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**Andy Fairbanks (AF):** All right, it should be going now. All right, this is Andy Fairbanks interviewing Joe Guidry at his home in Lutz, Florida, the 10th of August 2017, for the ELAPP Environmental Lands Acquisition and Protection Program Oral History Project. All right, Joe, we're going to start with your family background. When and where were you born and raised?

**Joe Guidry (JG):** I was born in Tampa, Florida, in 1951 in the old St. Joseph Hospital in Tampa Heights. My mother was raised in Tampa. We're sixth and seventh generation Floridian. My Florida—my husband—I'm getting old. My father came here during World War II from Louisiana, and that's when he went and met my mother.

AF: Okay.

JG: So I was raised in Tampa, and Seminole Heights is where I spent my first five years. And then we moved to Wellswood, and that's where I grew up.

AF: Okay. And now, where is Wellswood?

JG: It's right behind Tampa Catholic High School, near the Hillsborough River. When I was growing up, there were woods around us. It was a new subdivision. Where Tampa Catholic's gym is, it was all woods, hardwood. So, you know, as a seven- and eight-year-old, it was just wonderful.

AF: Awesome.

JG: We had a creek that ran behind our house into the Hillsborough River. Back then, they would let us go exploring. It was just a wonderful way—it was a small group of woods. It wasn't, like, a vast wilderness.

AF: Did the creek have a name? Do you remember?

JG: No, it did not. It was actually a storm drainage that came out of there. There were pipes that went through. But, you know, we had great fun playing in it and trying to jump it on our bikes. The big thing was, one time, there was a water moccasin<sup>1</sup> in our back yard that my uncle killed and, you know, those sorts of things. It was neat. We would see snakes all the time, but not big water moccasins.

AF: Sure.

JG: I was not and my dad was not an outdoorsman, but I spent a lot of time in the woods enjoying that.

AF: All right. And so, you said your father was not an outdoorsman, but what was he into?

JG: Well, he loves sports and baseball. I mean, he was a drug salesman for Allen Drug, Tampa Drug at one time. So he actually preferred those kinds of sports. I was not a good athlete, and I preferred the outdoors. But we had barbeques every week. They're very social people. And, every year, we'd go back to Louisiana. He loved his home state.

AF: And where in Louisiana?

JG: Houma.

AF: Okay.

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<sup>1</sup>The water moccasin is a venomous snake that can be found in the Southeastern part of the United States. The majority of water moccasins to be almost or totally black with some pale facial markings, although many specimens have patterns consisting of brown, gray, tan, or olive-colored patterned cross-bands.

JG: And there was an old house on the bayou. I mean, when he was growing up, he spent a lot of time in the woods and stuff. But not as—his father was a hunter and loved duck-hunting and things like that. But my dad and everybody, he loved playing in the bayou and that sort of thing.

AF: Did he find much attractive about the Tampa environment, similar to Houma?

JG: He made many friends. He loved people. Until the day he died, he always loved going back to Houma and seeing his family. He always wrote about how that was the best state in the world, and you could wall it off and everybody could survive. So that sort of thing. He would've probably spent more time there if my mother would've let him, but he loved his friends. He was very social and had very close friends.

AF: And what about your mother? Was she also from Louisiana?

JG: No, she was from—well, she was born in Sanford, but she grew up pretty much in Tampa, a graduate of Hillsborough High School. And she loved her home here. She had her mother and her sister here. She didn't want to leave Tampa, though. My father would've gone back, but she didn't want to.

AF: And so, you said they met after World War II?

JG: During.

AF: During World War II. Okay.

JG: He was stationed at MacDill, and they met at a dance or something. And she had—there's actually a story of her life. Her father had worked for the railroad and had been in World War I. He died of leukemia in his early forties. And so, his wife was left on her own with the three daughters he had to raise. And she kind of stepped in and really—because my grandmother didn't have to go to work. She went to work for the railroad. And then, when my mother married, my father became kind of the father figure to the two younger sisters, who are still alive.

AF: Okay, excellent. Yeah, I would like to talk more about that another time, with your mom's history growing up in Florida. So you grew up in the Tampa area, close to the Hillsborough River. You described playing around there, that you weren't particularly an outdoorsman as a kid.

JG: No, my dad didn't hunt or fish. I mean, we'd go to the causeway and fish with the cane pole<sup>2</sup> or something.

AF: Which causeway, the Courtney Campbell<sup>3</sup>?

JG: Courtney Campbell. Back in the old days, you'd have to go out first thing in the morning and reserve a pavilion. My aunt and uncle, who lived just down the street—and he was a fisherman—they'd get up early. One of us would get up early and reserve it, and the families would come out. We'd have these big picnics, and we'd fish on the bay. And you'd usually catch a little something. We would spend—I was in Cub Scouts, and we'd go out to the—Matt Greco, who owned the big barn, which became (inaudible) land out on Bruce B. Downs, which was called the road to nowhere. Back then, there was a road out in the middle, and it was a hunting club. But they would let the scouts go out there, and we'd have picnics. We never spent the night, and we would fish and do games and things like that. So it was a lot of time spent in the outdoors, just not, I don't think I ever camped as a kid, except in my back yard and that sort of thing.

AF: And then the Greco, same as the Dick Greco<sup>4</sup> family, or?

JG: I think they're distantly related. They're not close. His son was Eugene Greco, who was in my class, but a lot of old Tampa.

AF: And so, yourself, you grew up in the Wellswood neighborhood?

JG: Yeah.

AF: And did you move any other places?

JG: No, I lived in Wellswood, and then I moved out when I went to the University of South Florida.

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<sup>2</sup>Cane poles are a traditional fishing implement consisting only of a pole, traditionally made of bamboo, and fishing line. Unlike modern fishing rods, cane poles do not have reels.

<sup>3</sup>The Courtney Campbell Causeway is the northernmost bridge across Old Tampa Bay, carrying State Road 60 between Clearwater and Tampa. Originally called the Davis Causeway, the bridge was renamed in honor of Courtney W. Campbell in 1948. Campbell was a Clearwater Beach resident who served in the U.S. House of Representatives and championed efforts to repair and maintain the causeway.

<sup>4</sup>Richard Attilio Greco, known most commonly as Dick Greco, was mayor of Tampa from 1967 to 1974, and again between 1995 and 2003.

AF: And what year did you go to USF?

JG: I graduated from high school in '69. I started there, and then I moved out to Seminole Heights to an apartment we had in Seminole Heights eventually. But I stayed there. My plan was, my parents always said, You go your first two years to USF, and we'll help you go wherever you want after that. I thought I would go to [University of] Florida or FSU, you know, a better journalism program. But then, in the interim, I got a job at the *Tampa Times* as a copy boy and working on the wire desk on weekends and doing sports. And I thought, You know, I'm working here. I've got a foot in the door. So I just stayed at USF, which I'm glad I did. They had a good mass communications department. I met my wife there.

AF: So tell me about that, when you met Lenora(??).

JG: Well, we just had classes together, and we were talking. I think we were dating other people. We would always talk, and we'd kid about, "Oh, you know, we need to go out to a drink," which —(doorbell rings and dog barks)

AF: All right, so you were starting to tell us about when you met your wife, Lenora.

JG: Well, I met her. We were both in journalism. And then she called me. We actually had both graduated. We knew each other, but we didn't date. And then, she called to tell me she got a job at the *Tribune*. I was already working with the *Times*. It was a great thing. Back then, you could just work the day—I was working almost then. And then, the day I graduated, it was a job. She called and said she got a job, and I said, "Well, how'd you like to go out this weekend?" And she said, "Well, that's not why I called." And I said, "Well." Anyway, and we started dating, and that was that.

AF: Excellent. Excellent. So what year—did you both graduate the same year?

JG: Seventy-three. She's a year younger than me, but she's a year smarter than me. Or, actually, much more than that.

AF: Very good, very good. So you were at the *Tampa Times*; she was at the *Tampa Tribune*.

JG: Yeah.

AF: And did either of you work for the campus paper or anything like that?

JG: We both worked for the *Oracle*. I started working there—you know, I had this really great teacher when I was a sophomore.

AF: And who was that?

JG: Kenneth Kay. And he really—it was on writing, and he really made you feel the wonder of writing. And I already had bent that way in high school, so I started working for the *Oracle*. That's when I also went down and got a job at the *Times*. I was a copy boy. So I worked for the *Oracle*, probably over a year. I covered the administration. It was great experience. And, also, when I look back, I think of all those administrators putting up with these young kids who don't really know what they're doing. We thought, you know, we were the Bernstein(??), when, really, we didn't know what the heck we were—but you learned a lot, and it was a great experience. I'm very, very fond of my experience at USF and working at the *Oracle*. I eventually gave up the *Oracle* because they gave me pretty much a full-time job at the *Times* after a year, but some of my best friends were there. The editor, Grant Donelson, who I worked for, was like 10 years older but had gone back to school after the military; we became lifelong friends. And I said, "Editor, you not only taught me how to write. You taught me how to fish." So—

AF: I was going to ask about that.

JG: Well, he kind of—at that point, I was kind of getting into the outdoors more.

AF: So what was the motivation to start getting into the outdoors more?

JG: I just had a—you know, I liked it. Of course, reading Hemingway and things like that helped. But I'll tell you what; I was just thinking about this the other day. A real inspiration for me—there was an artist at the *Tampa Times* called Lee Cable. And his goal in life was to be an outdoor, nature artist. And he was incredibly talented. But he would go canoeing and do a lot—so he invited me one time to go canoeing on the Hillsborough River. I was still in college then. And so, we went canoeing. We put in at the state park and went upriver, which is now Two Rivers Ranch<sup>5</sup>, the Thomas family, who are great people. Anyway, we went up there, and we saw wild turkeys, saw otter, saw hogs, and all these birds, which I had taken for granted. You got this field guide, and you'd start identifying. It just was a revelation to me.

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<sup>5</sup>Two Rivers Ranch—named in reference to Hillsborough River and Blackwater Creek, which converge on the property—is a cow/calf ranch and timbering operation.

AF: Really?

JG: And, to this day, I still think of how fortunate I was to have this new world opened up to me. I mean, I had some semblance of liking the outdoors and wanting to fish and hunt, but my uncle, who was a fisherman, was teaching me a little bit. But, I mean, we didn't fish; we just canoed. But that was one of those things that, after that, it really—

AF: So did you continue to go with Lee Cable?

JG: I continued to go. We also went hunting sometime. We became, not best of friends or anything; he was older and had family, but we continued to be in touch for many years. He left and he did become a very successful artist (phone rings)—about Lee, who has since moved to Pike's Peak area and, actually, is doing work on cowboy art. But when Lenore and I got married, she said—cause I'd always said, "Man, I'd love to have a Lee Cable original." And she would always say, "Well, let's go for a drive sometime." Well, her wedding present to me was an original painting by Lee Cable. He said, "I'll paint whatever you want on it." What I wanted was a mountain lion in the Rocky Mountains, which today still remains one of my proudest possessions. He, one time, borrowed it from me to put in an art show. And he won. He didn't give me the ribbon, though. But anyway, her gift to me was much better than mine to her.

AF: Well, that's really cool. So, obviously, he sparked a lifelong interest because I know you're now a fisherman and a hunter.

JG: Yeah, I didn't know anything. I mean, I struggled. Another thing was I somehow talked myself into the outdoor writing job at the *Times*.

AF: And what year was that?

JG: That was around '73. That's when I got out of—or maybe even before, while I was still in college. And I was probably the most ignorant outdoor writer.

AF: So how'd you talk yourself into it?

JG: Well, they just needed somebody. And I said, "Well, I'm interested in the outdoors." So I did a couple of years. And you would learn stuff because you'd talk to people, and then I'd do feature stories on people. I never did—to this day, you know, I've caught a lot of fish and stuff

and shot a lot of things, but I never considered myself the world's greatest. But I get out there; I love it.

AF: So who are some of the people that you interviewed or that you learned from, in the job as outdoor writer? Anyone that stands out?

JG: I'm trying to think. There was a guy who had a boat shop here named Jack Westbury(??). He was a really good bass fisherman. He spent a lot of time with me. There was Roy and Edna Fox down on Shell Point, down at Shell Point at Cockroach Bay. A real character, he had one leg and crusty, salty, but kind-hearted people (phone rings)—

AF: It's rolling again. And you were starting to tell me about Roy and Edna Fox at Shell Point.

JG: Yeah, they had a place here. He was a good fisherman, and Cockroach Bay was a beautiful place. That was another place that kind of turned me onto—it eventually was bought by ELAPP. But to see that shell mound is beautiful, seagrass beds. You know, it's like, kind of, fishing in the Everglades. It was really gorgeous. So he was great. There was a writer, a former outdoor writer, at the *Times* named Archie Blunt. And I would fish with him. He knew a lot. We weren't real close friends or anything, but he was a very, really great fisherman. And my friend Grant Donnelson—who were best friends—he was a great—we'd fish a lot. We'd go down to Cockroach Bay and fish and snook and fish. We would have jobs where I'd get off early because I'd get in real early, so we could fish until dark. We'd stop and get a Pabst Blue Ribbon at the 7-Eleven at the end of the street or whatever it was there.

AF: So was that when you came across Gus, down that way?

JG: Gus was later. Gus was after I'd become an editorial writer at the *Tribune*.

AF: Okay. Well, we'll come back around to that a little bit later on. But go ahead.

JG: Well, I don't know if you want to jump to how I got to be an editor.

AF: I do. That was the next thing I wanted, to walk through your journalism career.

JG: Well, anyway, I did outdoor writer, worked in the wire desk, became executive sports editor at one time, state editor.

AF: And all this at the *Tampa Times*?

JG: All this at the *Tampa Times*. That was one thing, you kind of jumped from being a reporter type thing into an editing position pretty quick, but you learned a lot. But then the *Times* folded.

AF: And what year was that?

JG: That was in 1982. And I went—they laid off a lot of people. They kept me and a number of other people, and I went to work for the city desk, on the night city desk. And then, very soon afterwards, I became night city editor. So I'd run the operation at night, where you don't have everybody there, but if anything goes wrong it's your fault. And at that time, I was doing—because you don't write as a night city editor. I would do some book reviews for the editorial page editor. The book editor was Holmes Alexander. And so, they had a new editorial page editor named Ed Roberts. Anyway, I did this book review on the letters of Marjorie Rawlings<sup>6</sup>, and he liked it. And he called me, and he said—just out of the blue. I'd never met him or whatever, and I was home doing some home projects, and he called and said, “Would you be interested in talking about a job in editorial?” I said, “Yeah.”

I mean, that was—because I always was interested. And if I'm going to stay in journalism, going into editorial, where you get a chance to write, and it's a prestigious position, but you're not just covering nothing [sic]. I mean, that's a very noble position, but it wears people out. And, in terms of getting ahead in the news room, it's very political. When I went over to the *Tribune*, they were very kind to me. I think very highly of them. But they already had—you know, the hierarchy was there. They appreciated what I did, but I don't think I was going to get way ahead there. So I took that job and started in '84 after the Superbowl. I worked through it; they didn't want me to leave the news desk until after the Superbowl. I went to work. And it wasn't a great job. It was doing the letters and the op-ed and writing as I could. But, eventually, if you work hard, you can change the job. I eventually did more and more editorials, did more and more—the environment was my passion.

And then, eventually, through the years, I didn't do the letters anymore. Sometimes did the op-ed. Eventually got rid of that. Eventually, I became the deputy editorial page editor. But, well beyond that, I was doing the outdoors. And my boss, Ed Roberts, who was a very good man, but he was conservative, he had won the Pulitzer Prize, too—just a beautiful writer. But he came, and he could see how things were changing here. And even though we didn't always see eye to eye, he let me pursue my passion. And he did support it. In fact, on some things, he became even—I won't say more aggressive, but he was willing to go to some things, like off-shore oil

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<sup>6</sup>Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings (1896 – 1953) was an American author who spent much of her life in Florida; she wrote works based in rural areas, such as her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Yearling*.

drilling, which I'm dead-set against. But there is a point when you've got to say, How much of a buffer do you need? I mean, in everything. He was—man, don't let him anywhere, you know? So that worked out. And that's when I began. And we initiated a series on save the bay.

AF: When was that series?

JG: I believe it was around '85, '86. I'd have to go back and look. There was another editorial writer there at the time, Wade Stevens, who helped initiate it. I remember we all got—he was much more veteran than me. But we got together with Jan Platt and Robin Lewis at the Valencia and started mapping it out. And then we had this one big bomb, and then after that, I pretty much wrote every one of them. And Wade left not too long after that, but he moved onto other things even before. But I wrote more than 50 editorials on that. And that's where I met most of these people. Jan, Robin Lewis was a great influence. And I met Robin before, too, when I was an outdoor writer. I'd gone clamming with him. And that's when I met Gus.

AF: Through Robin?

JG: No, I met Gus when I was doing the save the bay. I can't remember for sure if it was part of the save the bay things when we wrote about his Cockroach Bay. But I'd been in touch with him. He would write letters, and he came by. And he'll tell you, I said, "Well, take some photos." And he said, "I'm going to take this canoe trip," and then we kind of got that impetus about, this needing to be done. As kind of a background to this, kind of before I was in the editorial section, there had been a campaign to buy the Bower Tract that Joel Jackson was very involved with. And the *Tribune* had actually come out against it: don't buy the Bower Tract. And that was because of Holmes Alexander, a very good man, but he had a different perspective. It wasn't that he didn't want to save land. He thought, if the government buys it, who knows what they'll do with it? He came from an era when you saw that they'd buy the land, and then they'll dam it or dike it or something like that. So he didn't see. And I was dead set against that. I said, "I mean, yeah, you can put protections in there." So I was able, once I was on the editorial board, to change that position. And we did advocate for the Bower Tract, and we did advocate for ELAPP, the public acquisition of land, which Holmes never—

AF: Well, let's walk through that in a little bit more detail. So the campaign to buy the Bower Tract; you weren't on the editorial board yet.

JG: No, not when it started.

AF: Okay, okay. Because I know that, you mentioned Joel Jackson, he and a bunch of others were really into that. Was that when the save the bay organization came together?

JG: Yeah. That was even before then that they had been working on it. I think a lot of it started with some of the dredging that was going on for the channel. But people like Joel—

AF: In which channel? The main one?

JG: The main one. But you had better talk to Joel on that.

AF: Sure, sure.

JG: But it's not like we came and won. I'm very proud of our save the bay series and everything I wrote on that, and I think it did—I mean, I think because of what we wrote, and I wasn't just the only one, but it became part of that fabric of what politicians paid attention to.

AF: Right.

JG: But there was definitely a movement, too, that preceded those, of some really dedicated people who fought hard and continued to fight hard. And we just, kind of, helped give them more of a platform.

AF: Sure, sure. They got the exposure. So what about yourself? You mentioned by the time when the *Tribune* came out against the Bower Tract purchase, it sounds like your position or your sense of being a conservationist was starting to crystalize, if it hadn't already. So maybe tell me about that. What main issues really made that position for you?

JG: Well, I think, one, seeing the Bay had degraded to such an extent. To see such a beautiful place as Cockroach Bay, and then have them want to put a marina in it, which we campaigned against and, I think, helped defeat. TECO<sup>7</sup> was going to put a facility down there, right near the waterway. And we fought that. And so, it was just like, everything that was done, it just seems to me, we degraded a little bit more. And my feeling was, and I didn't think I was an extremist, but we don't get any second chances with this; let's be careful. We live in paradise. And people are going to move here anyway. You know, there's always concessions; we all live in homes. But we need to make safeguards. And I think the power structure was so used to having their way, and it wasn't like these were evil people. They just didn't think. You know, We're going to do it the best way possible, well, you can do it the best way possible, and it's still a power plant.

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<sup>7</sup>TECO Energy Inc provides electricity to the greater Tampa area and central Florida. The company is also a provider of natural gas in multiple cities across the state of Florida.

And I'll always remember the story that the people from TECO are very influential and very generous in our community, but they wanted to have this facility down there at the Cockroach Bay. And I was dead-set against it, and I was fighting it. And they came in and said, It's going to be fine. It could've been one of those things because my boss, great guy, but he listens to—you know, our publisher, they're all part of that community. And so, I ask my boss, Ed Roberts, to go down to Cockroach Bay with me with Robin Lewis. And Robin Lewis took us out on this little boat in the shallows. And he had this transparent bucket, and he dipped the bucket in the water. And when he picked it up, you could just see it was full of life. Tiny shrimp, little creatures, the grass. He says, "This is what we're talking about. You change the water temperature in this area, everything, those discharges, this all could be at stake." And Ed says, "We've got to change this."

AF: Really?

JG: And, man.

AF: So is that what changed Ed's mind?

JG: Yeah. I mean, I think it already had, but I wanted him to see it firsthand, and he wanted to see it firsthand. And he told the head of TECO—he had him in his office—back then, the editorial page out of the *Tribune*, he said, "You cannot put this at risk." And the head of TECO, who was from another, you know, born elsewhere; he also said, "You're right. So the quality of life down here is not what it should be." And they pulled back on that. I give them great credit. I mean, a lot of the—not to be a Pollyanna<sup>8</sup>—but a lot of these people like TECO and Mosaic that I've dealt with harshly over the years, they've also done some good things. They're not, you know, it's all complicated. But they do their best. I think they've been, for the most part, good corporate citizens.

AF: What year was it, roughly, when you and Ed Roberts and Robin Lewis went out on Cockroach Bay?

JG: That might've been around, I don't know. I have to go back. It might've been the early '90s. It might've been '88. But I think, more likely—

AF: All right. So ELAPP would've been underway?

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<sup>8</sup>Pollyanna is a colloquialism meaning an excessively cheerful or optimistic person.

JG: ELAPP would've been underway or under discussion.

AF: So ELAPP officially started in 1987. And I know you've written numerous editorials about ELAPP. Was there a moment similar to this with the TECO power plant, when the editorial board made a shift? Or were they always in favor of ELAPP?

JG: They were pretty much, by then, I had—when it came to the conservation thing, not told, but I was kind of their go-to guy. Holmes was still there. He didn't always agree, but he wasn't arguing about it. And I say his opposition was, "Well, the government's going to get it, and then they could end up selling it and developing it." You know, it was a mistrust that it won't be preserved forever. It wasn't like, "Oh, we don't need"—he did care about things. I don't want to make it sound like he was a bad—

AF: Well, I think the context of what else was going on then would be important because you can tell me about what was going on in terms of corruption in the county, at the time.

JG: Well, we had three commissioners led away in handcuffs—this wasn't long after I got on the board—for corruption, taking bribes. They were convicted; I think two more later were. Developers just ran this community. And they continued to even after those people were arrested; they continued, pretty much, their influence. Not with corruption, and most developers aren't corrupt, but they had such great influence as to where the money is, the campaign. You had some people like Jan Platt, who did not kowtow to them at all, but most of the politicians would. Not corrupt politicians, but these are the people; and they created jobs. And that was another thing that drove. I tried, one of the big issues was growth management. The sky growth when we let development—I hate to see development destroy beautiful wilderness, but when you left development go hither and yond, we all pay for that. It's not like there's not a cost.

Because then you have gridlock, water quality issues, all those things. And that's what—I saw growth management not as just protecting homeowners and property owners from costs, it's just making you accountable. And we had, I thought, some pretty good success in promoting. We didn't always win, but promoting planning. The planning commission was probably one of the more effective ones. The agency there, they did the most they could with what they had. And nobody totally—even the pro-development politicians, they generally pay some attention to planning. But, even so, there's no way you're going to absolutely—you might say, Well, you can't develop on that piece of property, [so] you can't take it. Legally, you can't say you can't do anything. So you might be able to say, You can't build an apartment complex on there, but you can build 10 homes.

And the only way to absolutely preserve it was to buy it. And there's, you know, Bob Martinez will tell you this is a fairness issue and some of my friends who are ranchers. Nobody wants

them to do anything with that because they preserve their land. They're the last ones left. So all the subdivisions around them who looked alike that at one time, you are penalized because you did not develop your land, and you lose out. That's not fair. I mean, I still don't want to develop if it can [be helped], but for me to say to my neighbor who didn't develop his land, "Well, no, you can't do that. I like looking at it."

AF: Right.

JG: There's a fairness. That's why buying land. The buying the land not only preserves all of your wildlife, it prevents all these problems that are created. You have less traffic, your water quality is helped and the water recharge. You get all these free functions. You know about them better than I do. But so, it just seemed to me to make so much sense. And there was no ELAPP; when it went through, I didn't have much of an opposition at all on the board. Holmes was there, but he didn't fight me. I think he had, by that time, seen it's a different world. And the developers did not fight it.

AF: Really?

JG: No. I don't recall—

AF: Oh, because it was optional and volunteer, they could get—

JG: Yeah. And I think they recognized [that] here's a way that gives another option to buy land. Now, subsequent to that, after it was approved, it became this tremendously successful program because it is citizen-driven. Citizens pick out the sites, they oversee the contract. I mean, it's people with expertise. There's been no, absolutely no corruption or any incident of anything on tour to ever happen. It's just been an absolutely great program. But subsequently, we'd always have politicians come in when we'd interview them during election time for the endorsement. And it's, Oh, we've got too much land; this land's just sitting there doing nothing. You know, which always, as far as I was concerned, let's just stop the interview right now.

But there are people in the legislature right now who are saying, We just heard that about Amendment I, how much land do you need? Well, how many people do you need? We have 20 million people, so we need more land. If we had 10 million people, you know, but no. And that land's not going to get any cheaper; that's the other thing. You could buy it now, you could leverage it and have partnerships with the state. And there was something, you know—well, how are you going to manage it? How are you going to let the public enjoy it? Which we needed to work on it, but the county has a lot of programs to let you enjoy. But even if you walled it off and did nothing with it, it is still serving the public. I'm not suggesting that; I think we all should

have access to it. You've got to manage that. But it still serves the public by all the natural functions.

AF: Right. And we're just starting to quantify those ecosystem services and their financial value. But I think there's an intuitive understanding that you just articulated; maybe talk a little bit about your sense of how much influence did this have? In the times when these referendums were issued in 1987 and, subsequently, the public perception of ELAPP, how much of that was related, do you think, to the coverage of ELAPP in the editorials and elsewhere?

JG: Well, I'd like to think we had some influence on that. The people who came in the editorial board knew that that was a key issue. How important that is, obviously editorial boards' influence have been diminishing probably every year that I was on one. But we still had a—

AF: But did you see letters?

JG: Yeah, we'd see a lot of letters. Occasionally, we'd see one against it. But most people really—and you would see people who were conservative because it is the most conservative way to protect the environment. You just buy it. You know, you respect someone's property rights, and you pay property value. You don't condemn it and grab it and take it away. I don't see how anyone can see—it's a very conservative thing. Even, generally, we'd have pro-development commissions, and they would support it. So, I mean, we've had commissions that were more balanced. It's tradition for our commissions to be a little more [pro-development]. I think, in the last few decades, they've been more balanced.

Still, probably a little more pro-development but not like rape and pillage development. More like, let's do this in a responsible way and create jobs. I don't know where I was going with this, but it was—there was never any big opposition. I think the most recent thing they had the phone calls were from Jan Platt and Bob Martinez. I mean, you've got a conservative Republican and a Democrat. And, actually, Jan is pretty conservative. Fiscally, she's conservative. People always think she's very liberal, but she doesn't like spending the taxpayers' money if she doesn't have to. But anyway, I think people saw that it was good.

I don't know that they ever—and, to this day, I know you're doing a great job of getting more people involved and getting them in there. But I don't know if they were used to as much—or, as people realize whether there's a difference between ELAPP or another park. But I think people know, most people know, when they move here, Florida is losing a lot of what makes it so attractive. And I think they'd like—they may be just moved in from New Jersey or whatever. And they see traffic gets worse every year. This gets worse. This is no solution, but it's a little bit of a help. And it's certainly saving some beautiful areas.

AF: Absolutely. Absolutely. Let's see. Moving on to your experience. As you've interviewed all of these people, and you came with a knowledge of ELAPP and a knowledge of Hillsborough County from being the editor for so long, when you've interviewed people like Gus and Jan and Sally and Rob Heath and so on and so forth, what were the most significant things that you got that maybe—whether they were new to you or just reinforced how you felt—what were your takeaways from doing this project?

JG: I would just say how absolutely committed each one of them is to protecting the environment and doing what they can. They feel a personal responsibility to do what they can to protect these things for others. Like Gus, you know, he wants to leave and make sure he has a legacy of protecting. Joel Jackson is still going out, and I know a lot of the other ones [are] doing volunteer work to clear and those sorts of thing. They look at that as a personal responsibility. And there's also the appreciation of God's world, the beauty of what we have, and they appreciate it. I mean, Jan I'm talking about, when she went fishing with her father around the Town and Country area, and it was a crystal-clear creek, and they saw otters and all. Of course, that got developed over. I think the other sorts of things; when you love the outdoors, you just realize this is such a gift. And it sustains us. It's not up to whether you've ever set foot in the water and never go fishing or whatever; it does sustain us. It provides oxygen. And our drinking water, everything is so important. To see that sort of commitment that is ongoing, not one of them feels like, Well, I did my thing; I'm done. They still feel responsibility to keep going. It's really humbling to see.

AF: Yeah, yeah. I agree. In your opinion, how does ELAPP fit in with other efforts to protect the environment at any scale? Not just locally, but in the state of Florida, in the country, even globally?

JG: (sigh) Well, I think, you know, obviously, *Preservation 2000*<sup>9</sup>, *Florida Forever*<sup>10</sup> complimented that greatly. They could work together. I think the National Estuary Program and all our efforts to protect Tampa Bay and the SWIM program to protect surface water—

AF: SWFMD<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup>*Preservation 2000* was created in 1989 to replace *Conservation And Recreation Lands* (CARL) as Florida's primary program for acquiring lands of environmental and cultural significance. It has since been replaced by *Florida Forever*.

<sup>10</sup>*Florida Forever* replaced *Preservation 2000* as the state's premier conservation and recreation lands acquisition program.

<sup>11</sup>SWFWMD is the Southwest Florida Water Management District, a regional agency of Southwest Florida responsible for planning and regulating the consumption of water resources, the use and protection of wetlands, and other water-related activities.

JG: SWFMD. It was a state program, and that was started under Governor Martinez. Surface Water Improvement and Management Act, I believe, they called SWIM<sup>12</sup>. And, at one time, they were providing a lot of money for restoration programs, to reroute creeks so they would filter water again and that. So you could buy land that would complement that. At the same time they were doing that, it all worked together. Now, unfortunately, we don't have the funding for those sorts of things. We don't have the funding for ELAPP that I wish we had. But, still, that all worked together. It really helped. I think Tampa Bay is a great example. More things have happened. The water is cleaner. Of course, we had the Clean Water Act<sup>13</sup> and the Grissel-Fig Bill(??), which required wastewater treatment to be cleared. So all of those things. The environmental movement—I've made this point in editorials a number of times. People always say—"These job-killing regulations" has just become a phrase. That is absolutely untrue. Regulations can save jobs and save lives.

That doesn't mean you want red tape, too much bureaucracy. We were concerned. In fact, we didn't want more than you need. But Tampa Bay, a clean Tampa Bay has more economic value than if it's a cesspool. So if anybody says that the—they would not be, Jeff Vinik<sup>14</sup> would not be developing Water Street if Tampa Bay still was a mess. So do you think this billion-dollar project would have been attractive at the waterfront? So I get so aggravated. But you hear it's just become—they've managed to make it part of the—and it's not conservative to say that. You need to know what regulations can save you money. You know, it's a heck of a lot more expensive to clean something up than it is to keep it from ever happening in the first place. We don't have to have everything absolutely pristine. Nature has a certain resiliency. It's not one of those things [where] we don't want to do anything, but do what you can. Err on the side of the environment when you can.

AF: Absolutely. I know you've covered, you mentioned the Florida Land and Water Legacy Amendment<sup>15</sup>, Amendment 1. And I know you've also covered the wildlife corridor expedition<sup>16</sup> and the project itself. Do you see much in the parallels with ELAPP there?

JG: Well, yeah. I think we wouldn't be talking about the wildlife corridors, there would be no possibility of that, if it weren't for ELAPP and *Florida Forever*. It's only because of these programs that we have the mechanisms for creating that. And I think, you know, some other

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<sup>12</sup>In 1987, the Florida Legislature created the Surface Water Improvement and Management program (SWIM) as a mechanism to address nonpoint pollution concerns affecting at-risk water bodies in the state.

<sup>13</sup>The Clean Water Act (CWA), created in 1948 and reorganized in 1972, establishes the basic structure for regulating discharges of pollutants into the waters of the United States and regulating quality standards for surface waters.

<sup>14</sup>Jeffrey N. Vinik is the current owner of the Tampa Bay Lightning and Tampa Bay storm. He is engaged in a \$3 billion partnership with Cascade Investments to develop Downtown Tampa.

<sup>15</sup>Florida's Water and Land Legacy is a coalition of the conservation and civic organizations, businesses, and concerned citizens who together won voter approval of Amendment 1: the Water and Land Conservation Amendment on November 4, 2014.

<sup>16</sup>The Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition: Everglades to Okefenokee was a 1,000-mile expedition over a 100-day period in 2012 to create awareness and support for the Florida Wildlife Corridor project.

people, Pete or Curt would be able to tell you more, but I think many of the ELAPP purchases were done with an idea of kind of creating corridors. I mean, I love the corridor expedition groove in Carlton Ward's bend(??). You couldn't ask for a more dynamic space. And to have this state-wide corridor really was visionary.

But it was not unknown that you wanted to have enough environment to really sustain wildlife. I think it's called relic environment, where you just have this little bit of wilderness, not even woods, here. And you really can't sustain much of anything other than a few frogs or squirrels. But if you really wanted wildlife, you needed to have that connection. But you can't always do it. I think part of the ELAPP thing, you do have a little bit of green in the middle. That shouldn't preclude having a small area. You know, near Violet Curry, which I use every day to go jogging, although it's not very far from other areas, and I see deer in there that do not live there. But I know they're kind of moving through and that sort of thing. But it creates this little oasis, and it is big enough to have foxes and snakes and things like that, so.

AF: That's fantastic. What does the public understand and misunderstand most about ELAPP?

JG: I think they do understand this is to preserve the best of our wild areas. I don't think they always understand how valuable it is, that it's serving them even if they never use it. I think, probably, sometimes people think, Well, it should be a park land, or Why are we buying this? I'll never set foot on it. There's a lot of people who, unfortunately, think, If I don't use it, then it has no value. It's like, you know, if I don't use mass transit, it doesn't have value. But there's a lot of people it's taking to work. (both laugh)

AF: Yeah. And criticisms over the years that you've witnessed, have they been addressed, do you think, sufficiently?

JG: Yeah. I mean, there's never been any hint of scandal. The big complaint I've heard is from people running for office who never got elected, thank god, saying, We've got all this land sitting there doing nothing; we don't need to buy more. And I've heard complaints about it not being managed, that the exotics were running wild. And I think that was exaggerated, but there was some legitimacy to that, and that needed to be addressed. And that's the hard part of that. What do you do? You want to buy the land, or, you know, if the exotics go wild, it's lost a lot of its function, but it's still there. It's developed. You don't get the exotics, but it doesn't have your natural function.

AF: Well, and, to that point, do you think that we are doing—whether it's the county or journalism or whomever, advocates—are we doing a good enough job helping people understand what is land management? That you don't just buy a piece, and it's doing nothing; you actually

have land management practices. The ranchers used to do this, and now state parks and preserves.

JG: Yeah, I think it would be great to have some sort of program where you told people more. And I think it would be a great thing to have, like, a partnership with some of these ranchers and stuff, who are always taking on the chin from this and that. And they're preserving a lot of our wildlife. It wouldn't be there if it wasn't for them. You can say cows do this or that, but what if people were there, you know? And what they're feeding. And if it was soy—you know, people who are all against meat—well, if it's a soybean field, they're still clearing it. Everything has an impact. We all leave a footprint, no matter what. So we want to try to find a way to maintain the most we can and still support our population. But I think that's a natural partnership with our ranchers and the agriculture. The other thing that I think agricultural people know and you know and ELAPP, land that's been tilled or used or filled, 30 years later, you never know it was like that. It can go back to the wild if it's not paved over. So it's not necessarily, "Oh, that's never"—and, of course, a lot of places (inaudible) and stuff, you still go see the remnants of a home. Somebody lived there, you know? And it wasn't developed much more than it is now.

AF: Sure. So, starting to wrap up, what are some of the biggest accomplishments that ELAPP has made? You kind of covered that. How about the challenges that it has had to overcome? Can you think of any challenges?

JG: Well, I still think getting the full funding. It's never gotten the full amount of funding. I'd still like to see that happen. Unfortunately, you know, whenever—they want to keep, which is understandable, the tax to a minimum. And the times we can get the best deal on the land is a time when it's the toughest time to write the increased taxes because people don't have money.

AF: Or even to spend money that we do have.

JG: Yeah, or even to spend money. So it's easy to bash the politicians and that, but I understand that. But I wish we could come up with a way where we could get the max amount of funding because we're going to continue to grow, and there's fewer and fewer parcels we're going to be able to save. I mean, there's some now, even if it was full—we're not going to be able to save them because it takes a willing buyer. Maybe the next thing is to partner with some of these big developers on preserving corridors and things like that. I know one thing, people, too, they might donate land—and, of course, I believe also then lessened fee(??), you buy the development rights. But then you have the thing, well, we're spending tax dollars [so] there should be some public access. And I know some landowners don't want that because you have public access and, as one ranger told me, the public can be ugly. And it does. Unfortunately, I've seen it.

AF: We know it well, too.

JG: Yeah.

AF: Well, anything else that I haven't asked that you'd want to say about ELAPP or the people involved in it?

JG: No, I just think, in this interview, having seen and talked to these people, all of whom I knew, it really was a great crowd. And the fact that they all came together at that time, and they all have that great sense of responsibility in the public—not a big ego and I did this, or I did that. It was all a thing. I mean, we were just very fortunate that they stepped to the front and really took charge.

AF: Yeah. I agree. And maybe, do you think, is that an anomaly? Or do you expect that to continue to happen again in the future?

JG: You know, I don't know. I don't see—I don't want to sound—but I don't see the young generation getting involved in things like that. Maybe they will. You might know more. But on other areas and on boards and things like that, I haven't seen them. I think they're more transient. And the economy has been very rough on young people. They're not getting established in their careers as early as people were. And, of course, the other thing, a lot of the people who got involved in ELAPP were actually in careers that were related to the environment in one way or another. And now, the state has really cut back so much on DEP [Florida Department of Environmental Protection] and other environmental jobs. There's just not that value; we need to come back to the importance of the environmental protection. Not to the point where you're just creating bureaucrats to do nothing but create rules we don't need, but to really protect the environment because it saves us money, it protects the world we live in, it helps our quality of life. It's good for commerce. But that debate, unfortunately, has taken on—there's a lot of people that just hear that word, that phrase, "job-killing regulations," and that's all they think about.

AF: Yeah. I think you mentioned the point, you didn't use the phrase, but civic engagement of the current generation. It seems that, maybe, you mentioned the personal responsibility that the people in ELAPP felt: the commitment. Do you see that happening anywhere, even outside of Hillsborough County, as people, younger generations, get involved in local communities at a political level? Are you seeing that?

JG: Well, I think that there are some young people who do get involved in campaigns and stuff. One thing that does worry me—I don't know if this is off-track—but I don't know as many young people that are involved in the outdoors and enjoying nature, as they were once. Now, everything's technology. I mean, there's still a lot of them, but you look at, you know, the

numbers of the boy scouts are down and the sort of thing. I think we need more programs that really, kind of, get people involved in the outdoors in a fun way. And, you know, unfortunately, too much, when you hear about the environment, it's always like, here's your castor oil; the climate is changing; everything's gone to hell; the world is dying. You know, it's like, okay. Instead, like, go out in nature; enjoy it. We need to do our little step, whatever we can do. Those things, just develop this love for nature.

AF: Have some good news about the outdoors.

JG: Yeah, that is the one that I feel like we're always hitting people in the nose, and I try to put it in a different context.

AF: So maybe ELAPP can be a ray of hope for people.

JG: I think ELAPP is a ray of hope. The fact that it's still alive and well; it still has had its funding challenges for the last year; nobody was talking about killing it. I mean, I said last year; it was a couple of years ago. It's still, kind of got this protective sheen on it; it can be neglected, but you can't get rid of it. And, I mean, what you're doing, I think, is very helpful. Bringing people out, letting them engage with that. I think the more we can do—I know that does create some stress on the land itself, but the more people we can get out, let them see these things. [For example], appreciate that when we went on that height in Lake Dan, that night hike, and saw those lightning bugs. I bet there's kids in Hillsborough County who have never seen a lightning bug. I had not seen one in years. I mean, when I was a kid, I routinely saw them. But with, I guess, fertilizer or whatever else, pesticides, you don't see them. But to see those sorts of things. And I think a lot of adults, young adults, would love to see. I think they, when they have young kids like that, they would become champions. They just need a way to do it that they can do in a more easy way. You can't expect too much of people, especially when they have young families.

AF: Um-hm.

JG: Yeah. I don't mean to sound pessimistic. Thank god we have ELAPP. It's done a great job. Hopefully, we'll get more there.

AF: Awesome. Well, thank you very much, Joe. It's been a pleasure.

JG: Thank you.

*end of interview*