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***Interview Begins***

**Andrew Huse:** Well, it is Tax Day, April 15, 2014; and my name is Andy Huse. I'm here on behalf of USF Libraries and the USF Oral History Program. And it is my pleasure today to interview Jan Platt, long-time civil servant and woman of many hats. And we were just talking about the ELAPP<sup>1</sup> program [Environmental Lands Acquisition and Protection Program] on our way up; so, there's—we've got a lot of territory to cover. So, without further ado, we have Jan Platt. Thanks for being with us today, Jan.

**Jan Platt:** Thank you, Andy. And thank you for the role that USF Special Collections has in compiling the history of our area. You're wonderful.

AH: Right, well—

JP: Thank you.

AH: It includes—one of the crown jewels, of course, is Jan's extensive collection. So, anybody who wants to know about environmental preservation, human rights, women; that's the place to go, among many other things. So—and one of the few county

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<sup>1</sup>ELAPP is a voluntary program established for the purpose of providing the process and funding for identifying, acquiring, preserving and protecting endangered, environmentally-sensitive and significant lands in Hillsborough County. It is a citizen-based program with volunteer committees involved in every key aspect of the program.

commissioners during her time that wasn't hauled off to jail at some point or indicted. So, let's start from the beginning. You were born in Saint Pete, right?

JP: Yes.

AH: Okay, so tell us a little bit about your family, your background.

JP: Okay. I was born in 1936, in Saint Petersburg, Florida; and my dad was a graduate of the University of Florida in mechanical engineering. And so, during World War II, he was with the Navy Department, and over—was he oversee—one of the people who oversaw the construction of the amphibious tank that Donald Roebling invented. Donald Roebling<sup>2</sup> lived in Clearwater, and he developed a tank that he was originally going to use in the Everglades called the *Alligator*. And when World War II came along, the department of Navy decided that they wanted to use that as a landing device.

And so, my dad worked on behalf of the Department of Navy. And so as a child it was not uncommon for Donald Roebling to come to our home, for me to go to Donald Roebling's house. He was—and he was a—you know, his dad had built the Brooklyn Bridge, and then Courtney Campbell<sup>3</sup> was involved in it. And so, we as—I would fish in front of Courtney Campbell's house.

AH: Wow.

JP: So—and my dad was an avid fisherman. And he had no sons, but every weekend, we would fish. And we would fish in the bay—Tampa Bay; we would fish in the phosphate pits, where there were lots of rattlesnakes; we would fish in Anclote River, and the Gulf of Mexico. So, I grew up being very attuned to the water, and how important it was.

And I would—you know, I was a fisherman, so I kept up with things. Sweetwater Creek, for instance, was crystal clear when I was a child. And we would fish, and I'd see the bass, and I would also see the otter, which was the only place I ever saw otter. Now Sweetwater Creek is a drainage ditch. All these things stuck in my mind, and had later consequences when I got in public office. But—

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<sup>2</sup>Donald Roebling (1908-1959) was an American twentieth-century philanthropist and inventor. Roebling was most famous for inventing the Amtrak in 1937, which started as a civilian transport vehicle known as the Roebling *Alligator*.

<sup>3</sup>Courtney Warren Campbell (1895-1971) was a U.S. Representative and World War I veteran in Florida that was elected as a Democrat to the Eighty-Third Congress (1953-1955). He served as Assistant Attorney General for the State of Florida, he served as a member of the Florida War Labor Relations Board from 1941 to 1946 and as a member of the Florida State Road Board from 1942 to 1947.

AH: Well, you said that you're a fisherman in past tense, but you're still a fisherman, right?

JP: I am, I am, I am. And luckily, my husband is an avid fisherman, and so is my son. So —

AH: Great.

JP: Our vacations are down at Boca Grande, or Key—in the Keys or in the Bahamas, fishing somewhere.

AH: All right.

JP: Trying to catch something.

AH: So, now, what would the application have been for this amphibious craft in the Everglades? Do you know?

JP: Well, I think he was—he called it the *Alligator*, originally, and I think he was gonna' use it just to explore the Everglades; 'cause there was no craft, at that time; you know, there weren't the—what are those—airboats, you know? There weren't those. So, it was just to have an access into the Everglades.

AH: Okay. So, tell us about your education growing up. Obviously, you were educated on the water—

JP: Yes.

AH: Outside of school, but tell us about some of your formal education.

JP: Well, I graduated from Hillsborough High School, and then, went to Florida State University [FSU].

AH: Yeah, when did you move to Tampa, then? How old were you?

JP: Well, after World War II.

AH: Okay. Got you.

JP: And so, then I—in fact, my sixtieth reunion for Hillsborough is coming up next week. I was “Most Likely to Succeed.”

AH: Right.

JP: And most representative of the class. But then I went to FSU, and FSU had only been co-ed for seven years.

AH: Right.

JP: And so, I became—well, when I was at Hillsborough, though, a turning point was that the American Legion<sup>4</sup> Post 111, which still exists over on Florida Avenue, sent me to Girls State<sup>5</sup>; and Girls State was a big opportunity for young people to learn about government, and that was really the—in Girls State was when I first fell in love with government.

AH: So, how did you get chosen for the program?

JP: To go to Girls State?

AH: Yeah.

JP: I guess because I was active in student government and activities at Hillsborough High School. ‘Cause that was a—that was a high school program.

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<sup>4</sup>The American Legion was chartered and incorporated by Congress in 1919 as a veterans organization. It is the nation’s largest wartime veterans service organization.

<sup>5</sup>Boys/Girls State are summer leadership and citizenship programs sponsored by the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary for high school juniors. It began in 1937.

AH: Right.

JP: And so—

AH: So, Girls State was at—at—that was at Hillsborough?

JP: No, it was in Tallahassee.

AH: Oh, okay, okay.

JP: In other words, American Legion posts throughout the State of Florida sent people up to Tallahassee to learn about state government. And so, we lived in the dorms at FSU, and we had Congress; and I was elected to the Supreme Court, and I got to sit on the Supreme Court. But it gave high school kids an opportunity to go to Tallahassee and learn about state government.

AH: Right.

JP: I don't know if it's—that program still exists today, but it was really an outstanding program.

AH: Right.

JP: And that's what interested me, one, in FSU; and then, also, in government. So, when I went to FSU, I majored in public administration and political science. And I was the first woman elected Vice President Student Body, since it had been co-ed. It was co-ed for seven years, and even then there weren't many men but they were there; and that—we had a football, and a basketball team, and so—and one of the things that—my senior year, the president of the university and Governor Collins sent three of us to the University of North Carolina to find out how they had integrated their university system peacefully.

Because I went through all segregated schools, and our university system was segregated. And so, Collins, who was a very enlightened governor, was seeking ways—to find a way

to peacefully segregate our university system. Again, during that time, there were—lynchings were common. Ku Klux Klan was alive and well.

And so, the three of us who went to the University of North Carolina found out that that system had admitted a mature student, an older student, to the graduate school level, rather than undergrad level. And so, that's what we came back and recommended to FSU and to Governor Collins. And as fate would have it, when I graduated, I went to University of Florida law school, where I was the only woman in the school, 'cause women didn't go to law school in those days. And the first African American admitted to the university system was in my class, and he was an older student. He had a couple—he was married and had a couple of children. And so, the governor followed our advice.

AH: Right.

JP: Which was so nice. Because, I'll tell you, if he had been admitted at the undergraduate school level, he would've probably been lynched.

AH: Right.

JP: I mean, that's just how bad it was. They treated me terribly, and here I was a woman; but they didn't treat—they treated him okay. He did not—he's not—he did not graduate. He did not make his grades and did not—I stayed—he and I both stayed one year. He had come up to me and he'd say, "Jan, I'd sit next to you, except you and I have got enough problems." (AH and JP laugh) But, I made my grades; he didn't. He didn't come back. I didn't—I didn't. I'd never been treated like that before.

AH: Yeah, well, tell us a little bit about how you were treated. I mean—

JP: Well, they would—for one thing, if a woman entered the library, the law library, the men would shuffle their feet, and—so that it was very obvious that a woman was entering.

AH: Right.

JP: In some of my classes, my professors would say, "Well, Miss Kaminis, would you describe what's in your briefs?" And everybody would snicker.

AH: Oh, right.

JP: You know? And I've been at FSU, where, you know, I've been treated like a lady; and I wasn't at Florida. And I just thought, Well, you know, life's short. I'd been offered a scholarship to Duke, and, unfortunately, I didn't take it. (laughs)

AH: Right.

JP: 'Cause I think they would've been a little bit more enlightened than the University of Florida was at that time.

AH: Now, do you think—do you think the law school made it even worse? Like—I mean, it was one thing that you're at UF [University of Florida], but the law school is definitely like a boy's club at the time.

JP: Yeah, it was. It was. It definitely was. And see, I was viewed as an intruder.

AH: Well, I'm sure.

JP: And see, it never dawned on me. Because, you know, I was naïve. You know, I'd just gone to—going my merry way, and it was a real shock to me; I'd never been treated like that before.

AH: Right.

JP: So—

AH: So, that one year was enough, then, at UF, huh?

JP: Yeah, it was. And—I made the grades, though, so—

AH: Right.



JP: Yeah.

AH: And so, what'd you do from there?

JP: Well, then I came back to Tampa. And I went to Hillsborough High School and talked to Vivian Gaither<sup>6</sup>, and—'cause he and I had become close when I was at Hillsborough—and he offered me an opportunity to teach History at Hillsborough. So I said, "Okay. Well, I'll do that." So, I taught American History for a year. And the—and I could've stayed. My sister was in school at the time, and all of her classmates I taught—I was teaching; I didn't teach her, but I taught all of her classmates.

But, all my teachers were there who I had been with, and I felt like I was coming back to school again. So, I thought, Well, you know, I'm not growing, doing this. So, I found a job with the Girl Scouts. And I became a field director for the Girl Scouts. So, I taught a year at Hillsborough, and then, I became a field director for the Girl Scouts.

AH: Right. Well, Tampa kind of has a long history with the Girl Scouts.

JP: Yes, it did. And so, at that time, it was the Tampa Council, and our headquarters was in the old McKay Auditorium. And—which was at Tampa U [University of Tampa]—and one of the fun things was, I would go at lunchtime to the park at University of Tampa. And I know, one time, Bobby Kennedy was speaking in the band shell, and I was leaning up against the tree, and it was very—nobody came to hear him speak.

So, he came up and shook my hand, and I always remember that he was shorter than I was. (AH and JP laugh) But anyway, but the director and I would routinely go to see Jessamine Link, who was the—she was the leader of the second troop in the United States—Girl Scout troop.

AH: Right.

JP: So, we would go and visit with her. And I had the only integrated troop in the council at that time. And, again, we were going through this integration, and that troop was out at MacDill Air Force Base.

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<sup>6</sup>At this point, Vivian Gaither was the principal of Hillsborough High School.

AH: So, this would've been the later sixties?

JP: This—the early sixties.

AH: Early sixties, okay.

JP: This would be nineteen-six—I taught—it would've been 1960.

AH: Okay.

JP: Nineteen sixty-one. And so, I had to deal with providing and making things smooth for when that troop went camping at our campsite, or when those leaders went to training. You know, the whole integration process was slow and not a happy situation. But I played a role in that.

AH: Yeah, and tell us about, you know, growing up in Saint Pete. I mean, obviously—

JP: I wasn't—I didn't grow up there. Soon as I was born, we moved.

AH: Oh, that's right. Right, yeah, pretty much—

JP: And we lived in Dunedin, and then—for a short time, because that's where that amphibious tank was first developed; then we moved to Lakeland, because then, it was in—it was manufactured at Food Machinery in Lakeland.

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AH: Right. Okay. But then, by the—at the end of the war, that's when you moved to Tampa.

JP: Yes, yes.

AH: Okay. So—But you had had a chance to, kind of, be in Tampa—segregated Tampa, before *Brown v. Board of Education*<sup>7</sup>, and all that good, you know, kind of stuff unleashed this—this integration thing. So, you know, what were your feelings before, you know? I

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<sup>7</sup>*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)

mean, everyone kind of said that they thought it was going to go on forever. What were your thoughts about growing up in segregated Tampa?

JP: Well, you know, I had a last name—my last name was Greek.

AH: Right.

JP: Kaminis. So, I was about in the same situation as the blacks.

AH: Right.

JP: People didn't like—(makes noise)—they didn't like Hispanics and Greeks either.

AH: Right.

JP: In Tampa. Even though you had Ybor City.

AH: (affirmative murmur)

JP: I mean, the first Girl Scout troop I wanted to join, I was told, "We don't want any Greeks in our troop."

AH: Wow!

JP: I went home and cried and cried and cried. It—That—It was a bad time, all the way around, you know? And you'd get on a bus, and the blacks would just immediately walk to the back. And you just—that was the way things were. And then, when we'd go downtown, the faucet—the drinking fountains would say, "White only," and it just—it was a bad time. So—

AH: So, you were only too happy to assist in seeing this go away.

JP: Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. And so, I know when I got on the county commission, one of the first things I did was—. When George Edgecomb<sup>8</sup> passed away, I made a motion that we name a building for him. And that was the first building that, in this whole area, that was named for an African-American. And we named our community action center, which was big, for George Edgecomb.

And then, when they destroyed that—they were gonna' destroy it—then I—they were building an annex to the courthouse, and I won't say who, but there was somebody who wanted it named for himself, and I immediately said, "Well, since we've destroyed this one building, and it was named for George Edgecomb, let's immediate—let's—it's only fitting that we name this courtroom." And so, nobody could say no to that.

AH: Right. And his name is still up there today.

JP: It's still there today. It's still there today. And they take it for granted.

AH: Right.

JP: It's just one of those things that's there.

AH: That could've been Ralph Hughes or something.

JP: Or who—I won't say who. (AH laughs) The person is still very active in the community, (AH and JP laugh) so be it.

AH: So, obviously, it seemed like from a very young age, and with your education and everything, your interest in public service, really, that's your—is that your ultimate objective as—at a young age?

JP: Well, yes. And Girl Scouting, because I—you know, I was always active in the scouts; and that was, sort of, a part of it, too.

AH: Yeah. So, how long did your initial involvement with the Girl Scouts last?

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<sup>8</sup>George Edgecomb was Hillsborough County's first African-American judge.

JP: I can't say, a couple of years. And then, I decided to go to graduate school. And so, I went to UVA [University of Virginia] to get a Master's. But then, in the meantime, I'd met my husband who was a pilot at MacDill Air Force Base with Strategic Air Command. And that was during the Cold War. When there were planes that carried nuclear bombs, and he was a pilot of one of those planes; and that's what was out at MacDill. And so, he played a role in the Cuban Missile Crisis, because, if you remember, they were supposed to have Cuban missiles—there was—having missiles.

I was up at UVA. I had been dating my husband and all of the bombers from MacDill Air Force Base were transferred to Savannah, and MacDill became an infantry base. Because the thought was that what might happen is that it might—there might be a necessity to bomb Cuba, and that there needed to be a place for troops to leave from Florida, and MacDill became that—to go to Cuba.

AH: Right.

JP: So, in a way, I was involved with all that, because I was up at UVA, and we were just a hundred miles from Washington, and we were afraid that if Khrushchev and Castro had those missiles, that they would miss Washington and hit Charlottesville; and so, we were all packed up and ready to go. 'Cause we—and anyway, but that's when I decided to drop out of graduate school and marry my husband. (laughs)

AH: Okay.

JP: And so, he and I got married after the Cuban Missile Crisis, and then we got transferred to Plattsburgh Air Force Base.<sup>9</sup>

AH: So, how did y'all meet?

JP: Um, well, back in those days, there was a group called Spinsters, and I was president of it, and we would have parties every month at somebody's house. And so, we had a party at his house—he'd share—had a house with some buddies, and I invited him. So, that's how we first met was I invited him to that party.

AH: Well, right. So, this is a club for single women?

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<sup>9</sup>Plattsburgh Air Force Base is a former United States Air Force Strategic Air Command base covering 3,447 acres in the extreme northeast corner of New York, 20 miles south of the Canadian border.

JP: (affirmative murmurs) And we'd always pick a "Bachelor of the Year". I don't think it's in existence anymore. It was always a big social event.

AH: Right.

JP: To be the "Bachelor of the Year". But I was president of the Spinsters.

AH: Okay.

JP: A sort of dubious title. (AH and JP laughs)

AH: All right. So—so, he's transferred, then—

JP: To Plattsburg Air Force Base.

AH: Right.

JP: And—

AH: And so, what do you do during this time? You're—

JP: I got involved with the Girl Scouts, and was on the board of that council up there.

AH: Right.

JP: As a volunteer. And I did some substitute teaching, and that's when Kennedy was shot. And one part of the story that's never really talked about in this past celebration of his—or commemoration of his death is that nobody really knew for sure how far the plot went. And so, I did not see my husband for quite a while. And, again, Strategic Air Command, up in the air with bombs.

AH: Right.

JP: Nuclear bombs.

AH: Right.

JP: We went through that, which was not—it was an uneasy time. Because people really weren't sure what or who—how far that scenario went.

AH: Or if it went to Moscow or—

JP: Absolutely.

AH: Yeah, right.

JP: Absolutely. And see, that's why—

AH: Right. Well, and at that time, that's when they used to have planes on call at any given moment; they'd always be in the sky, right?

JP: They were on alert.

AH: Right.

JP: You know, they would—they would be on alert or in the air.

AH: Right.

JP: And so, he would be home for a week off, but always near a phone. But then, he would be on duty for a week, where he was on alert. And he was either in a barracks, where they all were ready to get in the air, or he was in the plane, up in the air.

AH: Right, right.

JP: That was during the Cold War. And, you know, when we were there, they phased out his plane that he flew, the B-47, and they offered him an opportunity to go to missiles. Because missiles—I don't know that the general public—and I don't know if I ought to be talkin' about it but there are missiles in the ground today, doing what those planes did.

And he was offered an opportunity to go with missiles or fly a B-52, and he didn't want a B-52, 'cause it was so big; he loved the B-47, 'cause it was only three people, and it was a neat little jet. And that's when he decided to—when they phased out his jet—to go to law school.

AH: Okay.

JP: So, he went to—went to Nashville. Went to Nashville.

AH: (affirmative murmurs) okay. So—so, what eventually gets you back to Tampa, then?

JP: Well, when he got out of law school, he decided to come back and practice here. And he originally was a trust officer with Marine Bank, and then, and then was offered an opportunity to become a partner with Sam Gibbon's firm. And so, he was with Gibbons-Tucker-McEwen until that firm went different ways.

AH: Right.

JP: Because congress passed a law that congressmen couldn't—couldn't have law firms.

AH: Right.

JP: So—but he was a partner of Gibbons-Tucker-McEwen.

AH: Okay. And then—so, when you get to Tampa, then, tell us about, kind of, your reorientation process.



JP: Well, then I became—we had a son, Kevin, when we were at Nashville. So, I was a mom, but then, I also got back into Girl Scouting.

AH: Okay.

JP: And was ultimately President of the Suncoast Girl Scout Council. And that's where I first became involved with the environment, because the Girl Scout Council built the first camp—had the first campsite in the Southeast on saltwater. And that's Wai Lani, that's over in Pinellas County. And it was open, I think, in 1972. And soon after we built that campsite, Pinellas County Commission voted to put a sewer plant immediately adjacent to it, with an out—a nineteen-inch outfall pipe that would be on the top of the ground; they were even gonna' dig up—(laughs) they weren't even gonna' make a hole. They were in Saint Joseph Sound, and dispose of the effluent just out in Saint Joseph Sound, where our girls—our girls were going to be canoeing and sailing and fishing.

And so, that's when I first became involved in environment, was—I was president of the council. And I called Roger Stuart, and that's the first time I ever met him. And we waged a campaign to go—we got the Brownies and we went before the County Commission in Pinellas County, and we got the press all involved; and it really brought to light something that had really never—it never dawned on people is what goes—with sewer plants, what goes out of those pipes, what happens to sewage when it—when you flush the chain or you turn on the (inaudible)—back then, it would just go to a sewer plant, wouldn't be treated, and then, it would be disposed of in the bay and out in a pipe somewhere.

AH: Right.

JP: It was primary treatment. And I had been a sailor—I used to sail prams, and I won't say what we would see floating in Tampa Bay, because that was what was going in Tampa Bay too. And so, we used it—I used it as an opportunity to inform the public of what was going on, and that was really the beginning; that Girl Scout adventure was the beginning of the whole issue of cleaning up water.

AH: Yep.

JP: Because Mary Grizzle, the Grizzle—Wilson-Grizzle Bill was passed that required tertiary treatment of sewer plants. And it became—started there. And Pinellas County withdrew its plan to discharge the sewage into Saint Joseph Sound and it turned that sewer plant into the first reclaimed plant in our area. And so, the reclaimed water from

the sewage in Pinellas County was used to water Innisbrook Golf Course. Which makes sense. I mean, that—it was a natural—and it was right next door to Innisbrook. And so, that was the beginning of reclaimed water. And of course Hillsborough County didn't have any of that.

And so—but that was in 1972, and then, my sister was—she was a staffer with the Girl Scouts—staff member. And so, we were very close, and she was six years my junior, and she had a long battle with cancer. And she passed in March of '74. And—I think it was March third—and when—it was almost that same week, Greco resigned as mayor—

AH: Ah, yes.

JP: —of the city. And when he did, there were three openings on city council. And so, that's when I decided that life is short, 'cause I'd seen my—I may cry when I say this, but, you know, there's nothing—it's so tragic to watch somebody you love, younger, fight for life and want life, and then be denied that. And it makes you realize how important and short life is, and that it's important that you just do and give as much as you can while you're alive. 'Cause you don't know what's gonna' happen.

And so, when those—that's—almost the next week, I said, "Well, I'll run for city council." And I don't know that—'cause I'm—you may not realize it, but I'm an introvert. I don't—I'm not this bombastic person. I'm sort of a—I'm a Phi Beta Kappa student, study, quiet kind of person. It's sort of—it's—I don't get up, and, you know, I don't get up in a crowd and do things. So, for me to run, I don't know that I would've ever run, had she not passed away.

AH: Right.

JP: And all my friends were—'cause I'd been a Republican at one time, and I'd been a Democrat. I was a Democrat at the time. So—and we—they all—all my friends were Republicans and Democrats, and city council was non-partisan. So, they all got together and said, "Well, we'll support you, and we'll raise the money," so, I ran for city council in '74.

AH: Right.

JP: And that's when I made a lot of the decisions never to ask anybody for money, because if you do, then if they have something that comes before you, it's going to be

hard to say no to them after you've asked them for money—they've done something for you. So, I never—I made that point in the very beginning, never to ask for money.

AH: But money is speech now, right? (laughs)

JP: Well, and I never—I never got much money, and my opponents always had a lot of money.

AH: Right.

JP: And that, in a way, worked against them. Because it was very obvious that I didn't have any money, and I wasn't—my friends would send letters to people and ask for money, but it was very obvious that I wasn't going to be beholden to anybody. It was very obvious.

AH: Right.

JP: And you could—you could—you could almost look at their contributions and it would be a playbook of what was going to come up, because you knew all those people had that much interest in this job, something was going to happen.

AH: Right. It reminds me of what Shirley Chisholm, the first female candidate for president, you know, she—her big saying was “unbought and unbossed.” (JP laughs) So, that was Jan Platt.

JP: Yeah.

AH: So—so, it's 1974, and you get on city council; you're elected?

JP: Yes.

AH: Okay. So, tell us, that must've been another kind of culture shock.

JP: Well, and my first two votes were no. (laughs) I started off voting no. Because—

AH: You were known as “Commissioner No.”

JP: Yes.

AH: Kind of.

JP: Yes, but because, again, I was a Phi Beta Kappa—Phi Kappa Phi. I was an intellectual whose major was government. So, I was there to try to make government work as it was supposed to work. And the election for city council—and the city—was at the same time as county commission, members of the legislature, everybody else, and the city’s budget; so that, when we were elected, the first vote that we were asked to take was on the city budget, which we had never seen or participated in. And so, I used that as an opportunity to articulate, when I voted no, why I should not have been placed in that position in the first place.

AH: Right.

JP: And that all my compatriots—(laughs) I didn’t say it, but, you know, what did they know about the budget? Because they’d just gotten elected. And so, I used that as a reason to move the city elections. So, now, the city elections are in March, because that’s when the budget starts. So, I was the one who started that.

AH: Right.

JP: And because that had to go to the voters to move it—the city elections to March.

AH: Seems like a strange ritual. It’s almost as if—almost as if new members learn to, kind of, get along and kick the can down the road.

JP: Oh, yeah, that’s right. I mean—

AH: Right? I mean, just don’t even look at it; just vote on the budget, right?

JP: Oh, absolutely. I mean, the City of Tampa is a strong mayor form of government.

AH: Right.

JP: And when I say strong, I really mean strong. And so—but let me tell you about my second no vote that was in the very beginning, and that was Dale Troutman came to us to expand the city sewage treatment plant. And so, I said—that’s when I articulated—I said, “Is that primary treatment or tertiary?” And he said, “Primary,” which is—just goes through the pipes and out back to the bay. And so, then, I used that as an opportunity to articulate why that was a bad idea; and that they ought not expand it in that fashion, but go the extra mile.

AH: Right.

JP: And the media covered that in a big way. And he did come back and change it. And so, one of the things that I decided early on—this is academic me—is that a no, well articulated, can be as positive as a yes. And so, every time that I would vote no, I would articulate why I did it. Now, that would make my compatriots really mad. (AH and JP laugh)

AH: I bet, I bet.

JP: And I would—they’d say, “Ah, there she goes again!” But, somebody had to do it.

AH: Right.

JP: And it really did bring about change. I mean, that’s how—and so, that—again, when I got on city council and they didn’t have their own attorney. The city attorney—the city attorney really ran the city; it was Henry Williams. He was the attorney for the mayor, and then, he’d come in and be the attorney for the city council. They had no budget help.

The mayor would propose a budget, and the city council members just sat there and approved it. And so, I articulated why both of those were bad ideas. And so, the city council then got its own attorney, and it got a budget analyst. And then, I said that there needed to be a city charter, and that’s what brought about a charter study committee that looked at the whole scheme of things and proposed a city charter that passed the voters.

AH: All right.

JP: So, I was sort of an academic, you know, about it, because the general politician wouldn't get into that kind of thing. But it was so terrible, because with the city, the chief finance officer—under him was the city auditor. He had—the city auditor—the person who was auditing the financial advisor—he was his boss.

AH: Right.

JP: Now that was all going on with Greco, you have to understand.

AH: All right, right.

JP: So, that's why I ran against Greco when—(laughs) later on, because he had—that's how he—but anyway.

AH: Well, he also bailed on his first term for—

JP: I know.

AH: To go work for a developer.

JP: I know, I know. But anyway, so, I reformed that.

AH: Right.

JP: But—

AH: Well, seems like you'd be the odd person out in most political activities around here, at the time, because you were talking about principle, you know?

JP: Right.

AH: And in each of the cases, I mean, when you talked about the Girl Scouts in the beginning, with the affluence and everything, the effluvium or—that, you know, it’s—you’re making a bigger point. It’s not just about the Girl Scouts, it’s about the way we’re treating our sewage makes no sense; we’re not treating it.

JP: Right.

AH: And so, each time, you’re bringing up a bigger issue and not just fighting over the one petty thing.

JP: Right.

AH: But kind of bigger—bigger issues. And then, you could see how, with your timing coming in during the ‘70s, you know, you’d be in step with a lot of—a lot of people that are becoming more aware of pollution and all that stuff; and you’d really have to be blind to not notice those things here in Hillsborough County in the ‘70s, right?

JP: Right. And that—you know, that—but that’s really—yeah.

AH: Right.

JP: And also, while I was on city council, Askew was governor. And I had met him at FSU—he was in the legislature when I was president senate, and he would periodically come in and just sit in at our meetings; because he had gone to FSU, and I had advocated that we, FSU, have a lobbyist in Tallahassee. Now think about it. You’re here at USF. Now, there are all these major universities. Back then, there was only Florida and FSU. And all the graduates—all the members of the legislature were graduates of Florida.

AH: Right.

JP: Not FSU. And so, all the money that was allocated went to Florida. I said, “That’s not right.” (laughs) And so, we were so glad about Askew; so, he would come, and I proposed FSU get a lobbyist, and we did get a lobbyist. But, when I was on city council, he appointed me to be Chairman of the Sunshine Amendment Drive; and that’s why

another nickname for me has been “Sunshine,” because that’s the amendment that requires full financial disclosure of public officials.

AH: Right.

JP: And we were the first county in the state to get all the signed petitions. It was the first successful petition drive in the history of the state. And so, that did pass; and then, he later appointed me to the constitution revision commission.

AH: Right.

JP: Which met in 1976. And I was there to represent local government—John DeGrove, from the East Coast, and I—and that was an invaluable experience for one year. I met in Tallahassee with all the powers that be to review the state constitution. And Sandy D'Alemberte, who's still alive and very active, was our chairman; and Jim Kines, who had sat next to me, and Governor Collins sat two down, and Ben Overton—I mean, all the biggies were on it. (laughs)

And it was such a wonderful experience, but they have a—they have a portrait that they did of the group; and over my head, it said “No.” (AH and JP laugh) Because they would come up with all these special interest things that they wanted to add to the constitution, and, again, I would tell them why it wasn't a good idea.

AH: Right. We're lucky to have you there.

JP: Yeah. So, Askew was—I was very fortunate.

AH: So, what kind of changes were made? You know—were there any real major changes to the constitution?

JP: During that time, no. There really weren't.

AH: Okay.



JP: Fortunately. But some of the bad guys wanted to eliminate the cabinet completely. They wanted to—there were a lot of bad ideas, but, fortunately, they didn't pass.

AH: Right.

JP: So, there were not. But it was a wonderful experience.

AH: Right. Sounds like it.

JP: (affirmative murmurs)

AH: So—so, anything else on your—on the city commission time before we move onto where, I think we can agree you really left your mark?

JP: Uh, no, I think that's probably it.

So, I ran county commission in '78.

AH: Right. And then, what prompted you to do that?

JP: Well, a lot of people in the media said I was needed up there.

AH: Okay.

JP: And I didn't know what they meant. (laughs) But I found out.

AH: (laughs) Real quick.

JP: I found out real quick.

AH: Well, and—did you feel that—?

JP: And see—and I didn't really like being in with a strong mayor form of government.

AH: Right.

JP: Because every time I would vote no, you know, it always put me at odds with everybody else. And I wasn't a go along person. I mean, to me, I don't know how anybody with—I shouldn't say it, but, it's a strong mayor form of government.

AH: Right, right. Yeah, that was my next question; is if that kind of stifled—

JP: Yeah. That's part of it, yeah.

AH: Okay. So—so, you run for county commission.

JP: (affirmative murmurs)

AH: And you do the same thing, right? You're not asking anyone for money or anything like that?

JP: No, no.

AH: So, based—so, just based on your reputation in city council, you were elected?

JP: Yes. (affirmative murmurs)

AH: Okay. So—so, tell us about this experience. How you—you and I have discussed this a little bit, but what was it like going into city council—I mean, county commission for the first time?

JP: Well, the growth was substantial.

AH: Right.

JP: Because that's where the growth was occurring. I think I—I've said that the county was getting, I think, about 20,000 new people a year. I mean it was just growing like Topsy, and what I was seeing that the board of county commissioners would approve of everything that came before them. I mean, they wouldn't say no to anybody. And it—if it involved mowing down—filling in a cypress head, or mowing down mangroves, they just said yes.

And I kept saying no, and saying why it was a bad idea. And one of the things I proposed was a zoning hearing master law, which did pass; that was one of my early ones. To—so that a zoning hearing master—an individual would hear the zonings. And then, we could not meet with the developers or anything like that. And then, he would make a recommendation to us, and then, we'd have to act on it.

But I made the decision early on at the county to not meet with anybody. (laughs) And I didn't. I didn't even—I wouldn't even let—I wouldn't even meet with the administrator, because he had a point of view that he was going to try to sell me. And so, I didn't want to be tainted by any of that.

And so, I would read everything. And the University of South Florida's [Library] Special Collections has a lot of that reading material that I read. Because I—one of the laws is that you have to keep all of the written material that comes in to you. And I did that. And I would often question things; and even the staff, I found, sometimes had not read what they had sent out.

AH: Right.

JP: So, that was an interesting situation, but I had some commissioners that would vote very strangely, and there would be a few people that, every time they would come before the board, they would—they'd just have—all they'd do is stand up there, and they would—they'd—the commissioners would make a motion to approve whatever it was they had. And they would get it. And I thought that was very strange. And, in fact, my aide was Cynthia Gandy, at the time. Cynthia is now the director for the Henry Plant Museum.

But she was my first administrative assistant, and the two of us, we were babes in the woods. And we asked [Joe] Kotvas, we said, "Well, you sure vote strangely." And he told that they—that he voted according to the *Farmers' Almanac*. *Farmers' Almanac*? So, I said, "Cynthia, go out and buy a *Farmers' Almanac*." (laughs) And one day, while he

wasn't in his office, we went down to look in his office to see if there was a *Farmers' Almanac* on his desk, and there wasn't.

AH: Right, right.

JP: But we got the *Farmers' Almanac* to see if we could—(laughs)

AH: To say—for the pattern?

JP: Yeah, but we couldn't. There was no deciphering it. I mean, they were just—

AH: Right.

JP: And then, one day, Cynthia was at her desk and I was in, studying the agenda, and Cynthia said, "You know, Jan, something's strange. Jerry Bowmer just walked by and he had two men on both sides of him. They walked out." And I said, "Well, that's weird." So, we stood at the office door, and looked down at Fred Anderson's office, and there were two men outside his door, and they had ear things on. And I said, "Oh, Cynthia, those are just TV reporters." (laughs) Little did I know, they were the FBI. (laughs)

AH: Right.

JP: But as we stood there, then those two guys went in and got Fred Anderson, and Fred walked out in front of us. And then, they went down and got Kotvas, and Kotvas went out and—I always kid Cynthia and tell—say that she's the only person who saw all three of them arrested. Rodney Coulson, whose office was next door to me, was out of the office that day. He wasn't arrested and he wasn't charged with anything. And soon after that, we got a call from US Attorney's Office telling us to leave our office, close the door, that the guys had been arrested and were being arraigned, and "Don't come back anytime soon." So—

AH: Why was that? Because they wanted to have a chance to—

JP: Well, they were being nice to let us know just to leave, because they knew we'd be bombarded with the press, and we didn't know anything.

AH: Sure.

JP: You know, and just to protect us.

AH: And not get mixed up in—

JP: Yeah.

AH: So, what were they arrested for?

JP: For accepting bribes for—on zonings.

AH: Right.

JP: And so, that left two of us on the county commission: Rodney and me. And so, the governor quickly appointed Jim Redman, so that we could have three people. And so, Jim—I was the chairman. I was kidding Sam that I was the chairman of the smallest county commission in the history of the county. (AH and JP laughs)

AH: Right.

JP: But the three of us governed. And then, it was—the governor at that time was Graham. And so, he looked for members to make a five-member board, and so, he added John Polk; and—oh, goodness. Oh, the fellow who developed Carrollwood, Matt Jettan; and—uh, an African-American who was very outstanding. I can't think of his name right now.

And, anyway, and then Jim Redman dropped off, but it was the five of us. So—but there were—I forget, but those three commissioners were indicted. And Charley Bean, who was not on the board at the time, but had been on the board—I served with him. So, there were four commissioners, and then about eighteen members in the community.

AH: Oh, wow.

JP: Business people.

AH: Right.

JP: Attorneys. You never hear about them, but they—they—

AH: We've just got five minutes left on the tape, so—

JP: Oh, gosh. Okay.

AH: No, no, no worries.

JP: Okay. But I appeared before the federal grand jury as a—not as a target, but as a—

AH: Right.

JP: As a—someone to give evidence.

AH: Right.

JP: And then, I had to appear at the trial. And it was very traumatic. You know, going before a federal grand jury is a great responsibility, because everything you say is so important. And you don't want to falsely say anything or say something that could injure somebody who—so, you—it was just very traumatic. And, fortunately, I have a very thoughtful husband, and he arranged for us to go fishing in the Keys after that. (AH and JP laugh) So that after I gave my Grand Jury testimony, I went to the airport and flew to Key West, and we went fishing.

AH: Ah, perfect.

JP: But it was very traumatic.

AH: Right. Well, but there was another good thing that came out of all that, right? Weren't you able to go to the Super Bowl?

JP: Oh, yes. That's right. That was right. How did you remember that one?

AH: That was a great story.

JP: Yeah. Because I—because I became chairman.

AH: Yeah, tell us the Super—tell us how you got to go to the Super Bowl. This will be a great way to end this segment.

JP: (laughs) Well, because I was chairman—

AH: Well, first of all, tell us why you couldn't go to the Super Bowl initially, right?

JP: Well, because I wasn't chairman. And I wasn't on the—on the—I wasn't on the sports authority.

AH: Yeah, so there were only so many tickets that went—

JP: There were so many tickets. And so, it only went to just the chairman of the county commission and the members of the sports authority. And I wasn't on either one of those. So, I got tickets to the Super Bowl, and that was the plus side of it. (AH laughs) And I'll always remember that I went, and in the box next to me was Ted Kennedy.

AH: Oh, wow.

JP: Which I thought was interesting. (AH and JP laugh) But anyway.

AH: Well, I think this is—

JP: That was the plus side.

AH: A good way for us to end the first hour of our adventures with Jan Platt. Thank you, Jan.

JP: Thank you.

***Beginning of Second Tape***

Well, one of the things I forgot to mention about—that occurred while the bad guys were in office was that they voted to take three books off the library shelves. And at that time, the City of Tampa had the libraries. There were only a handful of libraries in unincorporated Hillsborough, because there were no people out there.

AH: Right.

JP: And so, I raised Cain about the fact that they were taking these books off the shelves. And I said that there ought to be—that politicians should not have any policy-making authority over libraries; that they should be out of the library business.

AH: So, now, the books were taken off the shelves because they were considered improper, is that right?

JP: Yes. That somebody came and said, “These are terrible books.” And I can’t even remember what the name of the books were.

AH: Right.

JP: But they wanted them off the shelves. And so, again, at that time, the City of Tampa operated the system. And so, I went to the then mayor of the City of Tampa, who, as fate would have it, was Bob Martinez. And, as fate would have it, his wife had been a librarian. And so, she—he understood the issue. And I said, “Bob, we need to do something about this. And let’s create a countywide system.”

And he agreed and said, “I’ll—you come up with something, and I’ll look at it, and we’ll see what we do.” So, I met with Quintella Bruton from Plant City, who was very involved with the libraries in Plant City, and Elizabeth Himes. Elizabeth’s husband had been a



judge, and she was the first woman ever elected to a position in that—in this county. You never hear about it, but it's true; she was the first woman ever elected to a position, and that was to the Tampa General Hospital Authority Board, back a long time ago in Tampa General.

But anyway, the three of us met and talked about this countywide system, and Quintella was adamant that she did not want Plant City to be a part of it. She wanted Plant City to be independent. And, when we contacted Temple Terrace, they said they wanted no part of it. And so, we honored that, because they—it took a special act of the legislature—and so, we created—we came up with a piece of legislation that just dealt with unincorporated Hillsborough and City of Tampa.

And provided for a library board that would be appointed; would be citizens that would be appointed by the City of Tampa and the county commission, and they would be responsible for governing the libraries in the county and the city. That there would be one system, and that the downtown library, which is now the John Germany Library, would stay in ownership of the City of Tampa and would be the lead library.

And we also created a special tax district for the City of Tampa and everything out in the county except Temple Terrace and Plant City. And that would be used to fund the construction of new libraries. And so, Mayor Martinez was supportive of that, and we proposed that to legislative delegation, and they approved it. And that's the library system we have today. And now, there are over twenty-seven libraries throughout the city and county. But most of them have been out in the county, because the county has grown like Topsy.

And we really needed a unified system. And so, since I've been out of office, I've stayed active with the Friends of the Library, and to make them a strong organization. And one of my—one of my things that I still have on my list is to try to change that law now to include Plant City and Temple Terrace, because I think times have changed, and I think they would probably want to be part of the system too. But it would involve them saying yes to being taxed.

AH: Right.

JP: But, but, they both went along the environmental lands program, and they're taxed for that; so, I think they can see that if, you know, the money is well spent, hopefully, we can get them to be part of the system.

AH: Right.

JP: But that's the library system that we have today.

AH: I mean, aren't they taxed in their municipalities anyway? Are they not taxed to—?

JP: They may be. They may be. But it's for their independent library system.

AH: Understood.

JP: And see, they're not part of the—of some of the exchanges and things like that.

AH: Right.

JP: You know? And when our Friends of the Library meet, and we have representatives from all those chapters that meet once a month—or once every two months—they're not there to hear what's going on throughout the county. And so, it's really a detriment to their citizens, not to be a part of it.

AH: (affirmative murmurs)

JP: So, that's still on my list.

AH: Right.

JP: Of things to get finished off before I fade away.

AH: Well, you know, you're right, though, about the—you were just talking about the growth of the county; twenty thousand people a year, during the '70s, certainly during the '80s, it didn't slow down. So—

JP: I know. It's got close to 1.3 million people right now.

AH: Right.

JP: In fact, I think I have the statistics here. Well, it—no, I really don't, but it has grown like Topsy. When I—well, I do have it—when I was—when I was in—when I came into office, Hillsborough County had six hundred and—a hundred—six hundred—six hundred—sixteen people? Oh, they had six hundred— (laughs) I'm getting old.

AH: Six hundred and sixteen thousand?

JP: Yeah. That's what it had. And then, when I left office, it had 1.1 million.

AH: Right.

JP: So, it doubled when I was in office.

AH: Wow.

JP: And see, that's why I came up with that Environmental Land Program. Is because I kept seeing all this land that—you know, they'd vote yes to all these—

AH: Right.

JP: And I said, "We've gotta' save these lands, and the only way to save them is for the public to buy them." And every time we've put that on the ballot—the first time—well, it's been twenty-five years; we just celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary.

AH: Congratulations.

JP: Yeah, well, thank you. 61,000 acres have been bought.

AH: Right.

JP: And it's mangroves and those mangrove shorelines, and cypress heads, and that's the only way to save them.

AH: Right. It's such an important program. And, you know—and I think a lot of people are looking back at the, you know, the financial crisis—you know, 2008 and 9, as being kind of a reprieve for Florida lands, because they were being gobbled up so quickly.

JP: Well, and it's interesting that at this last election, I think it was 2009 when the presidential election—whenever the last presidential election was, the Environmental Land Program was on the ballot, and it won by 71% of the voters. It had the most votes of anything on the ballot. And it's been on the ballot three times, and every time, it's been by—it's won by vast majorities.

AH: Right.

JP: And it's the public is so supportive of saving the lands. And one of the keys to that—

AH: I mean, how often does it have to be voted on, anyway?

JP: Well, it won't be for twenty years; it's got \$200,000,000.

AH: Right.

JP: This last time was for twenty years.

AH: Okay.

JP: And it's citizen—the citizens operate it, basically. And I gave a speech the other day on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary, remarking that many of the citizens who were involved in the very beginning are still involved. There are numerous citizen campaign—citizen committees that review the projects and determine whether they meet the criteria, and then—and then, they rank what land should be purchased.

AH: Right.

JP: And so—and, you know, it's a fair program, because if somebody owns the land, it's not government condemning them and saying, "We're going to take your land," they're paid. It's appraised. And so, that they get something for that land. But it's really been a very successful program of saving. And then, as far as the—you know, I talked about me with the environment, I was on the regional planning council, and I became—I was involved in forming the agency on bay management, which is cooperative of all the environmental groups and regulatory groups dealing with bay issues; and they meet on a regular basis to oversee the seabeds, the sea grasses, and the oysters and everything, to make sure and then, make recommendations to government agencies and elected officials. And that still meets today.

And then, also, another issue that I dealt with was the estuary program. When I was Chairman of the Agency on Bay Management, I noticed that south of us—Sarasota, Manatee—that they were part of the estuary program. And I said, "Well, we're Florida—you people don't realize that our bay is the largest estuary in the state of Florida." And I said, "We ought to be a part of that, too." And so, I went before Congress—me and the director of Swiftmud<sup>10</sup>—and Sam Gibbons and Bill Young went with us. And we proposed that the bay—Tampa Bay—be part of the estuary program—National Estuary Program,<sup>11</sup> and it passed. So, we're part of the National Estuary Program, which is very helpful, because then, that keeps our bay in line with federal programs and federal funding for various—various opportunities.

And, you know, I might say this—that we always had bipartisan support for the bay. Bill Young and Sam Gibbons would always stand together on bay issues. And that was so important. And I hope that continues, because there wasn't political infighting; they both understood that it was important. When I dealt with some of the Egmont Key issues, I could turn to both of them, and they would both say yes. And they wouldn't try to undercut one another or grandstand or anything like that; they were a team. They could be counted on, and they will be sorely missed.

AH: Absolutely.

JP: They were the Monuments Men.<sup>12</sup> (laughs)

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<sup>10</sup>The Southwest Florida Water Management District, commonly referred to as Swiftmud or SWFWMD is one of five regional agencies directed by Florida state law to protect and preserve water resources. The District's responsibilities have expanded to include managing water supply and protecting water quality and the natural systems — rivers, lakes, wetlands and associated uplands.

<sup>11</sup>The National Estuary Program (NEP) is a network of voluntary community-based programs that safeguards the health of important coastal ecosystems across the country.

<sup>12</sup>The Monuments Men was a group of approximately 345 men and women, often professors from 13 nations that volunteered for service during the Second World War to protect and recover many works of art from the Nazis. In the last year of the war, they tracked, located, and in the years followed, returned more

AH: Right. Well, and it's funny, 'cause, you know, I just saw Bob Martinez speak a while ago, you know? And he was talking about some of the environmental things that happened on his watch as governor, and you often forget that today it's so, kind of, polarized. Everyone has their, sort of, appointed issues. You know, depending on what aisle—you know, side of aisle you're on. And environmental issues and republicans don't mix anymore. And so, it's—you know, it's really disappointing to kind of survey the political scene now and see that there's really—there's not much of that camaraderie or teamwork going on anymore.

JP: I know. And, you know, the newspaper—I think it was this past weekend—had the top twenty focal points for the state of Florida for people from the outside, and number one was our bay. It was water.

AH: Right.

JP: Number one. Tampa Bay. I mean, it is so important in so many ways.

AH: Right.

JP: And, you know, it's—with the ship—shipping channel, and now, with the cruise ships and everything, they're always mindful if there's ever any dredging or anything like that, that—that be done in a way that does not—is not harmful to the environment. But, because everybody understands how important it is. So, they heed all the warnings.

AH: Right. Well, you know, and looking back, although a lot of people can agree that all these environmental issues are important, if Jan Platt wasn't there in the county commission when you were there, would we have any LAPP right now, do you think? I mean—

JP: I don't know.

AH: I mean, it's—

JP: I don't know.

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than 5,000,000 artistic and cultural items stolen by Hitler and the Nazis.

AH: You would think that there would be other people advocating these types of things, but it doesn't seem like many people have surfaced.

JP: I don't know. Another I'd star was the history center. Again, under state law, counties are responsible for the artifacts of the county, and the county had an Indian—dug out Indian canoe somewhere, and they misplaced it. I heard about that—and I don't know if you ever went to the county, when the county commission was in the old courthouse. That's where we first met before we built that Fred—before we bought the Fred Karl Center. But in that building, on the second floor, was sort of a little museum. It was about the size of the room that we're in now.

And there was a lady that tended it, and it had a lot of the artifacts. It had beautiful paintings of the Indians and the bay, and things like that. And you'd routinely go by those. And so, I—and then, when the legislative office closed, to move to its own office, they had all these photographs of former members of the legislature that they were going to pitch. Well, I collected them in my office, and I said, "No way." And so I made sure that the county held onto those. And again, having been a history teacher—

AH: Right.

JP: I'm interested in history. So, I made a motion that we create a citizen's task force, made up of representatives appointed by the city and county, to determine what should be done with the county's historic collections. And they met—and the irony is Ken Lewis was the chairman. He was the president of the bank. Now, if you look at the papers now, Ken Lewis has made a name for himself in a bad way nationally. (laughs)

AH: Okay.

JP: Look him up on Google. (laughs)

AH: Okay.

JP: But anyway, when he was in Tampa, everything was fine. He was chairman of our committee; and they got an outside consultant, and that consultant said that we ought to have a history museum for these artifacts. And so, Tommy Touchton came to me with his wife, and he said, "Jan, if you can find the money to build it, Lee and I will get out and

raise money to operate it.” And—Lee and Tommy came and said that. And so, there was really no money to build a history museum.

But one day, in a budget meeting, one of our staffers came in—and it was during the budget hearing—and he had I forget how many millions that I noticed he didn’t have allocated to anything. And I said, “What is that? What are those millions for?” He said, “Well, we really haven’t determined what that money’s for right now.” And I think it was seven million. Anyway, so, I immediately—(laughs)—seized on the opportunity and made a motion that those millions be allocated to build a history museum. And it caught everybody sort of off guard, and so they said somebody seconded it, and they passed it. And so, that money went to build the history museum.

AH: Right.

JP: What is ironic is, months later, that staffer retired from the county, and I often wonder if his—(laughs)—if his comments before the board helped toward that retirement. I hope not. But anyway—but that’s where they got the money to build the history center.

AH: Right. And then, of course, they had to raise money—so much money to—

JP: To operate it. That’s—

AH: Right.

JP: Yeah. So, anyway.

AH: Okay. So, well, you know, talking about some of your landmark achievements—let’s see, Tampa Bay Regional Planning—

JP: I chaired that.



AH: Planning Council, the Agency on Bay Management<sup>13</sup>, the ELAPP Program, the National Estuary Program, or introduction into that. The county library system, another big one.

JP: And the charters. Because I proposed that we have a charter for this county.

AH: Right.

JP: And so, we had a charter—when we had those appointed commissioners that board, we developed the first charter for the county, with a strong administrative form of government. And I’ve been on every charter review commission since then, and I continue—because every now and then, somebody says, “Well, let’s get a mayor.” But I—right now, under our current charter, each person—each voter, votes for a majority of the board. There are three at large, and four single member, so that you have a majority of the commissioners responsible to you. And that’s democracy.

AH: (affirmative murmurs)

JP: Every now and then, you’ll find that people want to have two at large and five, but I say no, because then, you would mess that up. And you wouldn’t have a majority responsible to every commissioner. You see what I’m saying?

AH: Yeah.

JP: Right now, you’ve got four—

AH: Right.

JP: You, as a voter, vote for three at large. So, they’re all responsible to you, plus you have one single member district person who’s responsible to you. And so, you always need to remind them of that.

AH: Right.

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<sup>13</sup>The Agency on Bay Management, the natural resources committee of the Tampa Bay Regional Council, remains the primary community organization focusing on the protection and management of the Tampa Bay estuary.

JP: So, you've got a majority that are—

AH: Understood.

JP: Yeah. So, that if you switched it to two—

AH: Right.

JP: Then you'd have those two, plus a single member, but then you'd have a majority against you.

AH: (affirmative murmurs)

JP: And then, that would be—open the door to the mayor. And the politics with the county—and we've talked about the growth—it's not a healthy situation, because development rules the day. That's why we had arrests. That's why we have investigations. That's why we have some of the stuff going on. Because there's considerable pressure—

AH: Right.

JP: For growth. And to say yes to anything that comes along the line.

AH: Well, I thought that humanity—

JP: And that's why—

AH: I'm sorry, go ahead.

JP: And that's why having the administrator in charge of all the departments and everything, and making the recommendations—he's a professional, and they have ethics. And so, he's not beholden to people for campaign contributions when he comes forward

with his recommendations. So, there always needs to be people keeping an eye on the county commission.

AH: Absolutely.

JP: Because there's just a lot of pressure out there.

AH: (affirmative murmurs) Yeah—well, I mean, the county talked about—this is several years ago now, but I think this is a perfect illustration of the humanitarian award; they were gonna' do an award for, you know, someone who had done great things in the county for people, and Ralph Hughes was—I think that was the only nominee they had, you know? And Ralph Hughes, he's a successful businessman and a developer, but he's one who isn't exactly humanitarian.

AH: And I thought to myself, God, you know, could you think of so many people around Tampa and Hillsborough County who you could include, but Ralph Hughes isn't somebody that really would pop out at me. But yet—how did they end up voting on that issue? Do you remember?

JP: No, I don't. They were gonna' change the—in fact, that was in the *Wall Street Journal*, and I was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* on that one. (AH and JP laugh) I gave—told 'em what I thought about that. They were gonna' change the name of the Moral Courage Award.

AH: Yeah, that was it. The Moral Courage Award.

JP: To—they were—that Pam—that Cam Oberting<sup>14</sup> had received, and they were gonna' name that for him. But no, they backed off of that.

AH: Right, right.

JP: And they did not do that. But—

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<sup>14</sup>Cam Oberting is an environmental activist in the state of Florida.

AH: But is it one of those things that, you know, in the rarified air of county commission—it sounds like a good idea to somebody somewhere—they don't realize how transparent—I mean, it looks—

JP: Oh, absolutely. I mean, he was a puppeteer.

AH: Right.

JP: You know? He was a puppeteer. And ultimately, when he was exposed, I think he owed \$80,000,000 worth of taxes.

AH: Right.

JP: I mean, what kind of person is that? But again, I would encourage citizens who are interested and who are involved with government to periodically review the campaign contributions. They are the key to everything, and you can get a pretty good picture of where things are going.

AH: Right.

JP: And why things are like they are.

AH: And I want to spend a lot of time on the Supreme Court decisions, but the recent Supreme Court decisions about money equaling speech, you know, and that it's not necessarily a bribe if you give somebody money and all this stuff—you know, watching this play out at the local level, what do you think of the wisdom of those decisions?

JP: I think they—I think that they don't understand the pressures that those contributions create.

AH: Right.

JP: Because that's what it does. It creates pressure on the people who receive them. Especially if the people who receive them have been the ones to face-to-face ask for it.

AH: Right.

JP: You know what I'm saying?

AH: Right.

JP: Because, then, when the person comes with their rezoning or they want to be the—they want to operate the taxicabs or whatever, it's hard to say no to them.

AH: Right.

JP: Down the line.

AH: Right.

JP: And, you know, I think—I think another law that—I think a law that needs to be changed is the one that requires that seven years after you've been in office, your records are destroyed. You know, that's—I'm so thankful that the University of South Florida has taken my records. Those are important records. And yet, had you not taken them—and it's 230 boxes of them—they would've been destroyed. There are files on Ralph Hughes. There are files on global warming. There are files on the Environmental Land Program. In fact, the other day, when I gave my speech, I had taken—made copies of some of those and read from them, and shown pictures—and—but it's the history.

AH: Absolutely.

JP: And yet, right now, there is a state law that says, "Seven years, they're gone." No wonder—I mean, who does that benefit? I can tell you who it benefits, and it's not anybody good. That law needs to be changed. And I saw in the paper that some of the Sunshine Laws are gonna' be weakened. They may sound good on the surface, but they're not.

AH: Right. I'm amazed they've lasted as long as they have. (laughs)

JP: I know, I know. Now, one of my files deals with ICLEI [International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives] and global warming. I used to go—as county commissioner, I would go to—I’d go through the United States when conferences were held on global warming. And there was an arm of the United Nations then called ICLEI, of which I was a part. And we would be briefed on all the things that were gonna’ happen, and with the windmills and solar and all that. And I would come back and brief the county, and they would laugh at me. Now, those records are here; and I would encourage some of your viewers to maybe someday pick—pull out those records and look, but there are so many buildings that the county has that you could put solar on.

JP: I mean, really. I said the county jail, for instance, if you ever go on Falkenburg [Road], those are all flat roofs. They could be—and windmills. In our state, we’re perfect for those windmills. If you—in the flats areas, say, even along the coastlines, you could put those up and create electricity; but we’re not doing it. Now, they’re talking about global warming; well, it’s nothing new. And yet—now, the only thing that was—I was able to accomplish when I was with the county—and I think they’ve quit doing that—is I’d say, “Turn off the lights at night. You don’t need the lights on in this building at night.”

AH: Right.

JP: Now, I’ve gone by that building lately, and those lights are on. I need to call somebody and say, “Have you forgotten what you were—turn those lights off.” And then, the other thing that did happen too was they created a building that just creates ice—it’s called a chiller building—to be the air conditioning for the county buildings. And that’s in a building that’s down the street. And so, that’s really the only thing they did. The resource recovery plant I was involved with, and that—I was chairman of the board back when that was built, and that is a resource recovery kind of thing, because that takes our—the county’s waste and creates electricity. And that supplements—we sell that to Tampa Electric.

AH: Right.

JP: And that’s over on Falkenburg Road.

AH: (affirmative murmurs)

JP: And when I was chairman, I went to the city—Martinez, and asked him to get the city to go along with us. And now, unfortunately, that was when the corrupt guys were on the

board, and he said, “I don’t want to get involved with your board.” And so, he wouldn’t go with us on that one.

AH: Right.

JP: But—so, the city doesn’t have that kind of facility. But that—we’ve—the county has won awards for that resource recovery plant on Falkenburg.

AH: (affirmative murmur) I remember the files well in your collection (AH and JP laugh)  
So, what—have we missed any landmarks from your years with the county? I mean—

JP: I’m trying to think.

AH: There’s—what about women and human rights?

JP: Um, I don’t know. Let’s see.

AH: Well, this may be a good time to start thinking about winding down, but I do have some questions between now and then.

JP: Sure.

AH: So, let’s—

JP: All right.

AH: What advice do you have for young women out there who may be interested in public service? Or may not be? Or may not know that they one day might be? What—any advice for women who want to get into politics?

JP: Well, first of all, know what you’re doing and have knowledge about government.

AH: Right.

JP: And don't take money. Do as I did; walk the straight and narrow. Because, if you don't, you're in for trouble.

AH: I mean, do you think that's viable advice at the federal level?

JP: I think it's viable at any level.

AH: Right.

JP: I do.

AH: (affirmative murmurs)

JP: I do. And I think, don't think of yourself as a woman, think of yourself as a person.

AH: Right.

JP: And don't get into the women issue. I mean, I never did; I mean I just did it as a person. 'Cause once you start getting into the, "I'm a woman," or, "I'm a—." You know, then you get into just—you're an individual who has a right like anybody else.

AH: Right.

JP: And be cautious of who you involve in your campaigns. Mine were always close friends who I'd gone to school with or had been in Girl Scouts and, you know, all my Girl Scout buddies.

AH: People who you trust.

JP: And, you know, they didn't want anything from government. And none of us wanted anything out of it other than good government.



AH: Well, and that's one of the things that really sets you aside when you talked about getting on the city council was you had a real interest in government and how it worked, and most of the politicians around you didn't, really. They were usually trying to subvert it more than make it function.

JP: (affirmative murmurs)

AH: And then second, in being educated about the issues themselves, you know? And then educated about the budget that you're supposed to be voting on, et cetera. So, all those things certainly served you well.

JP: (affirmative murmurs) And be prepared to read the material.

AH: Right.

JP: And don't count on other people, because everybody's got their own slant on things. And you're the one that's responsible. No one else but you; you're the one who's got to look in the mirror at yourself, and ask yourself had you done the best you could that day. And, you know, I go by the Girl Scout motto: "On my honor, I will try to do my duty to God and my country." And that's—I sort of live by that. And I would live by that when I was in office. At least you'll try. And if you don't succeed, at least you've tried.

AH: Right. Right. Well, there's certainly plenty of evidence, you know, in your record as a public servant, that you tried and tried successfully. And that—had you not been there, I just can't imagine a lot of these programs ever getting off the ground, you know? And maybe someone may have tried in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but all that good, you know—

JP: (affirmative murmurs)

AH: —wouldn't have been done yet, and it probably would've been much more difficult to get it off the ground now than your early effort. So, you know, on behalf of USF and the people of Florida—Hillsborough County, we really thank you for your service; thank you for talking with us today.

JP: Oh, well thank you.

AH: And if you have anything to add, you're certainly—certainly feel free.

JP: The problem is with when I get home, I'll think of all kind of things. (AH and JP laugh)

AH: Right.

JP: But I can't think of anything right this minute. I—

AH: Well, I think your career speaks for itself.

JP: Okay.

AH: It really does. So, thank you, Jan.

JP: Well, thank you, and thank you for taking that collection.

AH: Of course.

JP: Because, hopefully, people will use it.

AH: Right.

JP: And it will make a difference for the future, 'cause you learn from the past.

AH: Absolutely.

JP: We learn from the past, and if we don't learn from the past, we're gonna' make mistakes.

AH: Right.

JP: So, thank you for keeping them.

AH: Our pleasure.

***End of Tape 2. End of Interview.***