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**Citrus Oral History Project  
Globalization Research Center  
University of South Florida**

**Interview with:** Frank Bouis  
**Interviewed by:** William Mansfield  
**Location:** Yalaha, Florida  
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**Transcribed by:** Wm. Mansfield (4-17-05)  
**Edited by:** Frank Bouis & Wm. Mansfield

[Tape 1, Side A.]

**Bill Mansfield:** We always get people to start off by having them state their name and telling us when you were born and where you were born. So, I'm ready whenever you are.

**Frank Bouis:** Just start talking?

**Mansfield:** Yes sir.

**Bouis:** I am Frank Bouis and I was born in 1926 in a suburb of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

**Mansfield:** Okay. Well, tell me ... you said you had a technical education. Tell me about that, if you don't mind.

**Bouis:** Well, there isn't much to tell. I've had a technical education as an engineer, in chemical, mechanical and aeronautical disciplines. And I have worked for the Department of Defense and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, doing developmental work, principally in the management of research.

**Mansfield:** Okay. And how did you get into the citrus field?

**Bouis:** My grandfather was a Floridian and a citrus grower. And in 1937, when I was eleven years old, I was taken--or brought if you prefer, here to meet him. And I thought that he was about the most marvelous man I'd ever met and that Florida was about the most marvelous place I'd ever seen. It took me until 1952, to permanently move to Florida, which I did at that time. [pause] Oh, and I went to work for him.

**Mansfield:** So that's how you got into working with citrus, and so you've been working in citrus since 1952?

**Bouis:** Yes sir.

**Mansfield:** That's a long tenure.

**Bouis:** Yes sir.

**Mansfield:** How would you describe your current occupation?

**Bouis:** [sighs] Well technically, I am a citrus grower. Professionally I am not, because a commercial caretaker takes care of my citrus groves. So I guess I would describe my present occupation [as] I manage my properties. And [pause] from time to time I have a wild idea and attempt to change the course of history.

**Mansfield:** [laughs]

**Bouis:** Of citrus history, to be more exact.

**Mansfield:** Okay. Well before we started recording you told me [about] your political philosophy, I wonder if you'd mind repeating that again for the recorder?

**Bouis:** In its simplest terms [pause] I believe that quality of life is more important than quantity of life. I believe that the small operator [pause] is probably going to be eaten up

by the large operator and I would like to do what I can to prevent [that], or to improve the chances of the small operator staying in business.

**Mansfield:** What is that you said? You called yourself a flaming liberal?

**Bouis:** I am a flaming liberal.

**Mansfield:** And how did you define that for me, earlier?

**Bouis:** In the sense that I believe in the rights of the small operator.

**Mansfield:** You said you stand up for the rights of the individual?

**Bouis:** I'll take it even a step further. I think the independence of the small operator, or small farmer, or small whatever—is more important than the greater good of the mass... of the population.

**Mansfield:** Okay. Well, in that article in *CITRUS INDUSRTY* [ CITRUS INDUSTRY Vol. 80, No. 12, December/January 2000] it talked about, how in the [19]90's you spent a lot of time lobbying against NAFTA [North American Free Trade Act].

**Bouis:** Yes sir.

**Mansfield:** Tell me about that. How did become aware... ....

**Bouis:** Let's digress a moment.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** Because that was only one step in a larger, much larger, much longer scheme of things. And I'm going to have difficulty in concentrating on NAFTA without drawing in this other stuff.

**Mansfield:** Okay. The "other stuff" being ... ..?

**Bouis:** Before and after.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** [pause] I have been very, what I'm going to call, politically active, in agricultural circles, since --- Will that [recorder] stop running when I stop talking?

**Mansfield:** No, no it'll keep going. If you need I can pause this.

**Bouis:** Well I got to think fast.

**Mansfield:** Take your time.

**Bouis:** Since about 19---[pause telephone rings and interrupts interview].

**Mansfield:** Okay, before the phone call came in you were telling me that you'd been involved in politics and agriculture ... ..

**Bouis:** When I was about 34 or 35 years old [1960-1961] I started getting involved in—non-occupational things. First on a local basis, and then on a statewide basis.

I've been president of just about every Florida citrus organization, that there is. And when Graham got elected governor he appointed me, first to his economic task force.

**Mansfield:** Bob Graham?

**Bouis:** Yes, and secondly to the Citrus Commission.

I can't really say that he and I became good friends, but we trusted each other. He trusted me and I trusted him.

**Mansfield:** What year was that?

**Bouis:** Frankly, I don't remember.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** It was before 1986, it was ... I was there for six years, it must have been 1980 or 1979 or '78. Something like that.

I'm a quick study and I think about things and I analyze them. It didn't take me long to realize two very important things. The first was that there is, in this country, a serious dichotomy between crop agriculture and fruit and vegetable agriculture. [pause] Three things I guess. The second thing was that fruit and vegetable agriculture had very, very little say or clout in the great scheme of things. And the third was, that the Florida citrus grower, in contrast to the handler, processor, was very small potatoes. Ultimately, I became president of --- no, I got to go to this first.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** I had all [of] the Citrus Commission that I wanted. Granted, I had been talking about the questionable future of agriculture in Florida; was there going to continue to be one? And I suggested a study, and he [Governor Graham] agreed.

He and I selected, I think it was 20 of the leading agricultural people in the state. And that committee was staffed with some economists out of the University of Florida and they ultimately wrote this report. Have you ever seen it?

**Mansfield:** No.

**Bouis:** Have you ever heard of it?

**Mansfield:** Well you told me about it, when I called you on the phone.

**Bouis:** I told you about it. Well I'm going to lend you this [Final Report: Governor's Task Force on the Future of Agriculture in Florida, Office of Planning and Budgeting, EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR, Tallahassee, FL. Dec. 17, 1986]

**Mansfield:** Okay. [Reading] This is the Final Report: Governor's Task Force on the Future of Agriculture in Florida. Okay.

**Bouis:** The summation of this is, was, that there was agriculture in north Florida and there was agriculture in south Florida. That there wasn't any future for agriculture in north Florida, because its crops were in competition with the crops up north and they couldn't compete. And in south Florida, the social problems and the regulatory problems were growing by leaps and bounds. And, if there was not some regulatory, legislative recognition of that, there wasn't going to be an agricultural [economy] in south Florida, either. Wonderful. The only thing wrong [with the forecast] was that we began to have some freezes. And there was enough of Florida citrus wiped-out that made that an interesting study, but really not applicable.

But it did not change the underlying problem of those three things that I said, earlier. Okay, about that time—no after that he appointed me to the commission that I've already said about.

No—the commission was first and then that. When I finished that [report] I was asked to become president of Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association. And that was interesting and from time to time I had to go to Washington [DC].

Well in that position I represented fruits and vegetables in Florida. And I used to poke around at the Department of Agriculture, the US Department of Agriculture. And I found out that, as a practical matter, the US Department of Agriculture didn't know anything about fruit and vegetable agriculture in the United States, and didn't want to learn. So I conjured up the idea that, that ought to be changed.

I digress.

Somewhere along afterwards, I forget the chronology, but I actually got a Title Thirteen, fruit and vegetable title, in the 1990 Farm Bill. Never been done before. At that time, when the Department of Agriculture was preparing for the Farm Bill they had thirteen groups working on crop agriculture. And not a one working on fruit and vegetable agriculture. They were not interested. I got a Title Thirteen, fruit and vegetable title in the farm bill, just getting my toe in the door.

I was up there poking around, I went to see the AF of L-CIO people, because I had an idea; which was, that fruit and vegetable growers and farm labor- Mexicans- were natural allies.

Now they did not ally themselves, but I thought that they should. One of the reasons that they didn't ally themselves is that big-shot fruit and vegetable growers consider themselves flaming Republicans. And the Mexicans, for the most part, don't trust the growers. They [farm workers] ultimately got—I'm happy to say— they got to trust me, the ones that know [me]. I'm the only grower that ever spoke to the annual convention of Mexican Farm Laborers, just as an illustration.

Anyhow, I was up there and I went to see the AF of L-CIO man, one day, on this thing. And he says to me, "Did you know that the administration just changed its approach, and they are going to seek a free trade agreement in North America?" I said, "No, never heard of such a thing." And I said, "Thank you very much." And I immediately turned around and walked out the door and went down to the administration to verify that and it was true. And that began my NAFTA campaign. And I spent—I don't know— it wasn't five years, but quite a lot of time, for two or three years, working on that.

Now my strategy was that fruit and vegetable agriculture (this is mostly a dietary thing, dietary and social) was essential to the well being of this country. About that time the then surgeon-general had come out with his nutrition book, in which he said, "In order for us to have a happy and healthy population we've got to have some much more fruits and vegetables." I sat down with my pencil and paper and did some calculations. And I forget the numbers now, but I calculated we had to increase the production by

about three or four or five times, just a huge increase, in order to do what he was talking about doing. I also calculated—did you ever hear of the “Fruitful Rim?”

**Mansfield:** I’m afraid not.

**Bouis:** Well, it works out and there are people in the USDA that know this. It works out that most of the fruit and vegetable agricultural in this country is scattered around the coasts; Washington State, Oregon, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, (skip over Alabama and Mississippi), Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and New York State. That’s [where] fruit and vegetable agriculture [is].

It also works out that they have control of the congress, those states. If they could get their message open to some place. [sighs] But I couldn’t get anybody interested.

**Mansfield:** Well who did you try and get interested?

**Bouis:** I tried to get Florida Citrus Mutual interested. I had been president of Florida Citrus Mutual.

Can you turn that thing off, instantly?

**Mansfield:** Yes.

**Bouis:** Then I’m going to come back to it.

[Tape interruption]

**Bouis:** The parochialism between the various organizations is unbelievable. It is undesirable and unbelievable. It is unusual. It is awful.

**Mansfield:** Let me ask a question right quick. You said you were trying to get these people interested, but I’m afraid I missed what you were trying to get them interested in.

**Bouis:** Opposing NAFTA.

**Mansfield:** Opposing NAFTA? Okay

**Bouis:** Building up fruit and vegetable agriculture. At that point I thought it was possible to have beaten NAFTA. Looking back on it I still think it was possible to have beaten NAFTA, because of the political line-up that I just told you about.

I went to California and I met with [the] Western Growers Association. Asked them to join with it, to stand on the same platform with Florida and oppose NAFTA. They wouldn't do it. I would meet, occasionally I would be at Washington and I would meet one of these officials of [the] Western Growers Association. I'd say, "Let's us go over to this photographer and get our picture taken together." [Shakes his head] "No."

**Mansfield:** Did he give you any reason, for why he didn't want ... ..

**Bouis:** No, just didn't want to do it.

There was, in this Title Thirteen I spoke about, a provision that the USDA should have a study of, nationally, fruit and vegetable agriculture. What its problems were, what it needed [and] the administration refused to fund it. Never would. Those are things that I'm talking about.

Now, by 1995, which was the next Farm Bill, what was done in NAFTA, was done. [Florida Citrus] Mutual [had gotten] some special consideration for citrus in that NAFTA Treaty. And what was done was done.

When the 1995 Farm Bill came up, I was then out of that game. And there was nothing about Florida, about fruit and vegetable agriculture in the '95 farm bill. It just dropped out. I am happy to report to you now, that by the 2000 Farm Bill, fruit and vegetable agriculture had waked up. There were--compared to crop agriculture not much, but compared to what had been, there were substantial revisions, in that Farm Bill, for fruit and vegetable agriculture. I want to follow that train [of thought] for a minute and then I'm going to go back to NAFTA, or international trade.

Most of [the new] concern has come not from production issues, but from social issues. The idea that it is good for the country to keep farms. The idea that fruit and vegetable farmers should be directly, financially supported in the same way that crop farmers are supported.

You do understand that up until a year ago--- crop farmers get millions of dollars. There are some states where if you took all the farmers in the whole state, they would operate in the red, if they didn't get the government payment. You know that?

**Mansfield:** I'm familiar with the tobacco program.

**Bouis:** You take the whole state of North Dakota. If all of its farms were shut down the taxpayer would have a net benefit, because the whole state operates in the red. There are hundreds of thousands of farmers that [would] operate in the red except for the subsidy. In other words, crop agriculture is treated as a social good, not an economic good, a social good. Fruit and vegetable agriculture, up until very recently, was wholly an economic good and not concerned with social issues.

Okay, [sighs] where am I?

**Mansfield:** You were telling about the 2000 Farm Bill.

**Bouis:** I'm going [there]. I want to follow that a little bit further, that thing.

Last year, maybe it was two years ago, I forget—time flies. There was indeed two hundred million dollars appropriated for what they call specialty agriculture—fruit and vegetable agriculture. Seventeen million came to Florida.

Most of the seventeen million was whacked-up by the governor and the commissioner of agriculture. Two million of it went to the University of Florida for a thing that sounds very much like your [Globalization Research] Center. It is the Center for International Trade, or something that sounds very very much like what you're talking about. To my knowledge there hasn't been a single dollar of that spent in any useful way. I have been unable, so far, to find any output of that two million dollars.

I applied for and got one hundred and fifty thousand of those dollars and ran a project looking for different ways to sell—for Florida citrus growers to sell their fruit. And that money's all been spent and the report's made and that's the end of that train. Out.

**Mansfield:** Okay, before we leave that train tell me when that was, just to place it a chronological frame.

**Bouis:** Oh, the last two or three years.

**Mansfield:** The last two or three years [2002- 2003].

**Bouis:** Now I want to go back to where we were, NAFTA.

**Mansfield:** Oh, you said the 2000 Farm Bill, but then you were talking about trying to organize fruit and vegetable growers in the fruit rim, around the coast.

**Bouis:** Oh, well to a small degree. The governors, no the commissioners of agriculture, of California, Florida, Texas, New York, Washington—I think; they formed an organization ostensibly for the purpose for cooperating on legislative and regulatory activities. Great idea! So far as I know they have done nothing. There's been nothing [done]—the 1995 Farm Bill.

Now we're up to [the] 2000 Farm Bill, which is so new I don't know what that's going to do. I've finished NAFTA. Oh, international trade [pause]

The tariff structure of citrus is very complex and I do not know all the ramifications of it. The tariff on orange juice [pause] the tariff on concentrate (don't ask me why this is, I don't know) the tariff on concentrate is higher than the tariff on the equivalent orange juice. There is a tariff on orange juice.

**Mansfield:** Is that the fresh squeezed orange juice, correct?

**Bouis:** No.

**Mansfield:** No?

**Bouis:** Well, it could be fresh squeezed or pasteurized. There was a deal once, somebody conjured up the idea of importing concentrate and then reconstituting it to orange juice and claiming the lower tariff on orange juice. [laughs] You know everything's been tried. People didn't worry too much about any of that because it was believed that it was uneconomical to import fresh orange juice, [or] orange juice, either fresh or not fresh.

That's now changed. The Brazilians have got tankers that will economically carry orange juice or concentrate, or both. The production costs in Florida are, crudely speaking, the same as the production costs in Brazil. The harvest costs in Brazil are far less; so that the Brazilians can deliver orange juice or concentrate, here in competition with us. You can analyze the in many many different ways and I'm sorry to say this—as best as I can construct it—the analysis of the figures depends upon the people the analyzer are trying to convince.

**Mansfield:** “There are lies, damned lies and statistic.”

**Bouis:** [chuckles] That's right. I've pretty much run down, but I've got one other thing to put some more of this in context to you—two more things.

I was reading last night about a company that I'd never heard of before, that makes software, writes software for certain kinds of businesses. This article said that the annual revenue of this company was six hundred and seventy million dollars. “A paltry sum,” it said. And I thought to myself—I did a little mental arithmetic—and I thought to myself; that six hundred and seventy million dollars is, crudely speaking, the annual value of the total Florida orange crop. A paltry sum! [laughs] A paltry sum.

**Mansfield:** Seems like a pretty significant sum to me.

**Bouis:** But you and I are sitting here in this dirty office, people don't pay much attention to us. But the harvester, the man that picks the fruit off the tree, he gets perhaps half of that again. The man that drives the trucks around, they get perhaps half of that again. The juice plant or the packinghouse, he gets, perhaps, all of that again. The transportation to the grocery store gets, perhaps, all of that again. The grocery store gets, perhaps, all of that again. So you've got, depending upon where you want to draw the line and add the numbers up, you've got a very very big business based upon this paltry sum.

Now, I've finished.

I'll tell you one more thing.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** Growers don't care.

**Mansfield:** Growers don't care?

**Bouis:** No, they don't care. I care. Growers don't care.

**Mansfield:** When you say "they don't care," they are not concerned?

**Bouis:** No. All they do is bitch. I have a friend who just died—a grower. He said, "the problem is there are no longer any Florida citrus growers. There are only real estate people, that are waiting to sell their land." There's a lot of truth in that.

When those freezes hit we had, in this county [Lake County], a hundred and thirty thousand acres of groves. We picked thirty million boxes of fruit a year. There were nine packinghouses in Leesburg alone. There were seventy-five thousand people in the county. It was one of the wealthiest counties in the state.

By the time the freezes had ended— oh I'll jump up to now. Now there are fifteen thousand acres of groves and two hundred and seventy-five thousand people. Vacant land is selling for as much money as a grove used to sell for.

With all do respect, I think the people who are laying out what you're doing are not really zeroing in on the problem.

**Mansfield:** And what would you say is the problem?

**Bouis:** All the things I just said. One, people don't care. In my spare time I have spent the last two or three years trying to devise ways that a small grower can market his fruit directly, either in the form of juice or fruit. And I know it can be done, I've done it. [But] nobody is interested, to begin with and the regulatory authorities wouldn't let it happen, to end up with.

I've got a juice machine in there. I've got a little packinghouse right out there. They both work. I've got a total of five thousand dollars invested in all of it. It can be done. Technically, it can be done. I freeze—I can squeeze juice and freeze it and keep it indefinitely; thaw it out and you can drink it.

When you leave here, don't let me forget, I'll give you a quart of juice that was frozen in December.

**Mansfield:** Okay. That sounds great.

**Bouis:** It's not very good juice, because there wasn't any good juice in December. But it's probably better than anything you could buy in the store.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** Do I make my picture to you?

**Mansfield:** Well, what it sounds like you've said is that – the government is only interested in the big growers.

**Bouis:** The government is interested in who they hear squeal and we're not squealing—from New Your State to California.

**Mansfield:** The fruit and vegetable [grower]?

**Bouis:** The fruit and vegetable people are not squealing.

**Mansfield:** You said that you were aware that NAFTA was a threat. How did you see it threatening the fruit and vegetable growers?

**Bouis:** I think, my analysis—and there are powerful economists that would disagree with me—it's, that the tariff is the difference between—the tariff equalizes the differences in the harvesting costs, so that Florida and Brazil, in a crude way can compete with each other. Without the tariff, and NAFTA of course——. Incidentally, NAFTA was not as bad as anybody thought it would be, of some reason. I'll come back to that.

For whatever reason, the Mexicans did not ship nearly as much fruit up here, as we thought they would. And they didn't plant anymore. So NAFTA itself was not a terrible deal.

The tariff is a terrible deal. Without the tariff, my horseback guess is that another twenty-five to thirty percent of Florida's groves would become houses. For Florida, in my thinking, the issue, the tariff issue should be more of a concern to the people that live in Florida—[like their] styles. I don't think that all of these small counties want to go from seventy-five thousand people to two hundred and seventy-five thousand people in fifteen years. [chuckles] Nobody wants to do that, except the real estate [people]. And that's the issue.

**Mansfield:** Over-population does seem like it would take away the quality of life for sure.

**Bouis:** Or change it. You know there are people that like living in cities. I'm not one of them. Here I am.

**Mansfield:** [laughs] Well, I certainly sympathize with you on that. I'd much sooner be out in the country.

But, If I could, I'd like to ask you a little more detail questions about your efforts to change NAFTA and your efforts—working to protect Florida citrus. After reading that article [in Citrus Industry magazine] I wrote up some question that would help.

**Bouis:** Shoot.

**Mansfield:** You said you became aware of the threat offered by NAFTA back in the late eighties, early nineties, when you were up in Washington?

**Bouis:** Yes sir.

**Mansfield:** Okay. You said that you thought that the farm workers and fruit and vegetable growers were natural allies. Could you explain that a little bit more please?

**Bouis:** Yeah, if we don't grow fruit they can't pick it. [chuckles]

**Mansfield:** Okay. You said you didn't have much success in working with the growers, what kind of response did they give to you when you approached them about this?

**Bouis:** Who, growers?

**Mansfield:** Yes sir.

**Bouis:** Oh, [it was] "Fine. Go to it."

**Mansfield:** But, I mean, when you tried to get them unite, to work together with the farm workers ... ..

**Bouis:** Well [they said] “We’re busy right now. We’ve got a full time job. I don’t have time to do that.”

**Mansfield:** So they just kind of brushed you off?

**Bouis:** Yes. They did, except for one. There was a guy — you’ve heard of Duda?

**Mansfield:** I’m afraid I haven’t.

**Bouis:** Well, A. Duda and Sons is one of the largest Florida agricultural operators. [They raise] cattle, citrus, vegetables, everything. And I happened to be flying back from Washington with their scientific research director. And I was ‘crying to him’ that I couldn’t get any support. “Why not?” says I.

He says, and I quote, he said, “You can’t get much interest in draining the swamp, when you’re working full time, trying to keep the alligators from biting your ass.”

**Mansfield:** Could you explain that a little bit more, for those of us who aren’t familiar with swamps and alligators?

**Bouis:** Alligators live in swamps. If you drain the swamps, why the alligators go away. But, He’s saying, you can’t stop fighting off the alligators to drain the swamp. You got to keep on fighting off the alligators.

**Mansfield:** So in that analogy the alligators he’s referring to are the farm workers?

**Bouis:** No the alligators are all the problems and NAFTA and regulations and anything else. Those are the “alligators.” No! I’m sorry, that’s to drain the swamp. The “alligators” are getting through, day-by-day, all of the problems of that day.

**Mansfield:** There are so many problems to begin with they can’t concentrate on solving one of them?

**Bouis:** Yes. You got to keep on ... ..

**Mansfield:** You got to keep fighting [the immediate problems so you can't give any attention to the long term problems.]—okay, I'm with you now.

**Bouis:** You got to fight the alligators.

**Mansfield:** Okay. You said you tried to get the growers and the farm workers to work together and the growers approved, but they didn't offer any help. Am I understanding you correctly?

**Bouis:** No, the growers really didn't approve. The growers' organization all belong to another organization called [pause] I don't remember.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** But it is an organization of the employers of agricultural labor. And they were in a— competitive posture with the farm worker organizations. So the idea of going down, one-step, in the organization. They were trying to find a meeting place— a meeting of the minds. No this has largely changed, or at least has changed in some cases. Because in the last year or two there have been farm worker bills passed through the congress; which the president, by the way, has refused to sign. So it all changes, but very slowly.

Does that answer your question? I hope so.

**Mansfield:** You said, initially, the growers weren't concerned with working with— cooperating with the farm workers. There's a competitive relationship between the two.

**Bouis:** Yes.

**Mansfield:** Sort of management–labor, almost. And that it has changed somewhat, but only slightly. What's I heard you say.

**Bouis:** May [it has changed] more than slightly. There is a change.

I'll give you another for instance. Somewhere back about that time, Coke-a-Cola, who at that time owned groves and picked fruit, they negotiated a settlement, a labor union settlement with Caesar Chavez's labor union [the United Farm Workers]. They were looking for an accommodation. And they were seriously, seriously criticized. That was treated as an apostasy by all the other farm worker employers. Does that illustrate my point?

They've since decided to get out of that business. To my knowledge, today there is nobody that negotiates with the farm workers as a group.

**Mansfield:** You mean with Coke-a-Cola or in general?

**Bouis:** What was the first alternative?

**Mansfield:** I'm sorry. You said, that to your knowledge, there was no one who negotiates with farm workers as a group.

**Bouis:** As a group.

**Mansfield:** So it's farm workers negotiate with individual growers?

**Bouis:** Yes.

**Mansfield:** Okay. You said that that has changed somewhat in that the growers are now more open to working with the farm workers?

**Bouis:** No, I didn't say that.

**Mansfield:** Okay, I wanted to make sure I understood.

**Bouis:** The legislative arena has changed. People are beginning to face up to the fact that it is the illegal aliens in this country that are crucial to harvesting our crops. They don't want to talk about that. But it is gradually filtering out into the legislative and the public consciousness. Now they said the congress—the farm worker organizations, the do-gooder, the labor, employer organizations and others, I'm sure; over the last three or four years have negotiated a very complex farm labor bill, that deals, among other things, with illegal aliens. [The bill] passed both houses of the Congress. —I'm sorry, it did not pass both houses of the Congress. It passed one house of the Congress, but the Senate to refused to—the leadership refused to consider it because they were afraid it would mess up the presidential election.

All right, now he's been elected. Now it is going back to the congress, with his blessing and this time it may be passed. And if it is passed they will be big time changes. What they will be, I don't know.

**Mansfield:** This is the “guest-worker” [legislation]?

**Bouis:** But there's more. It's guest workers and transitioning from illegals to legals, and from legals to citizens and I don't know what else.

[End Tape 1, Side A. Begin Tape 1, Side B.]

**Mansfield:** Okay, so the growers weren't really interested in working with the farm workers.

**Bouis:** That's correct.

**Mansfield:** How did the farm workers receive your ideas?

**Bouis:** Suspiciously. That's about the best way [to describe it.]

COFFO—the Congress of Florida Farm-worker Organizations— at that time, and they may still do, had an annual meeting and I was invited to go talk to that annual meeting. I think I was the first employer that ever did. I’m quite proud of some of this.

**Mansfield:** You should be.

**Bouis:** Anyhow, I got there early and I was listening to the previous speaker, who was their attorney, or the attorney for one of their member organizations. He was talking about what shits employers were.

I got up and I decided I wasn’t going to say what [I had planned]. Well, I got up and said, “Listen” —I told them who I was— I said, “If that man knows what he’s talking about, if he’s telling you the truth, then I am a flaming liar.” I said, “I’ve been a farm employer for twenty years, or whatever—a long time, and let me tell you how it works.”

And I told them, just exactly how it works. At the end of which they told me, they said that they had never heard that before. They had never ever, ever heard that before.

**Mansfield:** Would you mind telling me what you told them?

**Bouis:** I told them how picking-crews work. How you hire picking-crews. How you deal with picking-crews. The problems of people coming and or not coming, of fulfilling their contract, or not fulfilling their contract. Of getting the fruit to the plant before it spoils. Of getting it off the tree. Of meeting a pay roll, but not exceeding your possible revenue sources. Just—“Let me tell you about a farm employer and how it works.”

**Mansfield:** And so you told them that and what kind of response—you said they’d never heard that before?

**Bouis:** They’d never heard that, but wondered. Subsequently I was asked to attend some of the individual meetings and speak to them; which I did.

Did I change anything? I don't think so. Candidly I don't really believe anything I have ever tried to do has changed anything. But it might have.

**Mansfield:** So you told them your side, what it's like to be the orange grower—

**Bouis:** Yep.

**Mansfield:** Then what did you tell them about working with growers to protect agriculture?

**Bouis:** Just that I thought that it would be a useful thing, but I can't say that nothing came of it. Certainly there is more communication now than there was then. So maybe something did come of it. Or, maybe just the passage of time, or maybe just things got harder. I don't know. I have no idea. I'm off on a different kick, I was very amused when you called and said you wanted to talk about NAFTA.

**Mansfield:** Well, NAFTA and the FTAA [Free Trade Act of the Americas], which seems to be the most current threat to Florida citrus.

**Bouis:** Ah. I'm glad you brought that up. I'm not sure that they are a threat any more. But I'm not going to get into that. This time, the Florida Citrus growers, not as individuals, but as organizations are behaving differently. They really care about—it isn't just FTAA, what is it? The DOHA round, the whole issue of losing the tariff. They are very concerned about that. [Florida Citrus] Mutual and the Department of Citrus conjured up a deal where by there would be a new organization set-up called [pause as he thinks and searches lap-top computer for the organization's name.] But anyhow whatever it was called, [they] set it up to raise money to fight the current free trade maneuvers.

And they hired, we're talking about million dollars, a million and a half dollars. Have you heard about this?

**Mansfield:** I seem to remember reading something about it.

**Bouis:** They hired uh ... [Reading from computer screen] “Industry delivers citrus message to Washington.” Mutual can— you know how to get a hold of Mutual?

**Mansfield:** They’re down in Lakeland.

**Bouis:** You call them and tell them you want copies of their *Triangle*.

**Mansfield:** Their *Triangle*?

**Bouis:** Yes, it’s a weekly publication dealing with the tariff. There’s one, March the 11<sup>th</sup>, that’s got something—Well here’s one you ought to look at. [Reads from computer] “Mutual joins group in urging ... ..] well, you probably ought to get their *Triangle*, get a year’s supply.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** This is the ag jobs [reading] “approval of legislation that will reform the H2A Guest Worker Program.”

But they raised something, a million or two million dollars. They hired a high-powered Washington lobbyist. [Reads] “Commerce Department initiates dumping investigation. Mutual board supports united tariff position.”

**Mansfield:** I’ve read that, about the dumping and I also read that they are launching a big campaign to lobby the government to keep the tariff in place.

**Bouis:** Right. There’s even an intrastate effort to try to make it more palatable for Miami, who figured that they would be the seat of the free trade administration, to try and make it more palatable to Miami, if that didn’t happen.

You get those *Triangles* and look at it.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** I don't even want to talk about it.

**Mansfield:** Well, you said that you weren't sure the FTAA was a threat. Would you care to tell me why you think that?

**Bouis:** Because increasingly of the opinion—well for two reasons. One, is I don't think it's going to go any place. Or if it does go some place it won't go there on a calendar that is fast enough that it will be controlling. I think these others issues, of tristeza, canker, urbanization, lack of understanding and concern on the part of government for what growers need to stay in business. Even lack of understanding of the citrus regulatory, the Florida people, of what growers need to stay in business. Even lack of understanding on the part of growers of what they need to stay in business. I'm just very pessimistic.

**Mansfield:** You've talked about you tried to ... .. So you worked pretty hard against NAFTA, has that carried over into the FTAA?

**Bouis:** [Shakes his head] No.

**Mansfield:** No?

**Bouis:** No, I've become much more, I'm more parochial. I'm more interested in what I'm doing.

**Mansfield:** In working—you said you tried to get the growers to unite and you tried to get the farm workers to unite, you saw those people as your allies in this struggle.

**Bouis:** Potential allies.

**Mansfield:** Potential allies, unfortunately but nothing came of it for you, from what you've said.

**Bouis:** Well, let me qualify that.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** If it did come, it was slower than my tenure. There certainly is a greater rapport [between growers and workers] today than there was in my day. Now, do I take credit for that? I don't know. But maybe I could and maybe I couldn't.

**Mansfield:** It sounds like you did a whole lot more than nothing, and that counts for something.

**Bouis:** I didn't hurt [the situation]. I didn't hurt.

**Mansfield:** Okay. Well who were the adversaries in that struggle? Who did you perceive as the adversaries?

**Bouis:** I hate like hell to call names. I don't want to.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** People with vested interests. Organizations with vested interests were adversaries. Growers were not interested. Growers were apathy. Organizations were adversaries.

**Mansfield:** The processors, would you consider them adversaries?

**Bouis:** No.

**Mansfield:** Could you give me any better idea, when you say “organizations with vested interests,” can you give me a better idea of who that would be? I don’t want you to call any names, but —

**Bouis:** I’d have to call names to do it, because all fruit and vegetable organizations still today, they’ve got one man. One man runs it, with few exceptions.

**Mansfield:** But these organizations would’ve been agricultural organizations —

**Bouis:** Yes, yes.

**Mansfield:** —in Florida?

**Bouis:** Or in Washington State, or in California, or in Arizona.

I’ll give you a generic interest, for example.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** At that time, and I imagine it is still true, Western Growers Association, which is the major California fruit and vegetable organization, was dominated by growers who had Mexican operations. Depending upon the season of the year they would operate in Mexico or California. NAFTA was a good thing for them. Or they thought it was.

**Mansfield:** So people who have interests in Brazil, say, would be adversaries to [the struggle against] FTAA?

**Bouis:** Oh yes, no question about that.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** Let me digress again, just for whatever interest, you don't have to stop [the recorder].

**Mansfield:** I'm not, go right ahead.

**Bouis:** Mexico can't feed itself. The population growth of Mexico is greater than the rate of increase for their food production. So Mexico finds it's to their economic advantage to grow fruits and vegetables and ship them north, and import corn.

And there was some talk about changing that. I met with the Mexican Secretary of Agriculture. We were just talking. He spoke fluent English, and he said "If we can not get subsidized, essentially cheap US corn, into Mexico we'll just get it from Europe." Now the only point of that, you see, is that you're talking about huge economic considerations. And Florida orange growers become "a paltry sum." [chuckles]

**Mansfield:** You said you don't see much of a future for Florida agriculture?

**Bouis:** Not the way it is now, for some.

**Mansfield:** What was it you said, "In north Florida the crops couldn't compete, but in south Florida the social problems and regulatory problems were working against agriculture."

**Bouis:** Yes.

**Mansfield:** Could you tell me what you mean when you say "social problems"?

**Bouis:** Urbanization.

**Mansfield:** What, the pressure on farmers to —

**Bouis:** Well, I hesitate to call it pressure. Maybe it's pressure, but it's the idea that this farmer can solve all of his problems by selling his land. I recently sold a frozen-out grove—well, I told you, I told you. That today land is selling for more than groves used to be. There are groves after groves after groves today that will sell for more dollars as land than they will as groves.

**Mansfield:** Okay. It seems like —

**Bouis:** That's social pressure, or economic. I don't know what you call it.

**Mansfield:** Well, I can understand that. And you said the regulatory problems?

**Bouis:** I'll give you an illustration. We have a pest, a little bug called Diaprepis, an insect. We used to control that bug with a chemical called dieldrin

**Mansfield:** Called what now?

**Bouis:** Dieldrin. Only had that bug in, I don't know, a few thousand acres. Wasn't any big deal. We only applied the dieldrin once every two or three years. But it was decided that, word wide—dieldrin was used by lots and lots of people. Huge consumption. A wonderful pesticide. So the US government, in their wisdom, they said we aren't going to be able to use any more dieldrin, anywhere!

That bug is spreading by leaps and bounds. I have some [of the bugs]. Those of us that have it, it costs us ten times as much money to fight it less effectively as it did to use dieldrin. There is no way in hell that using dieldrin on that little bit of stuff would have destroyed the world's ecology. That's what I'm talking about.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** I love that expression, "a paltry sum." [laughs]

**Mansfield:** Well, one man's paltry is another man's fortune, I suppose.

Let's see, [looking at notes] I'm trying to make sure I've covered the questions. Is there any question you want to answer that I haven't asked? I've been bombarding you with questions for the past hour or so.

**Bouis:** I don't even know exactly what I've said.

No. I would have to say no.

**Mansfield:** Okay. Can you think—

**Bouis:** No, I'll say one more thing. I want to say one more thing.

The years between 1950 and 1980, here, were the most glorious years that anybody could ever have imagined. I wouldn't change them for the world. And I will never ever see them again.

**Mansfield:** Well, its good that you had them when you did.

**Bouis:** Good that I had them when I did.

We didn't have any money. We didn't have near the money that we have now. We didn't have all of the things we have. We didn't have air conditioning in our houses, or in our cars. We didn't have four-wheel drive. But we damn sure had freedom.

**Mansfield:** That's a priceless commodity anyhow.

**Bouis:** [softly] You're exactly right.

**Mansfield:** Can you think of anybody else that I could talk to. Both those folks who are working to keep protective tariffs in place and—

**Bouis:** Okay, now what's the subject?

**Mansfield:** Florida citrus industry and the impact of the free trade agreement.

**Bouis:** All right let me give you some people, a cast of characters.

Mike Stuart [spell] S-T-U-A-R-T, is now the leader of Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association in Orlando. [pause] (321) 214-5200. [See Mike Stuart's interview with Mansfield, 5-10-05.] He was at the NAFTA time a junior, he was a senior-junior in [the] Western Growers Association. He knew everything that was going on. He's very smart. He is basically and honest man. He will give you, I think, a different viewpoint than mine.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** His boss at that time, I think is dead, but his name was More. I can't remember his first name but you might ask Mike about More.

**Mansfield:** Okay. When you say Western Growers Association, that's the western United States?

**Bouis:** Yes, western, California, Arizona.

The operating head for Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association at that time was George Sorn [spells] S-O-R-N. He too is a very smart man. He was a labor expert. He probably knows more about labor, although he's been out of business for quite awhile now, than anybody—maybe in the country. Stuart will tell you how to get a hold of him.

F.F.V.A [Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association] has a new labor man whose name I can't think of right now. But Stuart can tell you about him, although Stuart maybe can tell you what you want to know about labor today, him self. As I say, he's a very smart man.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** Bobby McKeon [spells] M-C-K-E-O-N, and I don't have his phone number, but you can get him through Mutual [Florida Citrus Mutual]. Was running Mutual all the time of which I'm speaking. And he has his viewpoints. He is a very smart man.

These are all smart people, obviously. They wouldn't been where they were, without being smart. [sighs] There is somebody else that I've got to bring up. If you wanted to get on the telephone, Stuart can give you the names of people in Washington State that were active at the time.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** And there is another guy, it depends on how hard you want to work. There's another man you could talk to. He was not involved, at the time, but he is now. [pause] Well Mutual can tell you.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** There is an organization called California Citrus Mutual and they've got an executive director and he can tell you things and he'd be glad to talk to you too.

**Mansfield:** Okay. What about local folks? [Silence as Bouis searches his memory.] Can't think of any?

**Bouis:** There is a guy, an interesting character, you ought to meet him, just to met him. His name is Jim Griffiths [spells] G-R-I-F-F-I-TH-S. He' in Lakeland. [See Jim Griffiths' interview with Mansfield, 4-28-05.]

**Mansfield:** Oh yeah. Several people have mentioned him. He is in his nineties I believe.

**Bouis:** Yeah, just had his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. (863) 665-0709.

**Mansfield:** Okay.

**Bouis:** Jim knows something about everything. And he doesn't mind telling you what he thinks. [chuckles]

**Mansfield:** Well that's good to know.

Well, as this disc concludes let me thank you for taking the time to talk with me.

**Bouis:** Well turn that off. Just let me think a minute.

[tape interruption]

**Mansfield:** [Let me] cut this back on and put the official tag on it, where I say, I thank you for spending this time with us. Also, the information you shared with me will be deposited in the archives and be available for future research, if scholars care to look at it. I'll have to get sign a release from for that.

Also, I've been photographing the people I've interviewed do you mind if I take your picture?

**Bouis:** If you can stand it, I can.

**Mansfield:** Well thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me. I've truly enjoyed it. Let me shut this [recorder] off.

[End of interview]