. If there is, in fact, a conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural use it is usually irreversible. So these people were fighting hard for their lifestyle and the quality of life, through open space and environmental functions, which was a very big deal in Oregon then and is now. But they were getting a tremendous by-product associated with the leadership development aspects; where they were actually favorably influencing policy for agriculture in the community. We saw that to not only an encouraging bit of research, but also an inspiring bit of research. We put our efforts towards trying to—first very informally, but later in a very structured way, trying to develop leadership within our community that would influence policy that was favorable to agriculture.

The stereotype of agriculture not surviving in an encroaching urban situation is generally true because—ah—urban populations tend to increase regulations. There seems to be an inherent mindset that as people move into a community, they must be protected from the agriculture that is within their community. Flies, odors, slow moving vehicles, perceived or real pesticide threats, manure applications—you name it. All of these things tend to be offensive to new residents in rural or semi-rural communities.

The reality—and one of the things we have found—is that every regulation costs somebody something. And agriculture, after all, is a business. So as you increase the cost,

associated with regulations, you make it less cost effective for that agriculturist to be there, in that increasingly urban community. That, in addition to the—I would say the personal, or personality factor, [farming] becomes less fun if you've got your neighbors screaming at you all of the time. Particularly as you get in advanced age. Or you have to give the next generation advice on what their future might be.
If it has been a difficult situation for you, relative to people making your life uncomfortable, you're less likely to encourage them to continue in an agricultural endeavor.

So it seems rather simplistic but the reality is, if agriculture is a profitable situation you usually don't have problems with agriculture being moved out of a community. The best way that we have found to resolve this complexity, this convoluted issue of policy as it relates to agriculture is to have a focus on: "How do we make agriculture profitable in this increasingly urban community?"

Can we stop there for a second?

WM: Yeah. Let me pause this.

pause in recording

WM: And we're going again.

CH: The really interesting thing that we have found is that most people in-and-of themselves, do not have any kind of agenda, relative to agriculture. They don't say, "Let's put agriculture out of business in the process." I think it is more a matter of a general urban bias, where they are a product of their up-bringing, typically, and they look at things from the perspective of: "How can we put together a group of restraints on the community at large to protect the citizens of the community?"

That's fine and dandy if parts of that community includes the agricultural community. What we have discovered, in our involvement with regulatory community is that quite easily we can come up with suggestions in removing urban bias and regulations that will accomplish the intention of the regulations with a minimal impact on user groups.

Typically speaking, your regulatory community has never really had to live under the impact of the regulations that they formulate. So they don't know if any of the regulations they came up with are reasonable or not. Of course they assume they are reasonable, but they've never been in a situation where they wake up every day, trying to work with the natural environment, or the semi-natural productive environment of the agriculturist and minimize the impact of those regulations upon their daily lives.

So what we try to do is, first of all, expose where there is urban bias, so that we can have an educational program and eliminate propensity for the urban bias, with our regulatory community. It's a continuous process, because the turnover in regulatory communities. The institutional memory of regulatory communities is terrible.

WM: Tell me who the regulatory community is. You know who they are, but I don't have an idea about that.

CH: Well it's a rather long list and it gets into a montage, over time. We did a study recently and determined that, at that time, a grower who wanted to go into production in Hillsborough County, to pack the vegetables that he had produced within that community, utilizing a migrant labor force, which is a fairly typical situation, would have to either get permits, or interact with 46 agencies at that time.

Now the real difficulty that we run into is that not only are some of the regulations that come together have an urban bias (which we discussed earlier) but quite often the regulatory agencies are duplicative; where one would have coverage over the federal which has been delegated to the state, which has been delegated to the district, which has been delegated to the local agency. But all four [agencies] still have their fingers in it. And sometimes in this delegation to the local area there is, even worse than duplicative, there are contradictions. You can be in compliance with one agency and be in conflict with another and never know it, until it's too late to undo what you have done.

To give you a list [of the regulatory agencies] would be difficult. But there are lists available that you could use as an addendum, I'm sure. But at the time when we were looking at this there were thirteen agencies or advocacy groups with labor alone. So that gives you an idea of some of the challenges [that] are facing us.

The reality is that, in any single piece of property you have a use of that property in its current form and the projected long-term use of that property. One of the major things that we had to overcome within what is becoming an increasingly urban community is the bias that agricultural land-use is a placeholder. In other words, the use of that property is strictly for [agriculture] until it can be used for something else.

WM: So they are just waiting for something to happen. They're farming it because they haven't got anything better to do [with the land]?

CH: Exactly. Again, [they don't] consider the profit motive and the fact that it is a business. It's an open space function; it's an environmental function. But someday that land will be used for other purposes. First of all, we wanted to point out that agriculture is a legitimate use of property and have that reflected in our land use element. In other words, in Hillsborough County agriculture can be conducted in virtually every land use that there is.

And not only that, but in rural areas, where agriculture is the predominate use, it is the preferred use. So that when you have these potential conflicts that arise from agriculturists and the use of their property, versus rural landowners and their perceived property rights, as it relates to the conflicts that sometime[s] occur with agriculture—agriculture is the preferred use. That's critical. So you have 180 [degree] turn around, rather than a situation where you're protecting your rural landowners or your suburban

landowners from agriculture; you're actually protecting agriculture from other landowners that are non-agricultural. That's critical that [this] occur if you're going to have survival [of agriculture].

Not all issues are warm and fuzzy issues. Farm labor housing, for example, is one of those issues that really does come under the NIMBY [Not In My Back Yard] category. People do just not want migrant housing in their backyard. So one of the difficulties agriculturists have, particularly in winter-vegetables, like we have here, is finding adequate labor and providing and providing a quality of housing that meets the litmus test, for safety and health and is the type of housing we feel comfortable providing for our workers. We've had to fight.

That's been one of the areas that we've been very successful in over the years. I think I've served on six or seven committees over the past 30 years, trying to solve that problem. It comes and goes with the flow of the political powers that be.

Let's hold off for just a second.

WM: You want me to pause this?

CH: Yes.

pause in recording

WM: All right [it's running again].

CH: I should say, somewhere in here, that this was a self-taught program in leadership—

WM: And this is the leadership program that you started to—

CH: To influence policies that relate to land use in an urban community with a lot of agriculture.

WM: All right.

CH: Part of it gained—ah—my background by participating in those land use functions that give you an opportunity to be an intern, to be an apprentice. I served on the Planning Commission for a period of time. I was on the zoning advisory board, for a period of time. I was a charter member of the Citizens Environmental Advisory Committee. I was on the Citizens Advisory Committee for a period of time. All of these functions gave me an opportunity to see how agriculture can survive and thrive, in the long run, with a diverse group of people that are influencing policy.

Now what we did, in trying to develop our cadre of leaders that would influence policy within this community, was we utilized specific instances, specific challenges, specific threats, on the agricultural community as opportunities to learn by doing.

We still speak very affectionately of the “Feather Brigades.” People don’t remember, but in 1972, the south end of [Hillsborough] county wasn’t even zoned. There was an attempt to develop zoning particularly as it related to trailers and trailer parks. At that time we needed to have low-income housing available, but where do we put them? Quite often these facilities of several hundred units would be plopped down in the middle of a rural community, because no one else wanted them.

If you remember, my first involvement was with the poultry industry and the first efforts we had in mobilizing our community was involved with large trailer parks in close proximity to poultry farms. That’s about as close to potential conflict as you can ever run into. We were very successful. What we were teaching our people was, first of all: that a few people really could make a big difference in policy. We taught them how to network with other rural landowners. Not just farm people, but people who enjoyed the open space and quality of life issues of rural communities and saw a poultry farm as more desirable than a trailer park.

I know that’s not politically correct, but the reality is that sometimes you have strange bedfellows when you are working on a common issue.

We had an issue where water, which is one of our primary natural resources, fit in to provide is [with] an opportunity for leadership development. It was the case where the County of Hillsborough and their public water supplier, which at that time was West Coast Water Supply Authority, was planning to put 18 wells around the western perimeter of the agricultural community. Running, more or less, [along] Valrico Road to McIntosh Road.

At that time they were very much into linear well fields, meaning that they would pump over a million gallons out of a one acre that they would purchase here there and everywhere. At that time their interest was to pump roughly twenty million gallons a day, form twenty acres of property and roughly eighteen sites. That was really more water than the entire strawberry industry had been pumping on one hundred and forty square miles. So we saw that as being a real area of conflict, not only because we had gone come through the “Freezes of January of 1985” where we had a hundred and twenty some odd sink holes that occurred from fifty-five continuous pumping for freeze protection. We know if we were going to be successful in getting an agreement together with West Coast, we would have to use our abilities in developing a scientific basis for our concerns. But secondly, we’d have to get more politically astute and influence policy at the political level.

We developed a consortium, the first of which a member of the governing board of the Water Management District, Walter Harkala was retiring off of the governing board, at that time.

WM: Walter who now?

CH: Harkala. H-a-r-k-a-l-a. Walter had a background in Plant City agriculture and had funded strawberry production over time. So he was friendly to the strawberry industry.

Most people don't know that a private citizen can request a hearing on any action done by the Water Management District, if they feel that the environment is being threatened. So we asked this rather prominent private citizen to request a hearing, to hear our concerns, to keep the costs down.

In other words, Walter requested that we work through a hearing officer and then the Florida Strawberry Growers Association intervened on his behalf, to represent him, so we gained standing through that process. That particular group had just won a major battle and expended nearly three million dollars in court costs. So we knew we were up against some rather difficult cases.

WM: The West Coast Water [Supply] had just won a major battle?

CH: West Coast, Tampa Bay Water, one of those two, whichever it was at that time. Yes, the problem that we ran into a that time, had to do with the Lithia Pinecrest Pumping series, where they felt it was important not to set precedents on wells that were pumped dry through supplying the public. So there were two hundred and fifty wells that claimed that they had gone dry as a result of the [water company's] activities. They fought every one of [those cases] and spent almost three million dollars, more money than they would have spent if they had replaced the wells.

Sometimes it's good being number two because of this feeling [of] animosity [that] was building in the community. There was a concern that if the Tampa Bay Water [Company] had a foothold in that particular area the wells would go dry and they would not have the opportunity to get compensated if [their wells went dry]. In today's political climate that wouldn't occur, but in the late 1980s it was very much a concern.

The consortium that we developed was one that involved a homeowners group, that was around a lake that had been drawn down several feet because of a 1.1 million gallon per day well that was already pumping (one of the eighteen). Within our Strawberry Growers Association we have a women's committee that did a lot of leg work, as far as checking to see if some of the suppositions that [the Water Company]. I'm going to use the terms [West Coast Water and Tampa Bay Water] interchangeably, but I believe it was West Coast at that time.

The supposition they had at that time was over a ten-year period 100 percent of the people that were using domestic wells would convert to public supply so there would be an increased demand. By the time they had gotten through with the permit, they were well into that process. So it was a linear conversion [and] we showed, [with a] house-by-house inspection that they were well off, of how many domestic wells were still in activity, better than half way through their projected period. Secondly, we showed them that if the linear involvement that they had was in the year 2002, there'd be 102 percent

of the population would have converted. You know, it was just straight linear, as opposed to your curvilinear, or bell-shaped acceptance function.

The next thing, that we pointed out, was that they had made some projections on per-capita water usage that didn't take in the fact that, that area had been designated as a water use caution area which required a reduction in per-unit capita use. So they had over estimated their need on that basis as well. And, we had essentially shown that 85 percent of their projected need, that they were involved with was not scientifically founded.

But the real coup-de-grace, and probably the most important of all factors, was we put a pin map together that showed where each agricultural entity was in eastern Hillsborough County. [Then] we took the board of county commissioners on a bus ride and showed them agriculture and showed them where the proposed wells were and showed them where the existing wells were. We took them in the middle of a subdivision and said, "Can you see the well that is pumping 1.1 million gallons in the subdivision?" They actually had a well hidden in a house of the subdivision to reduce their visibility. But it sort gave this projection of not a community-friendly group of people that was involved in the process.

Quite candidly, Phyllis Busansky the county commissioner at that time, said, "We've got to find a way to have a compromise here." We sat down with the utilities director—

Tape 1, side 1 ends; side 2 begins.

CH: —We sat down with the people from Tampa Bay Water and we came up with a system that reduced the request from eighteen wells, down to two wells that were already built and pumping, until they were able to tie into their well fields at Cypress Creek. And then those two wells would be phased out, over a ten-year period. It's the first case, that I'm aware of, probably the only case, where the current, existing water use by rural water users, was respected, in the area of public supply.

We got a consent agreement out that, which stated that there'd be no more public supply well fields, within the intensive strawberry production area, that produced all the sinkholes back in the 1980s. That was renewed ten years later and is still in effect through the year 2008. There's not been an additional well.

The real value of that is, first of all they spent over one hundred thousand dollars in fighting us. We spent a grand total of four hundred and thirty dollars on our side of the deal. So it showed that even with limited resources, if you use an ingenious method, that a very few people can have a major impact on policy. [It's] a real success story in motivating people. We got two outstanding leaders that took on future areas in water issues.

What we have found is that the leadership—it's such a big universe in land use, we have identified people that will take a segment of it, within the resource function. We have a labor person; we have a person that does water. We have a person that does land use as it

relates to agriculture. And this group of people, whenever something comes in that effects them primarily, they served as the focal point for the group, for the workers that come together to make sure that the committee gets things accomplished.

We've found that, probably, what we needed to do, over this period of time, was to take it to the next level and have some sort of formalization of an organization that was by its mandate been put together to provide for the prosperity of agriculture [because of] the land use issues that come into an urban community. So in the 1990's we started with a Board of County Commissioner-requested task force, called the Agricultural Economic Development Working Group. I'll have to check the exact name [of the group]. The purpose of that was to determine the value of agriculture within the community, to determine the primary impediments toward prosperity in agriculture and then, the next thing, how do we find a vehicle that will encourage the prosperity of agriculture in the future.

The study that we came up with directly impacted land use, as it relates to agriculture and non-agricultural land use. And it has for the past nine years. The most important thing that it came up with was referring back to the transient nature of agricultural land use as a holding place for non-agricultural development. It just shook that basic assumption.

It identified that yes, there are some parts of agriculture that are low intensity that provide primarily a holding function—open space and environmental value to the community quality of life and generate quite a bit of money just simply because there are so many acres. But on the per acre basis of fairly low intensity [it] cannot compete well with non-agricultural development functions. However, there are a lot of agricultural commodities that not only compete well, but also compete in a superior nature to non-agricultural development.

For example we did an opportunity cost analysis, where if you have an acre of land and you use it for this purpose, what will be the impact on the community over a 50 year period? Roughly, an adult lifetime.

WM: Uh-uh.

CH: We looked at non-agricultural housing development. At that time the value of an acre of land produced a net benefit to the community of roughly a million dollars. Which was sizeable. For example, citrus was roughly half of that—roughly half a million dollars over a 50-year period. But vegetable production was over two million dollars. Strawberry production was almost five million dollars. Where we looked at environmental horticulture—[nursery] plants—it was over eight million dollars. When we looked at things that used very little acreage, of very high intensity, such as tropical fish, it was over eleven million dollars.

So it pointed out that highest and best use of a piece of property may be non-agricultural development, but it might very well be agriculture. So we were able to make a case that

we needed a balance of agricultural and non-agricultural development, if we were gong to have a wholeness within our community—things that we desired as far as land use went.

I think that, first for [the] first time, pointed out that we're not anti-development in this process. What we're looking for is an understanding of why agriculture has difficulty with an increase in urban community and to avoid those factors so that agriculture can be a player as part of the development that occurs over time, as populations increase.

The second factor that we determined, that I think has affected our land use dramatically, is the fact that there is, basically within this urban bias that I referred to earlier, there is an assumption that greenbelt is a subsidy function for agriculture. In other words, agriculture is somehow or other, getting a reduced rate on taxes, just by the nature of agriculture. And that non-agricultural development is subsidizing that particular use.

To be sure, when you look at total taxes, no doubt about it, housing is the primary tax base, but the important thing that we found was that purpose of taxes is to provide services. So there should be some sort of a linkage between the tax base and the services required. In other words, you use the money generated to provide the services that you have. We found that agriculture, because it doesn't need a whole lot in the way of schools and it doesn't need a whole lot in the way of protection (police protection and hospitals and that sort of thing) that agriculture in its assessment based upon its current use—producing agricultural goods—was [only] receiving 16 cents in services for every dollar generated in taxes. That was in 1997. In our most recent issue, in 2004, we've actually improved that to where every dollar in taxes we're now receiving, roughly, twenty-five cents. So that's probably an indication that we're getting a better deal now than then. It could also mean that we've gotten our sampling device a little bit more critical too, in how to work some of those things out.

WM: What would be the [cost of] urban [services]?

CH: I'm glad you asked. (laughs) The interesting thing was, that for every dollar in taxes that the suburban/urban, non-agricultural, housing use was; that for every dollar in taxes they generated they required $1.56 in services.

WM: So they are coming out behind?

CH: Yes. So there is roughly a 9-to-1 bias against agriculture when it comes down to the bottom line in services for every dollar in taxes received. We really wanted to point that out for two reasons. Number one, to eliminate the assumption that agriculture was being subsidized on a tax basis. But secondly, to point out, in the day when it is very difficult to balance a budget, that agriculture is part of the solution, not part of the problem.

We didn't, at that time, foresee that we would ever hope to get anything back on our land use function that would benefit us, because of the data that we had derived. Now, in our current situation we've got a brand new land use thing that comes and takes those figures under consideration. We'll get into that a little later.

WM: Okay. Well let me ask you a question right quick. Earlier on you talked about trailer parks and poultry farms and the feather brigades in the south [part of the] county. And then that moved to talking about organizing and educating to keep Tampa Bay [Water Company] from drilling wells. Now are those two topics related or did you use that as an example?

CH: No, those are two of many [examples]. We've had probably a dozen or so different challenges to the agricultural community since the 1970s.

WM: Okay, so Tampa Bay was just a—

CH: I thought that was a good example of how a few people can make a difference in policy and we used it, not only to provide a hands-on opportunity for people to become leaders, but we also used it as a "Remember the Maine"-type [rallying cry], to use that positive instance as a spring board for future issues with the understanding that it wasn't inevitable that land use would change and that the resources would be denied for the agricultural/rural portion of the population.

WM: But you talked about the strawberry growers, was that the volunteer group that you all drew upon to contest these wells?

CH: In that particular issue, yes. What we did at that time was—well first of all I had a board of directors that recognized that was a major challenge. We were using the template of the intensive strawberry production area as the battle lines that we had established. It was ironic that the one hundred and forty square mile area was actually designated by the water management district as a result of what I would consider a negative factor. The fact that when we had a major drawdown for freeze protection, we produced sink holes back in the mideighties. But we were able to utilize those boundaries as the intensive strawberry production area, their name not mine, as the vehicle that we could protect that area from an alternative or a competitive water use function, within that rural area.

So, I guess you'd say it's grabbing the cloud and finding the silver lining, as a result of previous work that had been done.

WM: I don't want to put words in your mouth, but it sounds like that you all organized a militia, a volunteer group, to protect your resources here.

CH: Well, militia is probably a little militant, but what we did was we got a group of concerned citizens together and through a "hands-on" approach, encouraged them to be more proactive in [shaping] their future. We went from a situation, where we were originally responding to a crisis situation to a situation with the Ag-Economic Development Council where we are actually writing the ordinances, writing the regulations, with not only the help but the total support of the government and the regulatory community [as well]. We are able to remove the urban bias and in some cases,

meet the needs—the requirements of the regulatory community with minimal or even beneficial involvement within the agricultural community.

So it's a process of proactive involvement that has [grown], both in number and in quality of intervention over time. So that now when we go before the county commissioners, because of the credibility that we've established, we are virtually assured of getting a 7-0 vote on our requests, simply because we have a high level of credibility. They understand that when we go in there we have not only evaluated the needs of the agricultural community, but also the entire needs of entire citizenry of Hillsborough County. With that level of credibility they know that they can trust us to come up with programs of the community at large, not just one segment of the community.

Secondly, we have developed the level of credibility so that if anything that affects the agricultural community is proposed by any agency at the local level, if it doesn't pass before our Ag-Economic Development Council, it's not going to be considered. Because it hasn't had the opportunity for interaction and for suggestions by these subcommittees that we have, working within that more organized group of activists that is now required by the county board of commissioners.

Through that imprimatur that we have obtained from the County Board of Commissioners we have—it's not a group of agriculturists that are expressing concern about something, it is actually a group that was developed by the board of County Commissioners, at their request, with a county employee working in their behalf, so that when we come together with that involvement, they are a part of that decision making process. And it's really made things so much easier.

WM: But was there an effort on your part to or the strawberry council's part to— you talked about identifying community leaders. Was there some sort of education about "These are the laws. This is how you can use them. It only takes one person to demand a hearing from the utilities commission." I'm not clear on that.

CH: I wish I could say that it was that formal. But basically what we are doing as we're learning by doing is, we don't have that template available to us. But I will say this; a lot of the things we do, Farm Bureau and the Strawberry Growers Association are designed to expand our basis of community action. Both of us have a mandatory rest on our board of directors, so that after, four years for us and six years for the Farm Bureau, there is a one year mandatory period where they rotate out, which brings new people into the system.

This sort of tutors them on being involved within the community. We're one of the few commodities that really don't have a major concern about where the next generation of strawberry growers is coming from. Because our board of directors has people [that are] twenty-three [years old] and it has people eighty-three [years old] on it. My board of directors has got a mentoring mentality, where they will [take] young people under their wing and will teach them, not only production issues but also issues that occur outside the fences [of the strawberry field], to bring them along as the next generations of leaders.

And that’s really what has to occur. As I mentioned, you’re pushing water up-hill. We’ve made it easier and are much more successful do to the credibility and due to the diligence that we’ve had over a thirty some-odd year period.

But at the same time we have enough common sense to know that if everything is left alone that it will drop to the lowest energy level. If you allow for there to be no involvement or interest in the best utilization of those resources, they’re going to go to the [lowest] common denominator, which is a maximum profit situation and the easiest location to get zoned.

So our situation is one where we recognize that it not only is it a more difficult alternative but it is a required life long commitment to be involved within the community, or you’ll lose the progress that you’ve made in a relatively short amount of time.

WM: Okay. And I’ll ask about the water thing, ‘cause that was the example that you used. But, the Tampa Bay Water, or West Coast Water, whatever the name of that company, it is like they have made up their mind that this is what they wanted to do and I guess they wanted to increase their supply, or production, I’m not sure—but the research that they did seemed to be pretty invalid. [It was] useful only to vindicate their position.

CH: Well, let me go back to the fact that there is no one malicious in this process.

WM: Right.

CH: We don’t have adversaries. We have people with different opinions. And their mission is to provide for the safety and health of citizens of this community by providing a potable source of water.

WM: Okay

CH: And their requirement is to try to find the least expensive vehicle for that to occur. Obviously, people had much rather pay thirty-cents per thousand [gallons] than $1.50 per thousand for the water.

Ground water is the cheapest source of water that there is. So we had a situation where even though in agriculture we had permitted a relatively [large] but sustainable amount of water within that community they saw an opportunity to harvest some additional water, relatively inexpensively. It wasn’t accidental that they drew a line running north and south on the western edge of the agricultural community. They knew if they went directly into the agricultural community they would definitely raise red flags. But if they are sort of on that line of demarcation, between the Brandon expansion and the Antioch area, then they felt that the risk was worth the effort. Ten years earlier it would have gone through without any kind of problems.

But this was—particularly after what had occurred in the south end of the county, in a largely agricultural community, with the Lithia-Pinecrest situation. The Lithia fields had

a major impact on both agriculture and rural water users. We saw that it was in our best interests to react to that situation.

And what we've done is to work very closely with Tampa Bay Water, in recent times when these permits have come up for renewal, is to offer alternatives that will provide them with the water that doesn't impact the rural, or agricultural community.

One of the great ironies of our times is that one of the lowest areas for permitted water use, is under subdivisions. That's because [the water] is all pumped in. There is very little requirement there. But there are a number of relatively small public supply wells within the Brandon area, that were able to case and expand and to utilize as a water source, instead of encroaching on a competitive use.

So those are the kind of things I'm talking about, seeing both sides of an issue and trying to come up with solutions that will solve everyone's problem, while minimizing the impact.

WM: I'm glad you clarified that because, maybe it's the tenor of the times, but everything seems to be so adversarial. "Them [versus] us." So that's good to hear, about the water [company] people and their reasons for expanding.

But how did the word of that come through? Somebody must have been paying attention to what was going to happen and seen the risks. So tell me about that.

CH: The primary vehicle for people to become involved and serve as [guards] for potential problems is through committees. Most regulatory communities have some sort of a public advisory group. A group that will provide them with input, whether they are user groups or whether they are just citizens at large. And the Water Management district is one of those. In fact, I served on their Ag-advisory committee before it was called that, back over thirty years ago.

I think formerly they've had a committee for 23 or 24 years. So you sit at a lot of very boring meetings and every once in a while you are able to provide input that heads off a potential problem. And every once in a while one [problem] starts snowballing and you recognize that it's not going to be contained within the advisory committee and you have to get a broader base of support, to address those issues.

And that's what this was. It was a case where we knew it was coming and there was enough lead-time to where we could organize the community to respond to that particular issue.

WM: And you talked about the Agricultural-Economic Development Council, did that grow out of this?

CH: The Ag-Economic Development Council really grew out of the mandate that the Board of County Commissioners provided in recognition that agriculture was important

to community and probably was not going to survive the increasing urban influence, with out having a very proactive intervention by the local political community.

WM: Uh-uh

CH: We had the task force first. The task force made recommendations and one of the recommendations was to form the Ag-Economic Development Council. We hired an individual, who is an employee of the county, whose primary responsibilities have to do with identifying potential conflict over land use within the community, and other issues related to the agricultural community and trying to find ways to accommodate all the components of the community.

The Ag-Economic Development Council has commodity representatives on it. It also has people that are not representing the environmental community but people who are well recognized as being environmentalists.

That’s one of the hints that you can take with you; the fact that all the committees we put together have people that are extremely knowledgeable and extremely well known for their involvement in various portions of the community. But they do not represent a standing board.

We found rather quickly that you can never get people acting as representatives of a board to either act in a timely manner or to get a consensus. Simply because most boards will have a diversity of opinion. What we will do is have someone that has been an active member of, I’m going to use the Sierra Club, or Audubon [as an example]. When you hear the name you recognize them as being very actively involved in that community, but they are representing themselves.

WM: Uh-huh.

CH: But we try to select people and present them to the Board of County Commissioners that we know to be people with a much wider view, of how everything sort of interlaces. They recognize that agriculture plays an important role in providing for quality of life and open space. And from their perspective if regulations put agriculture out of business, the alternative use of that property is probably going to have more of a [negative] impact on the environment than the current use of agriculture. So we try to find ways that can accomplish the objectives of those regulations, and minimize the financial impact so that we can stay in business and that land use can continue.

WM: Well talking with you makes me realize what a complex issue all of this is. It involves many different levels of government.

CH: Yes. We have a number of ex-officio members on the Ag-Economic Development Council. Virtually every agency that has a local impact upon land use is involved. We have Department of Agriculture, the water management district, EPC [Environmental Protection Commission], USDA [United States Department of Agriculture] involvement

through the Soil Conservation Services, just whoever has an impact, we have them involved for the information they can provide and for the communication that they can assist us with, in carrying information to the various regulatory agencies.

WM: And when did the Ag-Economic Development Council put together?

CH: I guess—I'll make my best guess and say 1997, 1998.

WM: Okay.

CH: Our current chair or current Hillsborough County employee is Stephen Gran. [See Stephen Gran's interview with Bill Mansfield 6-28-06] (CH spells out the name) He is been doing an outstanding job. And I currently chair that organization. I hadn't planned to be involved with it for this long, but it's been the most productive committee I've been involved with, so I hate to give it up.

Tape 1 ends; tape 2 begins.

CH: It affords some unique opportunities to influence policy.

WM: We've been going at this for a while, and I don't want to keep all morning; but the leadership education, that's really kind of happened as events came up?

CH: Yes it has.

WM: Okay.

CH: What we have tried to do at this stage, now that we have been at it for thirty years, is to find a way that we can provide a template for other communities with similar problems.

WM: Uh-uh.

CH: This past year, the Florida Farm Bureau Federation gave a number of community activity grants of $5,000.00. Not a whole lot of money, but it allowed us to put together a video that gave us the timeline, in Hillsborough County, of the past thirty years. [We've] used the process, that we've discussed rather anecdotally here, and put it down in a more formal basis. "These are the things you look for," [intending] to educate, to work with young people or people in the community that faces the same challenges that we faced thirty years ago, and are looking for a place to start.

We're also going to have a package of success stories, like some of those we mentioned earlier today, and many more. We will pull together some of these processes that we accomplished, so that they not only can gain enthusiasm for the fact that the system works, but also to give some ideas on specific things that work within a specific set-up.

But first and foremost, people have to be "see-ers." They have to be proactive. They have to look at—uh—be able to identify a problem and find ways to solve it, usually with very limited resources and utilizing human capital wherever possible. The improvement of that human capital, both in quality and quantity, is a direct result of these opportunities we provide.

WM: A question I'd like to ask now is [about] the different layers [of government]. Because there is the Board of County Commissioners, there is the utilities commission—Could you give me a rough outline of the different groups involved in land use planning within the county?

CH: Okay. I'll try.

WM: I don't want to ask a question that takes too long to answer.

CH: We'll see how we get into it.

WM: Okay.

CH: There are two primary planning groups within Hillsborough County. The first has got a state charter and that's the Hillsborough County City–County Planning Commission. Their primary responsibility is long range planning and they work very closely with the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council, that's a state function. They have a staff that will sit down and address the specific issues within the community.

It's a living document. As the needs shift and the population pressures change, land use changes they will try to provide amendments as they go through this process. We also have the Planning and Growth Management Department. Historically that has been the zoning part. In other words, you have a plan which provides you with a—uh—broad-brush approach towards where you want to do what, within the community. And then you get to specific parcels and you look at how that is zoned. So there is going to be a specific versus a general function there. But PGMD, the Planning and Growth Management [Department] is also been involved in intermediate and even long range planning.

I'm not sure of how much of that is a direct result of the Board of County Commissioners wanting to have a true county agency involved in that function and how much of it is a direct result of need that has emanated. But both are very productive groups.

I'm sure there is a certain amount of lines of demarcation that occur in any organization that has similar missions. But I've found them both to be relatively functional, more functional than some. I shouldn't say that.

Then you get into a situation where land use has to meet specific has to meet specific criteria within the framework. And it pretty much depends upon what that land use is determines what agency it is moved into. Within that framework you have EPA [the Environmental Protection Agency], at the federal level. They have, again the

requirements as [they] relate to clean air and clean water and various land use function, again, as it relates to how it affects water and so forth.

All of your confined animal feeding operations would fit into the clean water function. The real concern is whether or not there is contamination of water source, on that basis. They will delegate that, although they have the final say on decision making, as it relates to policy, they delegate a lot of the active and functional portions of that to DEP, the Department of Environmental Protection. DEP is directly involved in water quality functions. Most people don't understand or appreciate the fact that our water management districts ultimately answer to DEP.

WM: Is DEP [a] state or federal [agency]?

CH: State.

WM: Okay, so EPA is Federal and DEP is State.

CH: Right.

And then you have five districts, Water Districts, spread out across the state.

Some of the functions, depending on how they fit in, will go to the county level, which is our EPC, Environmental Protection Commission. They will look at wetlands. They have an upland ordinance. They'll look at air quality functions. As it relates to us [they will look at] agricultural burns, permits and such as that. We have several guidelines that come under the guidelines of EPC, as it fits into land use and how that's involved.

Now parallel to that you have Federal agricultural involvement through USDA [United States Department of Agriculture] and the NRCS, the National Resource Conservation Service. That is a Federal entity and it works specifically with agriculturists and best management practices, function and use of land. Their original mission looked mostly at erosion, slope and that sort of thing. But it also is deeply involved in this interaction with EPA, DEP, and EPC for wetlands contamination, for example. So they will come up with a plan a Best Management Practice, for an agriculturist [that] requires setbacks, or for vehicles to hold water back from contaminating the wetlands.

They are involved with the water management districts if you want a permit for surface water. For example: Over half of our acreage utilizes tail-water recovery ponds, where we actually recover tail-water, that water which is irrigated, or falls as rain. It's collected in a downhill pit and then re-pumped during freeze protection or during the plant establishment. It reduces the amount of ground water that is required to produce a crop. In various ways, [it] will [also] be involved in either providing incentives for growers through cost–share, or best management practices, or through just basic educational functions. Most of them have—there is an ag-squad from the water management district that involves various regulatory agencies.

When they have a new piece of property that they are looking at and how it's be[ing] developed, agriculturally they'll actually give you engineering diagrams on what is the best way to use that property and what you need to watch out for and so forth. So, all of those tools are available for the agriculturist to work with.

And then you've got things at the county level. We have a tree ordinance; you have to be very careful [to determine] if it is an agricultural or non-agricultural function. Agriculturist can, in fact, remove a tree, if they have to remove a tree. But they are supposed to apply for an exemption, so they get a permit that tells them they don't need a permit. So you run into that kind of thing quite often.

We've fine-tuned things like that, as to how to protect the environment, on one end and yet minimize the red tape. [For example,] if someone has a tree that's in the middle of where he is going to put a ditch, he's got to move it—and that kind of stuff. So—

Labor is a factor that's tied in. The County has through their HRLS— the Health and Rehabilitative Services— the local county health department does all the inspections on labor camps. OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration] is involved in that, that's federal. Wage and Hour, which is state, is also [involved], because of the fact that they are working with growers and inspecting their books to make sure that minimum is met and so forth. They are actually onsite, so quite often they'll look at and inspect the facilities when they are there. Unless they've been inspected by another agency, so they don't duplicate it.

At one time there, that was a relatively new thing, the non-duplication. That was one of those things we pointed out that was a duplication.

Gosh, I know I'm forgetting several, but that gives you some idea of the interaction.

WM: It does seem like it's many layered and—

CH: Confusing.

WM: Yeah.

CH: Particularly if you're a guy that got into farming because you liked the outdoors and a minimum of oversight. (laughs) The irony is that agriculture [has the] most oversight involved in it because of the nature of [it]. You know, we're talking about food and fiber. When you're talking food, you're talking food safety. When you're talking about harvesting you're talking about labor and the requirements associated with that. So there are a whole lot of factors.

WM: Well, I feel like I've—

CH: Can I give you one more thing?

WM: Sure! Absolutely.

CH: ‘Cause everything I’ve told you about before is out of the past. We’ve got one going on right now that I’d like to tell you about.

WM: Yeah, I’d like to hear about that.

CH: Within the County of Hillsborough, we’ve had a dichotomy and success. I mentioned the high-intensity versus the low intensity agriculture? Typically, high-intensity agriculture is doing well. In fact 80 percent of the value of agriculture is in those high value crops, high value-low acreage crops. Roughly 4 percent of the—
Well let me go back—31 percent of the acreage in Hillsborough County is “Green-belted.” Of the 100 percent, 4 percent of the acreage is producing 81 percent of the value of agriculture. Nearly all of that acreage is in a five-mile radius of Interstate 4 and Interstate 75. Which sort of blows the whole concept of urban-suburban, agriculture-non-agriculture out of the water. We have found that not only does agriculture, particularly high value agriculture, survive, but it thrives in an urban community, because of the increased land values and the borrowing power that it brings with it, if you’re able to get past the additional costs associated with regulations.

Now we also have 31 percent of our high value crop, within the urban service area. Which is a challenge for us because that is designated as where the development will be coming in, in the next 30 years. We’ve run into a real problem, particularly with the citrus industry. That is, in between—it’s not considered high intensity but it’s higher than pasture or sylvan culture. And citrus has had disease problems and has had a lot of the trees that have been plowed up in the recent past. And it appears that some of [the land] is not going to be put back into agriculture. Some of it is going into strawberries.

But anyway, the problem we’ve run into is that this vacant land, that was agricultural six months ago, is all of a sudden, now vacant land. And as vacant land it is appraised at highest and best use. Now there is protection, if a person—if you or I have a homestead on a piece of property that is appraised [at] the highest and best [use rate], we have a 3 percent maximum increase, from year to year, in our taxes. If you go from agricultural to non-agricultural, in this case vacant land, there is no such protection.

So you can have a piece of property that may be appraised at $3,000 an acre as citrus, particularly lower condition citrus. If you plow it [under], that property may all of a sudden, be worth $30,000 an acre. And you’ve got a situation where [the] tax [value of your land] has gone [to] maybe $500,000 to $600,000, almost overnight.

So our problem that we have is that; we have a number of people, not just in the urban service area, but throughout the county that are face[d] with this. And because of the taxes they have no alternative but to sell for non-agricultural development. A lot of these people are getting on in years and— Really you’ve got a two year period before you can re-plant you’re citrus, if it was plowed up because of disease functions. And then it would be another six or seven years before it would break even on your citrus [production]. A

lot of these people look ten years down the road, and it’s not worth it to them to go back through that process.

So, we’re looking at a situation where this land is being developed at a very rapid rate. Now the two things that are very important to understand is that, even though this is vacant land and it’s not agricultural and in and of itself, is not an agricultural issue. Because we have agriculture in close proximity to that land, that’s what this is (referring to a map).

This (in reference to the map) is low intensity agriculture and this is high intensity agriculture.

WM: Green is low intensity and low intensity?

CH: Yes.

And you have situations—let’s see—I’m trying to see a good place [on the map] somewhere in this area that would be where you’d have a mixed use function there and all of a sudden you’ve got a deal where it becomes very difficult to keep it as open space, because of the taxes involved. So you put a subdivision next to an agricultural area and that puts additional pressure on the agriculture.

Again, going back to the purpose of taxes being the services required, there’s very little services required for vacant land. Whereas, on agriculture it’s 25 percent basis, on vacant land it’s 5 percent. Maybe [there’s] a little additional police protection, so something like that. So the proposal that we’ve made to the Board of County Commissioners is to allow us to come up with a vehicle where we would have a temporal conservation easement. A ten year minimum, where a piece of property that is open land—vacant land, that the landowner agree to keep it as vacant land for the duration of that contract, a ten-year minimum.

In exchange, the taxes [would be] dropped to that level, probably somewhere in that range of 5 percent, the requirement for the services of that property. Then you take the pressure off that person and you have an indirect positive impact upon agriculture. Because you’re not prematurely developing property, you have a positive impact on the citizens at large because they’re not having to pay more taxes for services delivered inefficiently, because the support mechanisms are not yet in place for those areas.

We took that one step further, within an agricultural situation, where in “greenbelt” we’re using 25 percent of the taxes we pay, versus the services we receive are twenty-five cents on the dollar. If an agriculturist who now can sell his property tomorrow, if he wanted to enter into a conservation easement for the same duration, we should be able to drop his taxes down to that, since we’ve eliminated his non-agricultural development function, that’s part of his base to a situation to where we can reduce those taxes. Then you’ve really provided a major benefit for agriculture, in the profitability basis. Not only that, but for the first time you’ve recognized that there is a value to the community for open

space and quality of life functions. And you have, for the first time, broached the concept of renting, rather than buying that open space. The value to the community is, of course, is that it's a lot cheaper to rent it than to buy it.

WM: Uh-huh.

CH: Secondly, because you have the landowner still involved with the property he's required to do the stewardship on that property on that property, as opposed to having a county or state employee do that. You have a situation where you're enabling that property to generate the economic impact and it's not being removed from the tax rolls, but it's at a lower rate than it was before.

WM: One of the things I read is that it was in the municipality's interest to increase the revenue and that would mean developing vacant land so that you could get more taxes for the highest and best use.

CH: That's not totally wrong. We noted that there was a positive million dollar per acre function, if you developed from open or vacant land to other functions, but a lot of the value of the land is reduced by the fact that the services increase. Now, if it is where the services can be efficiently provided, you reduce that rate dramatically.

But people, even in urban in-fill situations, don't want high-density utilization. Right now we've got places of sixteen, twenty units per acre. The developers don't even go for that because they know that they're going to have people with picket signs out there because of the density; even where the services are easily provided.

The profile on the impact, positive impact, on developing a piece of property is front-loaded on housing. In other words, you're buying materials to build a house. You're paying people to build the house. You're borrowing money. All of this comes in as a positive impact, but in the long run, most of the places you borrow from are outside of the community. You know, they are stationed outside of the community. So you're sending money in that direction. And then the services kick-in, where you have to—which is a downside function tied in with it.

And while the statement is basically true, there is more of a positive than there is a negative. The positive tends to hit on the front end and then ten, fifteen years down the road, you start running into the negative side and that's when people—That's why on your impact fee, you're trying to provide that on the front-end so that you don't have an in ordainment impact on the taxpayers for the long haul.

WM: I mean, they see the immediate gain in tax revenues but they are blind to problems that come with congestion, increased demands on services, the deterioration of the quality of life.

CH: [They don't see] the loss. Well you know, you put [candy] in front of somebody and they're going to look at the first part. They are not going to worry about the upset stomach that comes down the road.

WM: Right. But this is something that's going on now, where you all—

CH: We met with the board of county commissioners last Wednesday. They gave us the go-ahead to examine language that would meet those needs. We've already met with the planning commission, the PJMD and with the property appraisers and have gotten a clean bill of health from them to proceed on with it.

WM: And when you say "we" this the Economic—

CH: Development council.

WM: The Agricultural Economic Development Council?

CH: Correct.

WM: Okay. Well that sounds like a good place to wind down, for the time being. I'm certain that I'll come back and ask— have some more questions that will come up after listening to this [interview] and transcribing it.

But two more questions; first, is there anything you want to tell me about that I haven't asked about or any thing else you want to say?

CH: Oh heavens yes. I could keep it going for another three hours, but you've got a lot to digest there. What I'd like to be able to do, if we can, is have a few addendum's. We have a couple of DVDs that I think would be a big help to you.

WM: I would love to take a look at that. You mentioned that video that's available in DVD format?

CH: We're at the second draft of that. We're probably 95 percent finished with it. We're still dropping in video. That's a problem you have. You have a script and you have to have something that makes sense to the script, and a lot of that stuff occurred 25, 30 years ago. It's been a real challenge to put it together, but I think it'll be good when it's finished.

WM: Okay. I would like to be able to see that. I think it would help me understand and guide my questions.

The second thing I want to ask, you mentioned greenbelt a couple of times, and my notion of greenbelt is just a green stretch surrounding the city. I think there is more to it than that. Could you tell me?

CH: Yeah. Greenbelt was developed in the 1950's when there was a recognition that if land in Florida was assessed at its non-agricultural value, particularly those agricultural uses that were low-density functions could not compete and the land would be prematurely developed. As a result you would lose agriculture, which wasn't in the best interest of the community at large. So, Greenbelt is specifically designed so that the taxation is based up on what the current use of the property is, rather than the projected use of non-agricultural development. Now, as I mentioned to you, some high-intensity agricultural functions, that's a pretty high amount as it is.

For example strawberries our tax rate on greenbelt is probably 50 times higher than one that's for pasture. So there is that consideration, there is not just a broad brush on "This is greenbelt and that's what the tax is." It just depends on its current use. And that's rather intricate, a little bit convoluted.

The way that they evaluate it is that they get advisory people together to discuss what they have been making in the last year. They use a five-year rolling average, because of the nature of agriculture, being an up-and-down type situation. That way, if you have one good year, you don't have an extremely high tax rate the next year, which may be a bad year for your agricultural basis. With the five-year rolling average that reduces that impact. Basically, what it does it puts agriculture in a zone similar to what you would have some of your industrial classifications, where your taxation is based upon the potential for generating income, as opposed to its non-agricultural value.

WM: Okay. Well I lied. I said I was going to only ask two more questions but I've already asked two. My third question is: Who would be some more people for me to talk to, to get information about this?

CH: The people I would talk with; first Stephen Gran is one of them. Stephen will come from the perspective of the county employee.

Dennis Carlton, [See Dennis Carlton interview with Bill Mansfield 6-27-06.] is past president of the Farm Bureau and either owns or leases over thirty thousand acres of property throughout the state. [He] has a very good levelheaded approach to land use. He's the person I sort of send land issues to and that group of talent that I referred to.

WM: Okay.

CH: I would talk with Hugh Gramling. [See Hugh Gramling interview with Bill Mansfield 6-26-06.] Hugh is my counterpart with the environmental work people. And he is currently president of SWIFTMUD's [Southwest Florida Water Management District] Ag-advisory committee, so he's really one of the better people around on water issues.

WM: All right.

CH: I'd like to give you another one, Michele Williamson. Michelle is a strawberry grower. She's recognized as one of the top people as it relates to labor issues. She's a

prime example of what I'd say is a young— my definition of young changes over the years.

WM: (laughing) It keeps expanding doesn't it?

CH: She's one of the people that we have brought into this program to become a leader of tomorrow. She'd be an extremely good person to give you the dynamics of some of these issues. She's participated in several of them over the years.

WM: You mentioned a strawberry grower who's bordering development?

CH: Yeah. I would say Mike Lott. [See Mike Lott interview with Bill Mansfield 6-23-06.]

WM: Okay.

CH: Now tell Mike it's okay, because he is surrounded by housing, he gets a lot of newspaper people around him and last—

Tape 2, side 1 ends; side 2 begins.

CH: —time the guy came in and quoted him and said something like, "How much do you get per bushel of berries?" Well, of course we don't pick in bushels. So every grower asks him "How many bushels did you pick?" [as a joke]. So he doesn't want to talk to anybody. But he's one of my past presidents and really, really a hard working fellow. While he hasn't been "high profile" on some of the issues, he's probably a prime example of someone who has to make decisions on an annual basis as to whether or not he wants to stay in strawberries or whether or not he wants to develop [his land].

WM: Okay, he does sound like a good person to talk to.

CH: He was also one that was just down the road from that hidden well that I was talking about, in the subdivision that is right next to his property.

WM: Oh yeah, they'll make it look like a house, but there is just a pumping station inside of it.

Well, I'll just say thanks a lot for taking the time to talk with me.

CH: My pleasure.

WM: I always put this on tape. You know this interview will be deposited in the Special Collections of the University of South Florida's Library and we need your permission to include it there.

CH: Absolutely.

WM: Okay great. Let me shut this thing off.

end of interview