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Interview with: Elizabeth Himes
Interviewed by: Doris Weatherford
Location: Tampa, Florida
Date: June 11, 1998
Transcribed by : N/A
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DW:= Doris Weatherford
EH:= Elizabeth Himes

DW: Hi, I'm Doris Weatherford and this is Thursday, June 11, 1998 and we are at Canterbury Towers in Tampa, 3501 Bayshore, to interview Elizabeth Himes one of the founders of USF. A long time community activist in Tampa and particularly for USF. This is part of the Oral History project for the USF Library. Hello! Good afternoon.

EH: Good afternoon, good to see you Doris.

DW: Thank you, thank you, this is exciting.

EH: Yes it is.

DW: When people hear your name they always think Himes Avenue, so let's get that out of the way.

EH: Alright!

DW: For whom is Himes Avenue named, and tell us about it.

EH: Well, Himes Avenue was named for my husband's father, who named it for himself really.....

DW: Alright, you gotta do that sometimes.

EH:and he was representing a group of people who were developing that particular area, especially the Gray Gabels area and ran into Gulfview and they were naming the streets after themselves. The finally got around to one little street that was left and they said, okay, senator this could be yours.

DW: And then it turned out to be the biggest one of all probably.

EH: And he lived long enough to laugh about it and say, look what happened to me. It really is interesting.

DW: I'm sure, at that time the Himes that runs out to Carrollwood now was not even.....

EH: I know, well even when John and I married in 1937, John apologetically took me to see Himes Avenue.

DW: It wasn't until after the war's end and Drew Field and the development of what became TIA that it grew into a major avenue I supposed. Well tell us a little bit about your father-in-law and your husband and then we'll come to you.

EH: Well, my father-in-law was a very interesting man. He was in the Senate. But his father was interesting, too.

DW: Now what years was in the Senate?

EH: He was in the Senate when it was Hillsborough and Pinellas together and so this....I think it was around 13 or 14 years before I was born, thank goodness. At that time it was such a small world and, he came to Florida and studied law, but as a child....but I want to talk more....go back to his father because his father was William Himes, he was a cotton broker in New Orleans and he was married to a young woman named Sara Allen and she was the sister of James Wayne Allen, who was a writer, an early American writer, very successful. And after she died in childbirth he came to Florida and....now that was William Himes....

DW: Um hum, now this would have been maybe the 1880s or 1890s?

EH: This was in the "80s. Oh yes, in the 1880s.

DW: So it began to grow in the 1880s.

EH: This is the ring, this is the ring that was the wedding ring of Sara Allen Himes and William Himes.

DW: Oh, how lovely.

EH: And inside it has the dates. She's the one my daughter was named for. And so, the interesting thing was though that he came to Florida and he became the first....I'm sorry I may forget, he was the state's first____(long pause)____ transportation, excuse me I....

DW: Oh, okay _____

EH: That's alright, that's alright.

DW: (Both talking at once, cannot understand either one)

EH: That's exactly right. So, anyway he came on to Florida and became....made his own way down to Inverness and that area and that's where my husband's father was born.

DW: I see.

EW: No, he was born, excuse me, in New Orleans before he came here, I'm sorry.

DW: And then your husband was born probably.....

EH: Here in Tampa.

DW: Here in Tampa, okay, in the 1890s?

EH: No, my husband was born in 1905.

DW: 1905? Alright. He grew up and went to school here?

EH: He grew up here, went to school here and went to Vanderbilt and then went to Harvard Law School.

DW: I didn't realize that.

EH: Um hum.

DW: Well great is a Harvard graduate.

EH: I know there are lots of things that are hard to bear about Harvard graduates.

DW: Yes, yes, yes. I was really thinking about my daughter being a Harvard graduate which is something that wouldn't have crossed their minds then, about girls being admitted.

EH: Oh, heavens yes! Oh, girls! Yes, it's amazing, it really is.

DW: So, he came back here to Tampa then?

EH: He came back to Tampa and started practicing law and joined his father with his law firm. Well the firm developed and John's father practiced, he was a trial lawyer and had lots of heart and if you look at those scrapbooks that I have given to Tom Kemp and the Special Collections Department at the Library you will see his wonderful career, because he was one of those who orated and got his picture taken as a piper. But he was very successful and a very delightful man because he had a wicked sense of humor.

DW: Now he never ran for office, your husband, your father-in-law.....

EH: My father-in-law did run, he was on the city coun.....no, excuse me, I don't believe he did run, yes,my father-in-law was in the Senate....

DW: But _____ (both speaking at once)

EH: That's right, uh huh.....

DW: I'm sorry, I didn't make myself clear. _____(speaking over EH, cannot hear either)____

EH: Uh huh, well we were skipping from one generation to another which was confusing.

DW: So your father-in-law was in the Senate when your husband was a boy?

EH: Exactly, exactly. About 10 years, he was about 10-years-old, something like that.

DW: That would have been when women's suffrage was an issue in the Florida Senate. I have read all those journals but I'll have to go back and check for the Himes name to see how he voted. That would be between 1913 and 1919.....

EH: Well, I have the blue book, no I gave the blue book to Tom Kemp so it's not here.

DW: Well that's okay on this issue.

EH: That's alright.

DW: And then your husband grew up and followed in his father's footsteps and became a lawyer but he did not run for office.

EH: Yes, he did, my husband was the Judge of the Criminal Court of Records and the Criminal Courts of Record no longer exists but this was in.....he had just been elected when we married, the year we were..... I was graduated from college and he was taking office practically at the same time and we got married practically at the same time. So....., and then he held office and ran again and I was pregnant when he ran the next time and then the war came along and he took a leave because this was a kind of war that everyone was enthusiastic about and he didn't have to go but he felt it was his duty to go. So, he went and stayed, that was in the Navy and he became a judge. Larry Grayson was appointed to hold it, his name maybe familiar to you I don't know, because he held the office while John was gone and then when John came back and finished out his term, then Larry ran.....John didn't want to run again for that so Larry ran and was elected.

DW: I didn't realize he had been a judge.

EH: Um hum.

DW: And then he practiced law after that.

EH: Then he practiced law, um hum.

DW: And then the firm became Holland and Knight eventually? **EH:** Well, that's a different story. No, John Himes, my husband, was never affiliated with Holland and Knight.

DW: Oh, I'm sorry.

EH: No, don't be sorry. My son is now, my son is, but you see, I was from Bartow where Spessard Holland grew up and where my father was one of Spessard's best

friends, we all knew the Holland family real well. But, Holland and Knight didn't come about until much much later. Getting back to Spessard Holland, this is kind of jumping around in this history.....

DW: That's okay, that's fine.

EH: Is that alright with you?

DW: That's fine.

EH: Because he was a very important person in the lives of all of us and when he.....I had become interested in politics because I had a grandfather who was in the Legislature in North Carolina and my father just naturally loved politics. So we had many evening meals ruined by political conversations, you know, or I'm mad at you...I'm for him, you know and that sort of thing, but anyway, it was interesting that we followed Spessard's career so and it was a successful career and he was such an honorable, marvelous person. When he was....the last time he had to run was when....and I had supported him in his... all his campaigns....and I worked in them because....as a volunteer. But in this campaign I was very active and also one of the co-chairman of the county with a man called Jack Dempsey, who ran the Chevrolet company and Norman Brown who was a lawyer. And he was running because Claude Pepper had not been re-elected to Congress so he decided to run against Spessard Holland. Most people have forgotten that.

DW: No, yeh, I don't know.

EH: Jimmy Clandillian said to me one time, "Spessard would never run against Pepper," and I said, "Pepper ran against Spessard."

DW: I heard _____

EH: It was a very bitter campaign, too. But anyway, after the campaign, and I had worked so hard for him, then I had my own election when I ran for the Hospital Welfare Board and I was introducing Spessard at this particular democratic women's meeting at thestarted to say Tampa Terrace but I think it was the Florida Hotel, and I suddenly heard Lucile Cochran who was then, I think, president of the democratic women's thing say, "and Elizabeth Himes is the first woman who was ever elected to public office in Hillsborough County. And I was standing on my feet to introduce Spessard and I was so stunned because I didn't know I was.

DW: Oh, really?

EH: I did not know I was.

DW: Isn't that interesting. I have seen other examples of that. Sandra Wilson, who was both the first African American first woman PhD. from USF did not know that until her graduation day when, I think it was Marilyn Horton was pointed out to her.

EH: Really, I know Sandra, yeh.

DW: We really need those milestones pointed out at the time so that people realize.....

EH: Well, I want you to know that I was so amazed that I stood there and I wasn't even there, I mean I was absorbing this information. And Spessard tapped me on the shoulder and he said, " I'm here, please introduce me."

DW: Well, okay, speaking of finishing introductions, let's go backwards on your life. Now tell me about your family from North Carolina.

EH: Well, my grandfather there was involved in politics and then I guess when I got....as a little girl my father just naturally liked politics, especially because he was always supporting somebody. I can still see him carrying my brother, youngest brother around with a straw hat on his head for....who was the presi.....Al Smith.

DW: Oh, for Al Smith, that was in 1928.

EH: 1928.

DW: Well, that took some courage in North Carolina.

EH: Oh, heavens!no now this was in Florida.

DW: Oh, after they moved to Florida, oh, okay.

EH: You see, my mother was from North Carolina, my father was, excuse me, a cracker, a Florida Cracker.

DW: Alright! Now how did they get together?

EH: Mother came to Florida, she was a nurse and had been a nurse, and so she came to Tampa to nurse. It must have let's see, I was born in 1915, that would have been in about 1913 or 1914. And they fell in love and got married and....I'm trying to.....

DW: Was it the forerunner of Tampa General that brought her here or was there any specific reason why she came to Tampa.

EH: No, no, she just came to nurse. In those days you, I guess, she had grown up with the former Senator Swerington's wife who lived in Bartow and

DW: That was the connection.

EH: That was the connection.....she sent for her, you must come and nurse my father. So, mother came down and that's how she met daddy, living in Bartow, Florida.

DW: Private duty nursing?

EH: Private duty, um hum, and she met daddy while she was there. But to get back to politics and after I married a man who was in politics, and he didn't remain in politics, but I still loved getting involved in politics, supporting people who I cared about and whom I believed in.

DW: It's an important thing for your community isn't it.

EH: Well, it was.....yeh, it's.....

DW: So, now you went to school in Bartow?

EH: Went to school in Bartow.

DW: Public school?

EH: Public school, that's all we had. Summerland Institute.

DW: Summerland Institute.

EH: It was, our public school was called Summerland Institute. Jacob Summerland was the biggest cracker of all.

DW: I know that name, how do I know that name?

EH: Well because he was from Bartow. Oh, he was a real leader of the crackers. The reason they got called crackers, I'm not sure, but anyway, his son, the original Jacob, his son, and my father were good friends and we lived next door to each other, so his daughter was my best friend.

DW: And they named the school for him, or did he.....

EH: For his father.

DW: Okay, for his father. And then when you graduated did you go twelve years to school there?

EH: Yes, I went 12 years there and then I went to Florida State College for Women.

DW: In Tallahassee.

EH: That's right.

EH: And that was the point that I was going to make that after John and I were married, he didn't know anybody except the people in Tampa and I could go out.....we would go out.....he was so.....oh, and by the way he was sent to hold court in Jacksonville and other places as Judge of the Criminal Court of Record to relieve a judge down there now and then.....

DW: And you had friends down there.

EH: I could pick up the phone anywhere I went and find somebody I knew.

DW: That's a neat point. We tend to think of men as having more effective networks but because he had gone to school at Vanderbilt, out of state, you were the one who had the network.

EH: That's right. So, it was really....you just knew everybody all over the state. It was a small world.

DW: Yes, much much different from today....and very nice.

EH: Very nice! It was. There was always a stag line when you went to a party.

DW: Oh, that's right.

WH: I can remember my daughter saying, "what's a stag line?"

DW: Yeh, well, of course, by the time the war came and there were no stag lines you were already married and had your own partner available for dancing, so.....

EH: That's right, true, true.

DW: So, exactly how did you and John meet?

EH: I was visiting here, I was visiting a very good friend of mine, Louisa Bennacre, who's father was president of the First National Bank at that time, Chairman of the Board of the First National Bank, at that time. And, let me see...I had been....I knew so many people here that I had visited here a number of times, but this particular summer between my junior and senior year was a different year. I met John.

DW: Oh that's.....perfect timing.

EH: And I had a date with one of his best friends and we met at the Yacht Club and that was the beginning. And so we did date.

DW: And then you got married when you graduated?

EH: Graduated in June of 1937 and married in June of 1937.

DW: Exciting time.

EH: Yes, very.

DW: That was exactly the way things were supposed to go.

EH: That's exactly right, exactly. And I moved all the way from Bartow to Tampa.

DW: And then the war came upon you very soon after you got married.

EH: Yes, and we lived in Jacksonville when he was in the Naval Air Technical Training Center.

DW: Oh, so that was handy so he didn't have to go very far.

EH: Well he, no, but it was close, there was a time when he was a head overseas but luck was with this and he was stationed there. I always said that I fought the war harder than he did because I learned to cook on a kerosene stove.

DW: Yes, there were a lot of difficulties for women, even women who's husbands weren't gone, everyone was affected by the war in terms of rationing and shortage of supplies and having to learn.....

EH: I still love catfish cakes and all those things when we couldn't get meat.

DW: Right recipes for cakes that have no eggs, no sugar cause there were no.....

EH: I learned to drink coffee and tea without sugar and I never have liked it since. Strange.

DW: So, tell me about the children.

EH: Well, I had.....Sara was born, my daughter was born in 1940 and she was a wonderful daughter and she died nine years ago of melanoma, melanoma, which she was ill for three years, in remission, out of remission, and it finally metastasized to her brain and she had two inoperable tumors, so it's something you never get over because you don't expect, even an adult child to die before you do, so..... But she had so many friends and she left me a wonderful legacy. I have kept up with all her friends and they've kept up with me and she had lived in New York and Washington and other places and they call me.

DW: That's nice.

EH: It's wonderful, it's wonderful, they come to visit me.

DW: So that shows what an exceptional person you are and what an exceptional person she was.

EH: She was, yes. And then I have a son, named John Fraser Himes, he....because of the confusion of John Rolland Himes and John Fraser Himes, his father was John Rolland, he abbreviated his to J. Fraser Himes, and he's a lawyer, he went to Vanderbilt, went to Aunt Phillips' Academy and Andover before going to

Vanderbilt and I think that was one of the best things that ever happened to him. He enjoyed it so much and has kept up with friendships he had there.

DW: Good.

EH: And he's been practicing law, he started out practicing.....in the beginning with some friends and then he went to his father and they were together when John died and I've forgotten who the other young men were, there were two or three other young men, contemporaries of his who were with them. And John died in 1980, December of 1980. John was 10 years older than I and that did make a difference....and this was something that I wanted to.....

DW: He was already practicing law then you were married?

EH: Oh yes, he'd been....see he graduated from Harvard 1971, law school, and so he was a bachelor around town, he was 31 and.....but he.....

DW: He was just waiting for you wasn't he?

EH: Well, I like to think so.

DW: You know, one thing we didn't get on record was your maiden name.

EH: Whidden, and there are lots of them over in Polk County still. You can look down at any tombstone in any cemetery. Whidden, they were crackers, my grandfather. In fact, the Tribune had a little story not too many years ago, one of their columnists, I can't remember which one it was, had seen this tombstone, these two tombstones, so then he interviewed somebody and found out about...that this was....

DW: Sounds like Leland Hawes, that the sort of thing he does.

EH: Well, it wasn't Leland but it was, could have been, but it wasn't Leland. But he wrote about having discovered these tombstones and..... my grandfather was determined to put a tombstone on, my father's father, on his parents grave and he finally did it just before.....I mean many many years after they had died, and it's over near Plant City somewhere because all those little towns.....

DW: I remember that story about the cemetery that got kind of isolated.

EH: Right, right, exactly. Steve Otto, was it Steve Otto, I think it was Steve Otto who did that.

DW: Well, I was curious about Fraser's name.

EH: Well, ah, oh that's.....well, their....the Fraser clan, this is from....they're Scotch, and the Himes and the Frasers married and they lived in North Carolina. They never knew my mother's family, but anyway, Katherine Fraser came from Isle of Sky and she married a man named William Himes.

DW: So the Fraser name is part of the Himes family?

EH: Right, uh huh, F-r-a-s-e-r.

DW: That's why I wanted to know about his name.

EH: Uh huh, oh, he loves his kilts and he loves all those things and he's been to the Isle of Sky where the Frasers were the pipers.

DW: Oh, right.

EH: Yes, he had a good time doing that.

DW: Was he able to trace your heritage?

EH: Yes.

DW: Okay, so we've gotten you married now and gotten the children born and we've had the war.....

EH: And I became very involved in PTAs, you know, it was wonderful it really was. I enjoyed PTA's. I know lots of people don't but.....

DW: So you came back from Jacksonville when the war was over.

EH: Oh, immediately, oh, I came back before the war was over.

DW: And the kids were in school then?

EH: Fraser was born in 1944 so he was just a baby when I came back.

DW: But Sara.....

EH: Sara was, uh huh.

DW: Well she would have just been four.

EH: Four, right. But the PTA was, I can't say enough for it because I think I learned to become interested in education, well, I was a teacher, I forgot to say, I was.....

DW: Oh, I'm sorry when did this happen?.

EH: I became a teacher when....out of necessity. My husband would shoot me if he heard me say that, but I didn't let him know that it cost me so much money to have the clothes I wore.....

DW: Yes, alright.

EH:And he only made \$5,000 a year as a Judge of the Criminal Court of Records, believe it or not, \$5,000 a year. And all our friends thought we were wealthy.

DW: Yeh, that was a lot of money then.

EH: And he could practice law too, because there weren't that many criminals, so anyway.....

DW: But you wanted to have your own independent income for.....

EH: Well, at first I started out kind of sneakily and didn't tell him what I became so.....

DW: He might come home and wonder where you were.

EH: Yeh, right..... no, I was just a substitute so I never taught regularly until I substituted over at Seaborne Academy, now this is a Seaborne that you've never heard of, I'm sure. This was run by Mrs. Clayton who started this school, and it was one through the 12th grade.

DW: Was it on Davis Island?

EH: On Davis Island right where it presently is, if it still exists.

DW: (both talking at once, cannot decipher)

EH: In fact Mrs. Litsky bought it from Mrs. Clayton, I think. And her daughter eventually, Mary Litsky Anderson ran it for a long time. In fact my grandson went there, Sara went there, Fraser went there. But when I taught there it was one through the 12th grade and it was an interesting thing because she let me teach Spanish first through the 12th grade.

DW: Alright, you taught Spanish.

EH: Yes, that was my major.

DW: You had studied that at Tallahassee? I forgot to ask what your major was.

EH: Uh yes, that was my major.

DW: Why did you chose that major?

EH: I guess because I just was crazy about the teacher. And it was a she, it was a she.

DW: I can't imagine you doing anything like that.

EH: She was a Portuguese and I had lived in Portugal and her father had been a missionary and she was adorable and I just decided

DW: You needed a role model.

EH: Well it was easy to speak and she made it easier just because it was fun, it was fun, it was fun.

DW: (both speaking at once)_____

EH: I know Fraser's taking Spanish now.

DW: I have lived in Portugal and I've traveled in Spanish countries and I learn enough to get by and then I forget it immediately, you have to have a definite ability

to learn it.

EH: Well, not only that, you can know it well and.....I can still read it but I can't....well I can understand it but.....and certain phrases come flowing out naturally, but a conversation, I can get real lost. But anyway, I did this....that was my experience...

DW: Now did you get involved in PTA through Seaborne?

EH: No, I didn't get involved until my children were in....you know, became.....

DW: You were substituting there while the children were still real little.

EH: Right.....No, wait a minute, this is all before they were born. No see, I didn't....Sara wasn't born until 1940, and we married in 1937 and that was three years.

DW: Alright, and during that time you were.....

EH: So,but the PTA.....the reason I feel so..... I made so many friends because I got involved in it on a countywide basis and I served as Legislative Chairman and I kind of liked that kind of thing.

DW: That teaches you doesn't it, when you have to go to Tallahassee and talk.....

EH: Yes, indeed.

DW:educational issues, you learn the issues and you learn how the system operates.

EH: And then, but we had so much....in those days if you had, you know, you have to go it....I would be covered with printers ink when I'd go through the files to find out what was happening to laws and things. Maybe that's when all my allergies started, I don't know.

DW: That could very well be, actually I've developed so allergies when I was working on a book where the Xeroxes were. Dating back to when Xeroxing began, that could happen.

EH: Right.

DW: So the children went to Gorrie did they?

EH: No, let me see, we lived.....well when we first married John had, as I said, we were all poor and he'd taken a lot of property in lieu of payment for developers, so we bartered, we traded lots for a refrigerator, we traded lots for a Magnavox, oh, that Magnavox...and I....also for records.

DW: To me trading land to buy a refrigerator really shows how values have changed. Land is so valuable now.

EH: I can still remember Bob Hoag, I know his daughter she comes back here to visit and laugh about it, but I could hear Bob saying "Excuse me, Elizabeth, don't you think you've gotten enough records now?" Oh, you got this symphony, oh you've got this opera, you know, well there we go. I'd say well just put it on our tab and he'd say, I think your tab is reached the limit. Those lots, I'll have to get another lot.

DW: Isn't that just amazing.....

EH: Electrolux, I also had....well whatever it was called whether.....

DW: Vacuum cleaner.

EH: Vacuum cleaner.

DW: Uh huh, yeh.

EH: We furnished our house with all these things with the lots.

DW: Isn't that interesting. Just imagine.

EH: See, Marilyn Manner and Virginia Park were both sort of in trouble at that time, the developers were, you'd never know it now.....

DW: They took over the land for payment?

EH: They took over Marilyn Manner, I don't know who took over Virginia Park, but we took over mostly Marilyn Manner.

DW: If a young person today thinks about wanting CDs and you trade land to buy CDs, I mean that's the analogy here, which is just amazing, when you think of what Florida land is worth today, and how many refrigerators do you think you could buy if you were trading a piece of land. It really shows how monetary values change. And, of course, those things were new and relatively more expensive, but.....

EH: But to get.....I'm going to get back to PTA just a little bit because, I got to know so many people, not just in the state, and there was not really so many in the state at that time, but all over Hillsborough County. And when I ran for public office I didn't, you know, I didn't know anything about getting together a campaign, I just sat at the telephone and called this network of people.

DW: And that's typically how women have been elected, especially in the early years after women got the vote, they used their old networks from suffrage movement and from the WCTU and the Red Cross and things like that and.....

EH: And I had.....Um hum. The Junior League had children....you know there were nothing, no entertainment for children so we trouped puppets and trouped plays to the outer strawberries schools, we called them then and other places, and so I got to know people real well that way too.

DW: Women's organizations have done so much to support the educational system. In fact, most listeners don't know that the first hot lunches served in Hillsborough County were organized by the Tampa Women's Club.

EH: I had forgotten that but I did know it, uh huh.

DW: It's an amazing thing, the school board wasn't willing to do it so the Women's Club took it over and made a successful hot lunch program, in 1915. You were just born so you would have no reason to tell me. So then during the 50s you were active in the PTA and....

EH: That's right and I began to get interested in politics too, and we had....we lived on.... we sold the house that we lived in when we were doing all the bartering and moved....

DW: Where was that?

EH: That was in Marilyn Manner and we moved to Hawthorne Road in 19, I guess it was 47 or 8.

DW: Uh huh, shortly after the war?

EH: And yes '48. And we were in the county then.....

DW: Oh, because the city limits didn't go that far.

EH:so, then all of a sudden we were involved and taken into the city, which we were happy about, but the next thing I knew....this is just maybe something that whetted my appetite for politics even more, they couldn't find anyone to run for city council. So, a group of people who were active in the PTA got together and came and said to me, would you run for city council?

DW: Alright, that's great!

EH: But my husband, I didn't tell him, I knew he would just have a fit so I didn't tell him until many years later really.

DW: You just turned it down?

EH: I just said, no, no, I'm sorry, my husband wouldn't let me.

DW: Actually it reminds me about what you were saying earlier about not realizing that you were the first women elected to office, if I can just interject here, the first woman who ran for office in Hillsborough County was Alice Snow who ran on a very similar basis. In 1916 a group of women who were reformists in the school system, part of this hot lunch program and so forth, came.....

EH: I read that in your book.

DW: Right. They wanted to have a woman on the school board, they felt like they were doing their share to support the educational system and they wanted a voice. They recruited someone else who's name escapes me at the moment, but she didn't live in the right district, so at the very last minute they recruited Alice Snow and the supervisor of elections had no idea how to handle this because, of course, Florida women didn't have the vote yet in 1916. There were precedents in a number of other cities as early as the 1870s, women were elected to the school board in Boston long long before Massachusetts women had the vote, so there were precedents for men electing women to office, even though women couldn't vote. Anyway, the supervisor of election said to Alice Snow and these other women, yeh, filing closes

in an hour and a half, if you can get 25 names on a petition before then we'll put your name on the ballot. And they managed to do this, got her name on the ballot and I think she probably won the election, because it took them about a week to count the ballots. And, you know, there weren't that many. I think that the men probably did elect her, but the men who counted the ballots just didn't want to acknowledge this. At any rate, she did not serve, and you were the first person elected who.....And much much later

EH: Oh, heavens yes!

DW: A half a century later, which is really why we need to do these oral histories and remember our history because it is possible to miss out on a half a century, to feel like you're making progress and then go backwards.

EH: Well, you know my husband was very chauvinistic, I guess.....,

DW: Most men were.

EH: He never really tried to tell me what to do but I knew what he didn't want me to do, in no uncertain terms, and so when I turned down being a candidate for the city counsel, which I never would have been elected to, I'm sure, at that time.

DW: Now what year was this?

EH: Oh gosh, well we lived on Hawthorne Road in 1948 so I'd say it was somewhere between 1948 and 1955.

DW: Yes. Women were going backwards in that time right? There were a number of women elected during World War II, but after the war was over, women were supposed to go back home and

EH: I can't even remember now who they got to run at that point, but anyway, when I decided that I.....Julian Lane, I'd supported Julian Lane when he ran for mayor and so Julian said, I want you to serve on the hospital board and so I did. I've been involved in the hospital as a volunteer when it was Tampa Municipal Hospital even, and so.....and I think I was...yes, I was very active in the volunteers at that time.

DW: Was that before it moved to Davis Island?

EH: No, no.

DW: It was on Davis Island.

EH: No, it was on Davis Island, in fact I don't think I could remember when it wasn't on Davis Island. You see at that time there were three hospitals.....I mean the county had County Hospital and Clara Frye was a city owned hospital, although it was started by a volunteer group of blacks. And still when I was elected to the hospital and welfare board Clara Frye was still going, it was under us and the county too.

DW: You were elected in 1964 and _____(both talking)_____ in 1967 so.

EH: Right, and Gordon Keller was a part of the total package deal too that we were responsible for. But to get back to the political parts of it. When I just _____. Oh, after becoming very involved in the hospital and attending, there had been so many problems at Tampa General, the legislature decided that it had to do something because there was this constant battle between the Welfare Department, as it was called then, and well they actually had a welfare and hospital board which the Governor appointed, that was a brief few years in there and there was a constant battle between the doctors and the _____ trying to get control of the welfare money and the money for indigent, but they liked to call it welfare, and so when Julian appointed me to this board I had already become a member of the lay advisory board and I...no, I guess he appointed me to the lay advisory board, excuse me, I had become a member of some other committee they had working within the hospital, oh, the joint conference committee, which was made up of doctors and lay people. And so I began to really, I felt, get in touch with what some of the problems were.....

DW: And again, if I may just interject, this is another tradition of women. The very first hospital in Tampa was begun in the 1870s during a yellow fever epidemic and was begun by women, run by women, was very successful and then the doctors took it over, put their wives on board and gradually eased out the original founders, then after the doctors had control of it they went to the county commission and started asking for _____ which women had provided on their own. A long history here of women willing to work and meeting with success and then finally maybe being able to manage it officially. I'm sorry, go ahead.

EH: No, that's alright. My husband.....you know..... I keep..... we're both jumping back and forth so much. But when I finally decided that.....So, at this time,

getting back to the hospital and welfare board which first started as the Board of Public Assistance. They called it BOPA, and the Legislature was looking at this act because they had appointed a first board and this was going to be the first election, the one that I ran in was the first election, and it turned out that the men from the board were made up of the Mayor, Chairman of the Board, County Commission and three elected from districts, these were arbitrary districts, just saying....district 1, district 2 and district 3, three was designated as the Plant City area, the others, Tampa was split in two by 1 and 2, and so I just was asked by Barry Wallason who had been the appointee for the Plant City group, would I run for district 3, and I could run for district 3 even though I lived in Hyde.....no, I mean, at that time where did I live.....Hawthorn Road, and so I.....

DW: So the seat that you ran for was actually technically a Plant City seat.

EH: But not really, if you know.

DW: Isn't that interesting?

EH: Um hum, isn't that interesting? So ahhhh.....

DW: Pretty good for a Bartow girl.

EH: Who's great grandparents were buried somewhere close there. But anyway.....well John knew that I was becoming very involved in the hospital and it's problems and I'd been very vocal at meetings and I was being quoted in the newspaper and so when they said that it was time to file for it, I just said, "I'm going to run for the hospital welfare board, I hope you don't mind."

DW: Good for you!

EH: And he said, well it's alright with me, but I want you to understand one thing, you have to run under my name. And he was not.....part of this was chauvinism another part was....

DW: Political.

EH: Egoism, egoism, and another part was, he really thought, you see he hadn't been a judge since 1948, he was a very popular judge, very popular, his name was extremely well known and held in great respect and still is, I certainly hope. But he thought in a way that he was doing me a favor.

DW: Oh absolutely, absolutely, I'm sure he was if he said he was.

EH: So....and everybody, women couldn't use their own names.

DW: That's right, that's perfectly typical of _____ (both talking)_____

EH: Mrs. John R. Himes and under it in parenthesis it says Elizabeth, but for people to view this as controversial now, this really shows that they don't understand the context of the time that's it's in. Everybody, almost everybody, used their husband's name. It was the typical thing to do. And especially if your husband was well known and well respected, it was a political advantage, why not use it.

EH: But the doctors, the doctors, who controlled Tampa General, the one's who started the medical education program there always controlled it. And so they decided to take it to the state attorney and get a ruling on whether I could use my husband's name.

DW: I'm sure you signed your checks that way.

EH: Absolutely, absolutely.

DW: Every woman did.

EH: And so they ruled in favor of my using it.

DW: Good, good, they were reasonable.

EH: And, of course, I was kind of hoping they wouldn't then I'd have to use my name. But he probably would have stuck to it, you can't run.

DW: It's a very conflicted situation, it shows how difficult decisions were to make.

EH: But anyway, excuse me.....

DW: Before..... you got the editorial, 1964, May 2, 1964. Who are the candidates? An interesting advertisement regarding the candidates for the County Hospital Board has been published by a group of 103 Tampa doctors. And basically these doctors were opposing you and the editorial says, but they don't have any reasons why, they don't have any alternatives, they're just kind of against.

EH: Now this is interesting because really and truly they were all friends, close friends.

DW: That's sad, isn't that sad.

EH: And yet they signed this ad, gave money for this ad opposing.

DW: I'll bet that just hurt you to see it.

EH: No, it made me mad.

DW: Well good.

EH: So I picked up the phone and I called everyone up, at the office.....

DW: Good for you!

EH:and I said

END OF SIDE ONE TAPE ONE

Side two tape one EH:I really don't think I'd have had the nerve if I'd stopped and thought about it but I really did, I was just angry. So, I can still remember which doctors and the answers some of them gave me. Some wouldn't come to the phone but most of them did. And they'd stammer and stutter and I said, why are you opposed to me... well I'm not really opposed to you, it's just that you don't know anything about it.

DW: Although you had been serving them.

EH: You don't really know what the problems are, don't let this affect our friendship.

DW: Let me interject one minute here. Here's what her qualifications were on the back of this card. Graduate of Florida State College for Women (FSU), Chairman of Tampa General Hospital Lay Advisory Board, Chairman of Tampa General Hospital Joint Conference Committee, Member of Tampa General Hospital Auxiliary, Past PTA President, Past Board Member PTA County Council, Past Secretary of the United Fund, Member of the United Fund Budget Committee, Past

President and Honorary Life Board Member of the Community Coordinating Council, Member of Hillsborough County Children's Committee, we need to come back to that. Past member Chamber of Commerce University Committee, and we will definitely come back to that. Past President of Junior League of Tampa, Past Board Member of the League of Women Voters, Guidance Center YWCA and Urban League, Elected delegate to 1960 Democratic Convention, the convention that nominated John Kennedy, so we'll come back to that too. This is not a woman who is running for office because she doesn't have anything else to do.

EH: Well thank you, I was looking for more things to do, I guess.

DW: You knew you could do it well.

EH: Well, I felt that I knew the problems as well as anybody else, or better than anybody else, I really did and I can still remember you know, campaigning at that time, it was different than campaigning these days, there was no TV.

DW: Right, and knew so many people.

EH: Well, and you went to all the rallies, these rallies at schools, churches, wherever. Out in the open.

DW: It was much more personal than today.

EH: And it was really fun, I enjoyed it, it was a challenge and then, oh goodness you got to know so many people.

DW: No wonder you won because you had friendships of long standing and they couldn't defeat you with advertising because the people doing the ad writing knew you.

EH: That's right. Well you see, I'm trying to remember how much money I spent on that campaign but all I had were those cards that were contributed, the printing of it was contributed by a cousin of John's.

DW: Well that's good.

EH: No stickers, no buttons,bumper stickers, why they were unheard of and.....

DW: No radio ads or television ads or anything of that sort.

EH: No, nothing, nothing. So, you just had to be there.

DW: It would be nice if we could get back to that again. **EH:** I think to get to know the candidate and it was, it was an experience, an unforgettable one, but it's so different from today.

DW: Now, how many people were in the race?

EH: Oh my goodness, too many. I see....all my material like that is at Special Collections, a lot of it.

DW: It was a big race right?

EH: I beg your pardon.

DW: There were several candidates.

EH: Oh heavens, there were, let me see here, I ran against.....this is my little biographical sketch and I.....let's see. Let's see if I can find where I talk about. Here it is, I was one of six, two women and four men running in the Democratic primary in 1964 for the same position on the hospital and welfare board. We were running for the same position on the Hospital and Welfare Board. That's for the same position.

DW: Right, right.

EH: Not just all districts but one district.

DW: Right. And this was more or less the Plant City seat. Were many of these other people from over there?

EH: Well, no, no.

DW: No, okay.

EH: I'll see, it says, defeated a physician opponent. Well he, I can't even remember his name, I can see him but.....

DW: So we had a physician.....

EH: We had a physician and ahh, there were two women.

DW: Now who were they?

EH: I can't remember....one of the men that was running was in the drug business.

DW: Okay, physician, pharmacist and ah.....

EH: And ah.....

DW: People who had a.....

EH: The women, one of them was, oh, one was the wife of a doctor.

DW: I was gonna say, were we gonna have a doctor's wife here.

EH: Uh huh, that was, that was.....

DW: So we've got people with special interest, pharmacist, physician, physician's wife.

EH: They were lined up solid behind her, of course. And you know the interesting thing was she was a very smart lady and very very able. But, of course.....

DW: But obviously, obviously had a special interest in you where the community _____ and the community was smart enough to sort that out.

EH: So, anyhow, it was interesting.

DW: So once you were elected did your colleagues treat you any differently then when you were appointed or was it pretty much the way things had been before?

EH: If you're asking me because I was a woman, no, no, it was because we were on different railroads, on different tracks. The opposite, you see the doctors controlled the board, they had just elected the mayor and that editorial refers to that.

DW: Right. So the physicians support Nuccio for mayor?

EH: Yes, oh yes, and ahh.....

DW: That seemed to be the implication of the editorial.

EH: Um hum, that's right. So ahh..... and he, was, you knowthat's.....I can still remember reporters going to him after a meeting and saying, well what happened here today? Nothing. Nothing. He didn't pay any attention and he didn't, I mean, and if there was a big issue that he would say, you know, he'd decided with whatever they told him to do. I liked the Nuccio's they were very nice people, his wife was a wonderful cook. I can remember being at her house and eating some of her food and he had a successful business in Ybor City and I was one of his people who bought a lot of stuff from him. But I just, you know, politics was politics.

DW: So you stayed on the hospital authority then until.....

EH: Well, I took office in....lets see, ...elected in 1964 took office in 1965 and, you know, that somewhere along the line the name was changed to HWB but that was long before I was elected, it was HWB when I was elected. I guess I had been on the board, I'm trying to remember, my term was expired the end of 1969, so it was in 1966, it seems to me, wait a minute maybe I've got it in here, the date that I.....not that it's that important. But I started thinking this is never going to work, this is never going to work no matter who's here. It will be in the control of whoever of the doctors group and they will elect whomever they want and the other two are going to....., because of politics, stay with them. So, I worked with Ray Nofke who was then, and I'm happy to say who worked for me, well not just me but because he believed that this is the thing to do, to change the law. And so we worked together and....I have letters in Special Collection from different ones and Ray Nofke others who worked and helped me and there was so.....

DW: He was in the Legislature then already?

EH: Yeh, he was Senator, at that time. And the important thing was it wasn't working but you didn't want to just tear it apart. So, my recommendation and theirs turned out to be pretty much the same, they accepted the idea of....Ray's aid I remember worked closely with me at that time and we decided to put it under the county commission let the county commission be the HWB with two councils under one welfare council....one would be the welfare council the other would be.....

DW: The Division of Health and Welfare.....

EH: Hospital, the hospital.....

DW: At the federal level and the state level the way_____ (both talking, cannot hear)_____

EH: The hospital council. So anyway, it was accepted and they accepted those amendments and so.....but with a provision.....Oh my goodness, you would have thought I had caused....declared war, it was just....oh, how could I possible do such a thing to the doctors.

DW: Well they were all ready then.

EH: Well, they knew they weren't going to run things anymore though for awhile.

DW: Because they were going to be under county commission's control.

EH: Well, they'd still get their clout in but they wouldn't actually control it. So anyway, I was happy that it changed and I was chairman of the Welfare Council for the next two years. So, it must have been the end of â??69 it must have been â??77 about the time that that took place. So I guess we were two years and then the last two years we were the hospital, the county commission was hospital and welfare board and we were the hospital council then. See we served on both councils that was part of the law, the amendment, that those of us who had been elected, see, they could not take us away from that.....

DW: _____ (cannot hear)_____

EH: So if we chose to we could serve on both councils and everybody chose to.

DW: Well it sounds like a tumultuous time much like in the â??90s at the hospital authority.

EH: Oh, it was a tumultuous time alright and I.....

DW: And people often forget that these are usually volunteer, unpaid positions that absolutely turn your life upside down and you don't get a dime for it. This was not a paid position for you, was it?

EH: They did make an amendment about the time I think they made that amendment, about somewhere in there, the legislature did, that we would be paid for

expenses. Like if we went to.....

DW: Right, to conventions.....

EH:if we went to, if we went to.....I went to Washington once to a meeting and then...oh, and our travel expenses, well I never kept track of it.

DW: That's not really pay, that's reimbursement.

EH: Just for any expense that we had.

DW: Exactly. I wanted to come back to a couple of things from that era. This is actually even earlier from 1959. The headline is: And Just Why Shouldn't The City Of Tampa Have A Woman As Mayor? From 1959, very early, it wasn't until the 1980s that Sandy Freedman finally became the first woman to be the mayor of Tampa. So this is an interesting exploration of ideas here on the part of the Tribune. Ahh...and among the women who are featured as potential candidates for mayor, of course, is Elizabeth Himes. Can you tell me about.....well let me read what it says here. This would seem to bear out the contention of Mrs. John R. Himes that sex is not important but rather qualifications of honesty, intelligence, capability, sufficient training, education, and experience to be prepared for the job. "Although I would never vote for a candidate just because she is a woman I would probably scrutinize her more closely because the job would be more difficult for her. Generally speaking I think men admire and respect a capable and intelligent woman, but often that attitude changes when she is on an equal or competitive basis. A woman mayor would have to be unusually objective in her thinking and tactful. However, I think most women have great respect for law and order, they are sticklers for rules, regulations and proper procedure. Contrary to what most men think they are not motivated by emotions but in civic matters move deliberately and cautiously after careful study." I think that is so true. "They are also economy minded and have the courage to fight for their beliefs." Mrs. Himes stressed, however, that any woman in public office must be free of home and family responsibilities, otherwise she would feel guilty about neglecting her family and fail to do a good job.

EH: That was back then.

DW: While with this in mind she said that she thought that the _____ should aim first at school board or city representative positions which duties a good executive could manage and still be a housewife and mother. Which is exactly the way Sandy began, on city council before she became mayor. And then finally, "I

would be enthusiastic about encouraging a good candidate," Mrs. Himes declared. "I only wish public offices could be made more attractive to qualified people of either sex." So true, so true. Very _____ next year it will be four years ago and every one of them is absolutely true today.

EH: Well, you know, it's interesting because if you look at what some of the other said there you will see the reflect.....I mean they're all my friends and wonderful people but most of them would have voted for a man, they say so.

DW: Yes, yes, yes, yes, I'm glad you made that point that they were not serious.....

EH: They would think a man would be better. They really thought.....

DW: Couldn't bring themselves to say it. And again, you know, we tend to forget the context Florida really was very small and very isolated and very different, but on the national scene, by 1959, we had had several female U.S. senators, several female governors, this is really not rocket science, there were lots and lots of precedents, women had been elected as mayors of cities as big as Seattle and Portland back in the 20s. And here we are in 1959 and Tampa is just sort of entertaining the idea and the best candidates are saying, oh, no, not really.

EH: Well you know.....I guess I won't say that. Sometimes.

DW: That's a sign of a good politician.

EH: I guess one thing I would like to make clear, I did not start out doing things because I thought a woman should. I was not promoting the woman's movement whatsoever, I was just doing what I wanted to do.

DW: And that's perfectly typical of all these women who were elected to office early on.

EH: Because.....and that's.....the women's movement came much later, and I guess we would never have gotten where we are if it hadn't come.

DW: And the suffrage movement that got women the vote.

EH: Um hum.

DW: Those women who ran for office out of that movement generally were not elected. It's a very interesting historical twist, that after having worked very sophisticated political elections to win the right to vote, almost none of them turned that into success for themselves. I can think of only one exception, there was a woman elected to the Supreme Court in Ohio who had been an active suffragist and as soon as women had the vote took that network and turned it into her electoral base. But that's the only major election that I can think of where the suffragists used the network they had. And I think it really was a factor of the times that.....especially after the economy collapsed in the late 20s and hear in Tampa it collapsed even sooner, there was a lot of pressure, individual pressure, to let the men retain the positions, bring in the income and, I think, more than any other factor it was the economy and then the war that caused this big step backwards. Just a couple other things here on our clippings, and this is a good way to introduce the.....

EH: Oh good! You can see I had a waistline then.

DW: Oh, you had a waistline..... in all of these pictures you look just great. And I love these clothes from the 1960s because they are so timeless, they reflect your good taste, these clothes you could put on today and you would not be terribly out of fashion. They show that you have a sense of classic good taste that is timeless.

EH: That was an exciting time.

DW: Well tell us about that.

EH: Well, I....this is something that just came up out of the blue, but I had dated George Smathers in college but so had a lot of other people.

DW: George Smathers, a U.S. Senator.

EH: And he....George was the favorite son and so I had worked for George when he ran and I was just called one day and said, would you be.....allow us to put you on the ballot as a congressional delegate to the convention, and you had to run statewide on that. I can remember John Germany calling me from Tallahassee, I think it was, or maybe after he got home, but he said, "Elizabeth, I was so excited when I saw you."

DW: Oh, that's good. This probably was an effect of reforms that were implemented under Roosevelt where they had to elect a certain number of women as delegates to the Democratic conventions. So.....

EH: Well, I was proud because I had a whole vote.....

DW: ____ (both talking) ____

EH: So, it was really fun. But it was the convention to go to if you ever went to a convention, because it was the last one that Pearl Mason gave a party.

DW: Alright! Was this in New York?

EH: No this was in LA and of course it was Jack Kennedy and Johnson. Parties, not just her party but there were parties morning, noon and night.

DW: Yeh, that was before all the restrictions, you could do what you want, you could have fun.

EH: You could try to sleep too, oh dear. But it was exciting because really we knew we didn't control our.....because we were favorite son delegates, so George had control over how we would vote but we were very concerned about George listening to us so we had many private ballots which he received.

DW: Now he was a good friend of John Kennedy, wasn't he?

EH: He was a very good friend.....Johnson had been his mentor and Jack Kennedy was one of his best friends, he was in Jack's wedding.

DW: I thought so.

EH: And ah....so we got to be with the Kennedy, with Jack Kennedy, she wasn't, Jackie wasn't there, I think she was having a miscarriage at that time.

DW: Yeh, I think I recall that.

EH: But the man who really ran that convention was Phil Graham.

DW: Phil Graham?

EH: Phil Graham was a most unusual man.....and I knew him in college when he was at the University of Florida. He was so brilliant!

DW: Was he with the Washington Post then yet?

EH: No, no, that was when he was in school.....Oh, yes, he had then married the Washington... I'm sorry.

DW: He married Katherine who.....

EH: Kat Myers.....and ah.....who's book is excellent too.

DW: She was really admirable person.

EH: She's a wonderful person, in fact I'm so surprised they ever got together because they were so different in personalities, she was a shy introverted sort of person and he was so outgoing.

DW: And yet he must have had his depressed side, too, since he.....

EH: Oh, he did, he did, but I'm not.....but that came on later, that came on later. In college he wasn't. He started a fraternity called the Sigma Foolies and I was a Sigma Fooly.

DW: Well that sounds a lot like Bob Graham.

EH: It was just a take off on fraternitiesâ?? weekends.

DW: You know how Bob Graham has that same sense of fun, he loves to sing, he'll be giving his speeches and all of a sudden burst out in song. That must be a family characteristic.

EH: Well, Phillip Graham was an unusual man and I thought his life ended up so tragically and you know we were all.....the Washingtonian magazine had an article about his life and death and Sara, my daughter, was living in Washington then and I remember....I wish I had kept that, but anyway Phillip....he was such an admirable person, he was so smart and yet full of fun too, and the thing that the Washingtonian magazine brought out was the strange things that happened during Jack Kennedy's life and also the man who Kennedy appointed to be the ambassador to England, I can't remember his name, was a delegate to the convention and he sat right behind me, he was charming, attractive man and he jumped off the roof of a building.

DW: Oh!

EH: There were two or three suicides of close friends and there was just too much to be coincidence.

DW: Yep. It's a very stressful place to be but it is interesting.

EH: Just makes me have goosebumps when I think about it and I can still see him....well now we didn't see much of him at the convention â??cuz he was unapproachable at that time, but Jack was very much available at all the parties and so was Bobby. Now Bobby was the favorite, Bobby was fun and he.....

DW: Did you work for him in â??68 then when he ran?

EH: No, I didn't. I can't even remember but I probably voted for him but I didn't work for him. But Bobby.....

DW: Well actually you may have never gotten to work for him.

EH: He didn't....I don't think he did.....

DW:he was probably _____ (both talking at once), yeh, because he was assassinated in July and it was probably September

EH: That's right, but he had, he didn't have Jack's looks but he had a marvelous personality and so Jack was very smart, he sent him to meet with our delegation over in Orlando, and he just charmed everybody there. He sat there down at the table and had breakfast with us. Once our plan got toâ?|we had to miss a party because our plan was late, and he said, well we will just have to have another party for you. He was just that sort of person.

DW: So did the Florida delegation then vote primarily for Kennedy?

EH: Well you see, we were never told the results of our secret election, I mean our secret votes. But, we all talked among ourselves and we knew who the majority were for. And it wasâ?|I shouldnâ??t say that. I shouldnâ??t reveal that, really. But, it was notâ?|

DW: Didnâ??t they have to stand up at the mike and cast _____ votes.

EH: Oh yes, George did. But, he controlled the votes. See we took no official vote

ever. He was the favorite son, and therefore, whatever we said, didnâ??t matter because he had controlâ?|

DW: Who nominated him as the favorite son?

EH: Oh well, he run. He decided to run as a favorite son.

DW: But, who placed his name and nomination?

EH: Collins I guess. Collins was what do you call the chairman of the whole convention. You are stretching my memory.

DW: Well, that would fit, the right era. Well, sounds like a lot of fun.

EH: It was. It was a very exciting experience.

DW: So, did you help the campaign here in Tampa, Iâ??m sure, when John Kennedy was nominated?

EH: I was for Johnson.

DW: You were for Johnson?

EH: So were most of the other people I knew there.

DW: Alright. He was elected and made that historic trip here to Tampa just shortly before he was assassinated. You most have been a part of that?

EH: No.

DW: You didnâ??t go to see him? You really were a Johnson supporter?

EH: Iâ??d seen him, and had drinks with himâ?|

DW: Couple more clippings. This is 1976, classic, beautiful picture. You havenâ??t aged a minute since those pictures were taken in â??59 and â??64, really a beautiful picture and a kind of feature story by **Betty Vance**.

EH: This is right after I was elected, the sustainer of the _____ and the sustainer of the year. That is the story by Betty Vance.

DW: Yes, a good summary of when you starting to be a _____ stateswoman. And this is one I should have begun with Himes Avenue, the history ofâ?|.

EH: Leland Hawes did a wonderful job on that.

DW: He is such a treasure to this town.

EH: Isnâ??t he though?

DW: What we are going to do without him. The man is just a walking encyclopedia. There is no way we can replace what is in Lelandâ??s brain.

EH: Well, you know I gave him so much material, which the University of South Florida library now has about Johnâ??s father and his career and so he wrote. I mean he read everything. I must confess I didnâ??t know some of the things he wrote about my husband.

DW: He likes details. He makes sure everything is straight. He gets everything right. He is such a resource. Well, lets talk about USF. In 1956â?|

EH: 1956, well actually it started before that when I was on the Chamber of Commerce, and we were really, I guess, I just remembered I donâ??t even know how I got on the committee. Somebody called me and said I guessâ?|

DW: If you didnâ??t have a phone, you could avoid a lot of workâ?|

EH: I think Scott Christopher who was then their Chamberâ??s, whatever the call it, executive said we are having a meeting that Sam Gibbons feels we ought to have and so I went over, and we met in this little room, which was like a little closet, and there were only about six of us there. Martha Johnson, Mrs. Carlton Johnson was there. She got off the committee after a while, she did stay with us for a while, but I think newspaper wives felt they should not get involved, and she was very active in the PTA, and also employed by the school system I think in family life education, or something like that. So I was the only womanâ?|

DW: You were the only woman, once again.

EH: I was.

DW: As far as I know you were the only woman. Martha Gibbons to some extentâ?|was just an extension of Sam.

EH: The committee grew slowly. We followed the Board of Control to their meetings. We went to Gainesville. We went to St. Pete. We went to Jacksonville.

But, many of us knew members of the Board of Control then. Fred **Kent** was one, who was very helpful to us. Another one was Mr. Love from **Quincy**, I can still remember. But, Fred **Kent** came down on two different occasions and had dinner with some of us. I was the only woman among all these men. But, you know the funniest thing is John never objected to my doing these things.

DW: Well he knew that you were doing it because you could do it well. And you were a good extension for him.

EH: It was fun. It was interesting. I tell you the people who did things for the university, and Iâ??d like to say that Mr. Smith, oh my goodness, I canâ??t think of his first name.

DW: Not Reece Smith?

EH: No, not Reece Smith. This was a man who had a plan and was in the construction business. Sorry, I should have done some homework. But, he was on the Chamber Committee for one purpose, and that was to really help. But, he was in the construction business.

DW: Most of the time that is true, that the men who would get on the committee and have some business to further, and the women in that era did not.

EH: So anyway, we flew in his plane, and when we looked at that property down there that _____ had given, we shook our heads and said oh, that is where our university is going to be. So anyway, that was interesting. His name will come to me Iâ??m sure before this afternoon ends. But, anyway, Mr. Smith was one who was always there, and he also, at that time, I think may have own the Florida _____ been financially involved in it. So a lot of those meetings were there.

DW: Was this mostly the chamberâ??s idea that Tampa needed a public university?

EH: It came from our committee, but it could have come from anywhere. But, Sam Gibbons, I think thought felt this was the group to get behind it. He called our attention to this study that the state had paid Dr. _____, I forget the other manâ??s

name, _____ I remember because I talked to him. The study recommended a third state university, and it also recommended what we have now, like Hillsborough, community colleges. People had never heard of community colleges before.

DW: They were a new concept. All of the states were doing these studies and saying the world has changed, and education is going to be important, and we have got to spread it out to the middle class, especially in Florida with its growth. USF was really the first of the non-traditional schools, the first one to be begun in the 20th century. This is really unusual everywhere. Most states had established their colleges and universities, and were building on that. Because Florida had such tremendous expansion of population after the war and the invention of air conditioning, we are probably the only state in the nation that has started a university system from scratch in the second half of the 20th century. So tell us about that, and how that was perceived. Were there people who were graduates of Gainesville and Tallahassee who had kind of mixed feelings about this? Was there opposition to the idea?

EH: I don't think there was any opposition from any of the other schools. I'm not aware of any.

DW: Not even from the University of Tampa?

EH: Well, I think there was a fear by the University of Tampa that we would try to encompass them and make them a part of the university. Nobody ever thought, within the committee, of ever doing such a thing. I remember Sam thought it was a good idea for us to go to the Board of Trustees at the university and talk to them, and say that while we had no desire to take them over. They could do whatever they wanted; we wanted to know the door was open if they felt the need. Well, the people who were on the Board of Trustees, one the chairman happen to be Joe Smiley's father. He was a rather testy man. He didn't particularly like the idea that we were there in the first place, and he, I think he, who are these people baring gifts. So, these men sat there and didn't say anything on our committee, so I proceeded to because my cousin was sitting next to him, Joe _____ of the Tribune. I said, well I wanted you to know that really we don't foresee any problem, but we just wanted to be friends, if you need us. Well, that is all he needed to hear. Mr. Smiley unplugged. He decided that he didn't appreciate our visit, and he became a little personal.

DW: What a shame.

EH: Yes, so it caused great defense of me on the part of the men who were on our committee. I think it made sort of a little ill will between the two groups for a number of years.

DW: But, your intentions were absolutely right, and Sam's idea was absolutely right, and had you not gone they would have complained about that too. It takes courage to do these things, and you did the right thing. But, the schools have two completely different missions, and I think now 40 years later everybody can see how it has developed that USF is not a direct competitor of UT. Goodness knows we have enough population now that there is no way in the world that UT could have absorbed it.

EH: Well, you know the only opposition I think that came about at that time that I can recall was sort of stupid they call it the beer college you know, you are going to be next to the beer and all this.

DW: Oh, because of the brewery out there, and that's something people would have forgotten about completely. Busch Gardens was new. It was primarily Busch beer, and now it is not a factor at all.

EH: It never was really, but it was one of the things, it got a lot of publicity. Then the John's Committee.

DW: Just a little bit more about those very very earliest days. Did you work with Mary Lou Harkness at all when she was building the library?

EH: Well, now Mary Lou Harkness didn't build the library.

DW: Well, I'd forgotten, what was her boss's name?

EH: I just said it this morning. Elliot Hardaway. Elliot Hardaway was just wonderful. He was great. Everybody, I knew all of the people.

DW: They had a house down on Plant Avenue, as I understand it.

EH: This was a house that we rented. Although we may have been given the rent, and Mary Lou loves to tell stories about how she shook the termites out of the books as people were giving donations of books. But, anyway that is where we met and signed the charter that was the first foundation meeting was held there. The

charter was actually signed in thatâ?|

DW: we need a sign there for that, a historical sign.

EH: I hadnâ??t thought about that. What is the house used for now.

DW: I donâ??t know theâ?|

EH: I donâ??t know whether itâ??s a residence or whatâ?|

DW: 345, was that the address?

EH: I donâ??t remember. I could go to it, butâ?|

DW: We need to go and put a sign up.

EH: These were really exciting times for the university because you know there was no building, and I can remember John being so patient because, and there was no I-75 or 275 or whatever to get out there, so I remember it would take me forever to go to a foundation meeting. There were also, to suit the men, they were after 5 oâ??clock. So Iâ??d come home, go driveâ?|

DW: Were the initial meetings in construction trailers?

EH: No, no. The meetings Iâ??m talking about were, where were we meeting? That is an interesting question. Why did I go out there? I take it back. This must have been after the first building was built. But, it was still the same situation as far as roads and everything was concerned. No, the times I went out there, oh, I hated going out there until the roads got better. But, we did meet, and our one first building, that was the administration building. Then as the buildings came up around us, I can remember we were all so proud. We would go around stroking them practically. I rememberâ?|

DW: The library was the secondâ?|

EH: The library I believe was the second.

DW: SVCâ?|

EH: You know it was thought of as a commuterâ??s college in the beginning, and

that's why you know the state gave us no money for dorms, so we had our dollar for dorms drive, which I do thank the Tribune and Jim **Klindan** and for making it possible because they got that thing going and course we helped a lot with it by having coffees and things of that sort, which I wanted to get around to because Grace and John were just soâ€¦|They did so much in the beginning, the Allen's, to bring town and gown together. I had a group of volunteers, and everybody wasâ€¦|wasn't hard to find volunteers for this, everybody was so enthusiastic about having this university here, and everybody wanted to be a part of it. So we would get groups together, and they would come and talk, and they justâ€¦|But, the best thing they did of all was make us realize that they had no alumni. So what are you going to do? So we started the foundation, which became it. This became the responsibility of this original university committee.

DW: You've done a great job over the years.

EH: When I look at the foundation now, and see what the gifts are, and what the people who care and who belong, I am overwhelmed.

DW: it has made tremendous progress recently. But, that is not to diminish what happened then because those dollarsâ€¦|

EH: You know it was so hard in the beginning. I can remember meeting at night, maybe one of these nights at the hotel, because we couldn't find somebody to be our professional person for the foundation. We didn't have enough money. I remember, one we had was such a nice person. He later went with a bank out in Temple Terrace. He did try so hard to do a good job, but to get people to give. Interest is easy, but to get people to give was not easy in the beginning at all. I was secretary I guess for the first four or five years, and I still was the only woman, and finally, I said I would like to be on the nominating committee. So I got Frances _____ and Mary **Weekly** on the board. I don't want to leave anybody out. I guess I got somebody else on during those years, I don't remember the proper order. Mary, I think, became secretary, Mary **Weekly**, or Frances, maybe they both were. Because about this time was when I was getting so involved with the hospital and _____.

DW: So you had to step back from your USF stuff a little bit. So did that coincide with the John's Committee?

EH: The John's Committee came aboutâ€¦|This was an investigation by, brought about by, do you know much about it?

DW: We probably ought to put it in context of Senator Charlie Johnsâ|

EH: I donât know much about it. There were some local people involved in saying they didnâtâ|I have to apologize; I just canât go into it.

DW: I understand, and there is a lot of documentation for anybody who cares to look it up.

EH: It was just like a bad dream.

DW: Exactly. I think thatâs a great summary right there. It is just too painful to discuss, even 40 years later. It very nearly ruined the hard work and great idea that people had, but thankfully it didnât. Right prevailed, and you persevered, and USF turned into a very successful institution.

EH: Well, the âyouâ encompassed so many people who gave so generously of their time and money to help it grow. Iâm so proud of it. I get lost every time I go out there. Itâs wonderful. And one of things that impressed me so when I was out there and got lost trying to get to the meeting that Betty had, when she had some of us who were first involved to meet together, some of the first people at the university, was that no matter where I stopped, I finally found a parking place, parking illegally, but I did put up some papers to show where I was going in the car so it could be read. I crossed the street, and I didnât know which building to go to. I was just totally disoriented, and Iâm not kidding, I crossed the street and I stood there, I must have looked like a sleepwalker or something, and this cute young boy came by and he said, âCan I help you?â And he was so nice, and I told him where I was going. He said, âFollow me.â And he got me to the door, and I just thoughtâ|

DW: It is amazing how things are growing, and how much it has changed.

EH: And to find students who are stopping their busy lives to tell you, or to tell me how to get there, and when he saw my _____ look, and he just said follow me. That was really wonderful.

DW: There are still good young students, and there always will be.

EH: I know.

DW: The kinds of kids that you built it for in the 50s, theyâ??re not so different from the kids in the 90s. When people are young and beginning their college years, I think do have a sense of appreciation for what has made it possible.

DW: I would like to go back to Elliot Hardaway and also the library because that was one of my favorite places to go. He made it so easy to call up and to just say, â??Iâ??m worried about my leather books. What am I going to do about them?â?? â??Well, Iâ??ll have students look up and send you some information.â?? So Iâ??d get all kinds of information about what to do about these books. He was, he is, heâ??s still living, a fine fine person. And then Mary Lou came along and did a wonderful job too.

DW: I just walk around in the library as a historian, is how many things they have that predate the library by 100 years. It was very hard work on their part, to assemble a collection that old.

EH: Well, now Iâ??ll tell you a lot of this started during those parties that were given for the dollars for dorms or whatever. Because Grace Allen, she was always looking ahead, and sheâ??d say what we will need are lots of things that are _____ I guess little mementos and all these little things that most people would throw away.

DW: Old books.

EH: Old books, right. In fact, when I moved here and I had to get rid of lots of very dear friendsâ?? old books I thought what am I going to do because nobody wants old books, and I called Tom Kemp, and he came, and we had a ball. Thatâ??s when he told me first about special collections [department] and told me that I could, since I was the first woman elected [to] public office and that this was the year of the woman and that I could give my collection to South Florida, and I said, but I canâ??t separate myself from the Himes family, so I will give you the Himes collection, and I will be a part of it.

DW: We are building a lot of good things at USF, and special collections is one of them. I taught a course last semester, and we met in special collections, and sat down on the floor and looked at the scrapbooks. Itâ??s a marvelous way for students to learn. Is there anything else that we should cover.

EH: Well, thereâ??s so many things I could go on about. Grace got the womenâ??s club started. I can remember going and making a talk, and Iâ??m sure they thought

this woman has lost her mind because I said we walk along and touch the brickâ?|

DW: Iâ??m sure you felt that way.

EH: Grace did so many things to getâ?|She had so man parties. Sheâ??d say we need to do this. We need to have a party. We need to get people here as the buildings came along.

DW: I remember Phyllis Marshallâ??s stories about when Studentâ??s Service Center was also the dorm. Boys on one side, and girls on another. They would sneak pizzas to each other after hours. Itâ??s just hard to imagine in todayâ??s context. It must have been a real sense bonding in the community and a lot of important beginnings. Now we do have graduates who already a decade or more ago we had Lee Moffitt as Speaker of the House, who was a graduate, which shows how quicklyâ?|

EH: And look at Moffitt Cancer Center as a _____, which affects the lives of tens of thousands of people, maybe millions, with research. And when you consider that all this is just barely four years old, itâ??s truly astonishing. A lot of people deserve a lot of credit and your right there at the very center at the very beginning.

DW: Thatâ??s the exciting part that is feeling that you were in on the beginning of it, and I feel privilegedâ?|

EH: Having taken advantage of you here at this long discussion. Iâ??ve enjoyed it so much.

EH: Iâ??ve had a good time. Iâ??m worn out. Thank you.

DW: Thank you. It was fun.

EH: I loved it.

End of Interview