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Robert Kerstein: I know something about your term as mayor, but a limited amount. Can I ask—I know you ran in 1959 as the first time you ran for office.

Julian Lane: That's right.

RK: Why did you run for mayor?

JL: Well, I'll tell you, Doctor, I was going to run for city councilman, and I had announced. Then a group came to me and said, "Why don't you run for mayor?" They all got behind me, and I decided to pull out of the city council race and run for mayor.

RK: What group was that? Was that like the Chamber of Commerce?

JL: No, no, just some friends of mine. [James] "Red" McEwen at that time was State Attorney, and then my old friend Jackson Logan, who became my campaign manager. We had just general, run of the mill people that got behind us, and [we] went to work. Of course, it was a short campaign. This was in July. That's what they're going to have to do, to cut down on the cost.

RK: Yeah, I think you're right.

JL: Or something. I spent—I think we spent somewhere around eighteen thousand dollars, but I didn't announce until July, and the campaign was short. It was a rough campaign, I'll tell you. (laughs) You have to devote all your time to it you know.

RK: I know a couple of the banks were real important then. I guess it was First National; was that the name?

JL: Yeah.

RK: Were they active with your campaign?

JL: No. In those days, banks weren't active at all, although some of them might give you a little money. I think I got a contribution from Clewis Howell, who at that time was at Marine Bank.

RK: Clewis Howell was at Marine?

JL: Yeah. Marine Bank is now—

(Mrs. Frances Lane walks in)

RK: Hi.

Frances Lane: Hello.

JL: This is Mrs. Lane.

RK: Bob Kerstein, nice to meet you.

FL: Nice to see you. Good. (to JL) Jay wants his toys.

JL: I just talked to him.

FL: Well, he just called again. Did you—

Pause in recording

RK: —your role in politics?

JL: No. It was just a few individual bankers who made contributions.

RK: That was about it?

FL: (inaudible)

JL: (to FL) Yeah, I talked to him.

RK: According to the [*Tampa*] *Tribune*, the city had serious budget problems when you were elected.

JL: They did. It was the first thing that hit me in the face when I went in office. We had about eight hundred thousand dollars accounts payable over at Tampa General Hospital, which at that time was part—belonged to the city. We had three hospitals: the city, Tampa General; the county hospital; and St. Joseph. We had to do something to pay those bills

off. Of course, eight hundred thousand (laughs) now is not a lot of money, but it was then. In resolve, we went to a garbage tax. (inaudible), which consumed the tax. It was quite unpopular, but we just had to have some money.

RK: And that raised most of the money you needed, the garbage tax?

JL: Yes.

RK: Is it true that Tampa General was the source of a lot of Mayor [Nick] Nuccio's¹ patrons' jobs? That he got his people employed there?

JL: A lot of what?

RK: Mayor Nuccio, did he use Tampa General for a lot of his patrons' jobs?

JL: I don't know. I don't think he did. He may have. We didn't have any civil service—we had a civil service in the city, but nobody paid any attention to it.

RK: Oh, I see. It wasn't very strong at all.

JL: The administration—the previous administration just hired people as they wanted to. So, that's one of the changes that we made. We went back to a civil service, and strictly enforced the rules and regulations of civil service in the quality of people. I think it was a good thing. I know during segregation, the integration of the blacks, I had a group of black people who came to see me and wanted to see if they could get a preview of the civil service [test]. They won't hire them. I said, "Of course we'll hire blacks. They just have to pass the civil service test just like everybody else." So then they came back later on and wanted to know if they could have a preview, and I said, "No, you can't. If you qualify, we'll hire you." And that was the way we went.

RK: Who were the major black leaders then?

JL: Blythe Andrews, who was the publisher of the *Sentinel* [*The Florida Sentinel Bulletin*]. Dr. [A. Leon] Lowry, who's one of the few still living. Perry Harvey [Senior], who was the head of the union of the—

RK: Longshoremen.

JL: The stevedores. He was a longshoreman. And then we have another one, Jim Hammond. He works for—he was a young one. He works for Jim Walters, has some responsible executive position with Jim Walters.

RK: He's still in town?

¹ Nick Nuccio (1901-1989) was mayor of Tampa from 1956 to 1959 and 1963 to 1967. Lane was mayor from 1959 to 1963, defeating Nuccio in the first election and losing to him in the second. Nuccio also served on the Tampa City Council and the Hillsborough County Commission.

JL: Yeah, he's still here. He and Dr. Lowry, I believe, are the only ones living. As old as I got—I have to tell you that Dr. Lowry—I always referred to him as “Old Dr. Lowry.” (laughs) And he was the same age I was! (laughs)

RK: (laughs) Did they have the ten mill limit back then—they didn't, did they?

JL: No.

RK: So it was much higher, wasn't it? The millage.

JL: Yeah. There wasn't a limit on the millage. While I was in the legislature, we passed the ten mill limit.

RK: I see.

JL: Of course, the government would find ways to get around that, you know.

RK: There were other ways to raise money, I guess.

JL: Yes.

RK: It was also recorded in the *Tribune* that there were problems with Mayor Nuccio as far as purchasing items from political cronies. Was that a problem, in your eyes?

JL: Yes. Yes. They had no person directing it all. Anybody could go buy things. We found equipment that we had no earthly use for.

RK: Just bought it?

JL: Yeah, they bought it. I know we found some tractor tires in the Parks Department, which didn't even have a tractor that they fit. (laughs) Those kinds of things. I set up a centralized purchasing department and appointed a purchasing agent, and all purchases had to come through him. He was the one that made the purchases. Of course, we did have small—fifty dollars, something like that—but any major purchase had to be made through the purchasing department.

RK: So, you made major changes in terms of civil service and purchasing.

JL: Right.

RK: Did civil service, the way you did it, go back to the way it was with Hixon,² or was this the first time?

² Curtis Hixon (1891-1956) was mayor of Tampa from 1943 to 1956. He was also on the Tampa City Council and the Hillsborough County Commission.

JL: I don't—I think it was probably the first time it was really—even though it was there. Probably Nuccio abused it more than any previous mayor. I don't think it was a major force in the administration before we came along—

RK: The civil service.

JL: —and said, “We're going to go by civil service. People have got to be qualified for the job.”

RK: A large portion of Mayor Nuccio's appointees are Latins, or was it very mixed?

JL: No, it was heavily—yes, I'll put it this way. In the small jobs like common laborers, (phone rings) sanitation department—

(answers phone) Hello?

Pause in recording

JL: Through the years that we did, we had (inaudible) material. We changed those to somebody else. I hated to do it, but it got to the point where—it started off good, on our earliest, and by the time we got to the (inaudible), which is a (inaudible) seat, we couldn't find (inaudible). Over the weeks, we finally put them—I guess they knew how it could improve in at least fifteen to twenty years.

RK: Jeez.

JL: I told them that was the reason.

RK: So, he did—he hired a lot of political supporters, some political supporters.

JL: Oh, yeah. They went with him—like I say, it was the common laborer class where it really didn't make a lot of difference. But they still—for example, in most of the civil service jobs you had to have at least a high school education, or the equivalent thereof, or work experience. Of course, you could put them on there; you could put them on—I guess it was a six month trial, or something. They didn't have to pass anything, but they would always forget that and just keep on going. But we found that in the Parks Department, and then in Sanitation, Sanitary Department. That was about the two worst of the replacements. We only had, in those days, I think even with Tampa General we only had a little over three thousand employees.

RK: Three thousand total.

JL: Yeah. A thousand of them were at Tampa General.

RK: A thousand at Tampa General? Boy.

JL: They've always had problems at Tampa General. And the main reason, of course, is you've got to take welfare patients. At that time, we had a quota system where the county paid for welfare patients. I think at Tampa General we had twenty-five [patients], at St. Joseph's it was twenty-one, and at the county hospital somewhere around twenty. Well, the county hospital wasn't much. St. Joseph was a good hospital then, and it is today. But the Sisters of Mary, when they got to their quota of twenty-one, they cut it off.

RK: That was it.

JL: They wouldn't take anybody. And of course we had to go over it; we couldn't just turn people away, even though we'd get paid for twenty-five. That's one of the reasons we always had a money problem over there.

RK: I see.

JL: I guess it always will. Sam Gibbons was [state] senator,³ and I said, "Sam, how about putting a bill through the legislature which would broaden the tax base?" Tampa General was then supported by the taxpayers who lived in the city. We didn't get anything from the county. And that's all we want is to get some money out of the county taxpayers, to help us foot this bill. Well, Sam went up there and came back with what they called (inaudible), Florida Public Assistance. They changed it entirely. It took it away from the city, as far as that goes, but we had a board and rented it. We picked money up, of course, from the city and the county, but it wasn't very satisfactory. And then they changed it later on to the Hospital Authority, which is still there; it's the same group. They should never have built the thing on Davis Islands in the first place.

RK: Bad location?

JL: Yeah. You've been over there—

RK: Yes.

JL: —you see how it has—it's a jungle. It's a great hospital, they do good things there, but the way they have added to it and added to it, you almost get lost.

RK: (laughs) When was it built?

JL: Probably along, I think, in twenty-seven [1927] or eight [1928].

RK: Oh, way back then. Ah.

JL: Well, it used to be over by the fairground. They called it the Old Gordon Keller Hospital.

³ Gibbons served in both houses of the Florida Legislature, and was a state senator from 1959 to 1962; he then served as a member of U.S. House of Representatives for thirty-four years from 1963 to 1997.

RK: Oh, it was in the county.

JL: No, it was in the city. But the old—

RK: Oh, I'm sorry.

JL: It was downtown, where the University of Tampa is. They had the hospital right there on North Boulevard, as I remember when I was a boy, and then somewhere along in the late twenties [1920s], they moved it over to Davis Islands, built it there on the end. And it's always—they have parking problems and money problems. Dr. Ed Flynn, who was a dentist and a former Golden Glove champion—lightweight amateur, won the world championship in Moscow, I guess—he was a great supporter of it. He wanted to be an M.D. but never did make it; he was a D.D. But he's the one who was responsible for us pumping in on the—I guess we would say the north end of the island—out of the bay and the river. We pumped up a parking area there. Now, of course, the hospital has moved over to it.

RK: When was the parking area done?

JL: I imagine in the late sixties [1960s]. I was on the board sometime along in there. I guess the seventies [1970s], early seventies [1970s]—before seventy [1970].

RK: I see.

JL: It gave us parking, but now the hospital has spread over that. What we wanted to do years ago was to build a parking garage and charge people, but nobody was in favor of it but me. (laughs)

RK: Were there any annexations while you were mayor?

JL: What?

RK: Were there any annexations while you were mayor?

JL: Oh, yeah.

RK: Did the city expand while you were there?

JL: Yeah, we annexed Port Tampa.

RK: Port Tampa, that's what I thought. In fifty-nine [1959], about?

JL: Yeah, we did that by—the legislature did it.

RK: Oh, there was no vote. It was just mandated.

JL: (laughs) They gave us the authority, so we took it over. Of course, we didn't have much opposition.

RK: Who initiated it? Whose idea was that? Was that yours?

JL: Yeah.

RK: Why did you want it?

JL: Well, we just—it was only a little separate city down there. There was no land down there.

RK: It was its own city.

JL: And we thought it was to the advantage of the people of Port Tampa and to the city to annex it. They had very—well, I might say no fire protection whatsoever, no police at all.

RK: I see. So, it wasn't part of the county; it was its own city.

JL: Well, actually, it was in the county, but it was an incorporated city.

RK: Oh, it was? It had its own mayor, and so on?

JL: It had its own mayor. [Albert] Rollins was the mayor.

RK: The man who was on the county commission later on, or the city council?

JL: He was on the city council.

RK: City council, yeah.

JL: And of course, he automatically—in the bill, he came on to the city council, the Tampa City Council.

RK: Oh, that was part of the bill.

JL: That was part of it, yeah.

RK: Did he oppose the annexation?

JL: Oh, yeah. Yeah, he did, but you know, not much. (laughs) As long as he was taken care of, he was fine with it.

RK: Did it help the city, as far as your tax base, with Port Tampa? A little?

JL: Somewhat, but of course we had the port down there. I remember—oh, at that (inaudible) on U.S.—I don't know. We got them—it was an industry; we got them to come down, and basically it was because of the port facility that they built down here.

RK: I see.

JL: That's Gibsonton, something like that. I know the train—they hauled the stuff out of there every night on the train.

RK: What did they make?

JL: They made wallboard.

RK: Wallboard? They still manufacture down here?

JL: Yeah, they've got a big plant down here. It was a national firm. I know I had some of the city leaders come to me, and this all happened about the time we took them in. They wanted me to take a little area down there where they were going to build, and not keep it in the city. I said, "An annexation? We can't do that." "Oh, it'll keep them from coming!" I think the man who was the president of the company, a man whose name is Baker, I'm not sure.

RK: Who came to you and said that?

JL: Well, we had like Howard Frankland and George Holtsinger.

RK: Frankland was with the bank, right?

JL: Well, I don't think he had gotten to the bank yet. He had Pioneer Tire Company, a big outfit. He might have been on the board at the old First National. And it was George Holtsinger and the Holtsinger Motor Company.

RK: They were in the city?

JL: Yeah. And let me see, who else? It was three or four of them. Bill MacInnes, who ran Tampa Electric.

RK: He was one of them, too? MacInnes?

JL: Yes. So, I called the president of the company up in New York or somewhere, and I told them the situation. I said, "The taxes are going to run you about thirty thousand dollars a year." He said, "That doesn't make a difference. We're coming to Tampa because of the economic advantage of us coming into Florida." And that was it.

RK: So, they didn't care about the taxes?

JL: No. They said, “We expect to pay our way.”

RK: Oh, so the businesspeople were saying that they kept—that if some of Port Tampa just remained in the county, there’ll be lower taxes for the company and they would like that.

JL: Yeah. They would only be paying county taxes. They wanted us to keep—when we annexed it—to have that little area of land around where these people were going to build, cut it out.

RK: Part of the county.

JL: Cut it out of there for the plant. I said, “We can’t do that.”

RK: How’d they come up with that idea? Had they spoken with anybody?

JL: Well, they were the so-called movers and shakers of that day in the city.

RK: Yeah. But they were wrong.

JL: Absolutely. None of them supported me, but I ran.

RK: Was that the first time or the second?

JL: The first time. But they all—after I got in, they were very helpful in a lot of things.

RK: And what were the benefits this man said, this gypsum company or whatever, of coming to Florida? Why? What were the benefits?

JL: Well, they could see that Florida was growing. They wanted to get in the market.

RK: Market demand.

JL: Now, it’s an international firm. I can’t remember—it might have been U.S. Gypsum. I know they make wallboard; it’s a big outfit.

RK: Can I ask, as far as the City of Tampa—oh, is that the only annexation, Port Tampa, while you were mayor?

JL: Yes.

RK: When you were mayor, what were the major employers in Tampa?

JL: Hmm. Well, Tampa Electric, General Tel [Telephone].

RK: Tampa Electric, General Tel.

JL: General Tel was at that time Peninsular. I think during that period of time, it became GTE.

RK: Were there any manufacturing plants that were major employers?

JL: Oh, we had Del Monte.

RK: Del Monte.

JL: The cigar factories.

RK: There were still some cigar factories?

JL: I think we still have them, one or two, but there's nothing like—Hav-a-Tampa was, and the Corral Wodiska. Manny Garcia had the Berriman Cigars.

RK: Even when you were mayor, they were still operating?

JL: Oh, yeah. All of the politicians would go to the cigar factories, you know, and shake hands. That was part of your campaign.

RK: What about Florida Steel? Were they a major employer?

JL: Who?

RK: Florida Steel? Was that the name?

JL: Yeah, Florida Steel. Now, that was another; they supported me. I've known them for years. They didn't have as many employees as those two. Of course, the city was a big employer. (laughs)

RK: How would you describe the community, as far as the economic base? Was it mainly manufacturing? Is that how you'd see Tampa, when you were mayor?

JL: Well, we had manufacturing, but Tampa was starting then—it became more service-oriented. Big companies coming in here—at that time, I think, 67 percent of the population of Florida was within a hundred miles of Tampa. They came in because of the people within the hundred miles of the city. They knew that we had a market here. Of course, nobody really thought the population of Florida was going to double in twenty years, like it did.

RK: (laughs) What were the major companies that moved here when you were mayor, the major service—was it small little companies?

JL: Yeah. Yes. Let me see.

RK: Did the beer companies come in when you were mayor? Schlitz?

JL: Yeah, Schlitz. Budweiser.

RK: That's while you were mayor?

JL: Yeah.

RK: They moved to the county, though, didn't they?

JL: Yes, at that time—let me see. I believe they were in the county at that time.

RK: Did you get involved in trying to get them to move down here?

JL: Yes. Of course, the Committee of 100 and the Chamber were the most active part of getting them to come down.

RK: Who were the major people active then in the Committee of 100?

JL: Oh, Scott Christopher, who was chairman or president of the Chamber—executive vice president. He did a tremendous job. I think he—in fact, I'm having him speak at the Kiwanis Club on the twenty-seventh. He just got back from Russia, and he tells about his trip to Russia. I had him last year, after he got back from China. Long talk, very—

RK: Yeah, he spoke to my class one time.

JL: Scott is the man who made the Chamber of Commerce, I think, become the best chamber of commerce in the state of Florida. Good worker, very compassionate, and a good personality.

RK: Yeah, he's very nice. I spoke with him.

JL: He came to us from Miami, and before he came, the Chamber was just run of the mill. He developed it into a first-class chamber of Commerce.

RK: Were you hoping at all that the beer plant might come to the city, so you had the tax base?

JL: Yeah, we wanted that.

RK: Did you try to do anything?

JL: One of the problems I had with Schlitz [being] where the old city hall is—the courthouse used to be directly a block north of city hall. I hated to see them tear down the old courthouse; it was a great historic building. They should have left it there. But it was

torn down, and on the southeast corner, Schlitz put a big beer sign with a bottle rising over it. (laughs) I could look out the third floor window of my office, and that's all you could see. We had quite a time about that thing. I made a trip to Milwaukee, some kind of business trip, and we were—

RK: Did you go with the Chamber, with them?

JL: Yes. We were the guests of the Schlitz family. They're nice people, seemed to be much of a higher type than old Anheuser-Busch. I knew him, too. But I told them, I said, "The only thing (laughs) I've got is that sign. We've got an awful lot of criticism about it. Take it down."

RK: And did you try to get them to locate the plant around somewhere in the city?

JL: No, they always—that was a new industrial park out there.

RK: Oh, so it was clear it was going to be there.

JL: That's where it was going. The Committee of 100 was the one that started that.

RK: I see. Did the city benefit from that at all, the City of Tampa?

JL: Oh, of course we did: the additional people coming in and the publicity we got. I'm sure even before it was annexed into the city there were economic benefits for us. Of course, the university—there was a battle on whether we were going to put the University of South Florida here, or it would go to St. Pete. Man, we were criticized as being the "Beer Town." (laughs)

RK: You were mayor when we got USF, weren't you?

JL: No, I was—I came in right after.

RK: Right afterwards. I see.

JL: I had a little bit to do with this other committee that went out there. Of course, Sam Gibbons was in the legislature at that time, and he had a lot to do with it. And it's become—you know, if you had as many colleges and schools as the University of Florida, it would probably be twice as big as the University of Florida. These things cost money. That's the problem. And when I was in the legislature, some of the folks out there would tell me, "The University of Florida gets all the money." "No, they don't get all the money. They've got more schools and colleges than you have." We just can't afford to duplicate all of them, although we are. I think there's an engineering school out there now, and an architecture school.

RK: They were talking about it. I don't know if they do or not.

JL: There was a lot of trouble with that. And I said, I was in the legislature in the early seventies [1970s], and we had passed a bill to establish an architecture school at the University of South Florida.

(phone rings) Excuse me. (answers phone) Hello?

Pause in recording

JL: —now that we have a bank down there.

RK: (inaudible)

JL: We have an emergency bank. I used to be chairman a long time ago of Pan-American Bank. We sold out to NCNB⁴.

RK: Oh, of course.

JL: I think there were three of us. It was Merchants Bank. The old bank's coming along. We have (inaudible)—if the credit's no good, we can't lend them the money, because it's not ours. (laughs)

RK: Have you seen that new sculpture at NCNB? That yellow thing?

JL: Yeah. I've quit them now. I don't have any accounts with them anymore. I should, I've got a lot of stock in it. (both laughs) But you know, the trouble is what we need is local, independent banks where you can talk to them. NCNB is so big. I think they got rid of all of our people.

RK: They did.

JL: And I just didn't know anybody down there.

RK: I have a small checking account there, but I'm not going to keep it. I don't like the work that it's done.

JL: Well, I don't, either. I just didn't know anybody, none of the people at the branches I was working at. I started at the one in Hyde Park. (inaudible) I kept an account with them, because I've had one for so long. That goes back to World War II, when it was the old Exchange Bank.

RK: Oh, Exchange became Pan American?

JL: No, Exchange became—Exchange sold to NCNB.

RK: Oh, I see.

⁴ NCNB acquired Bank of America in 1998.

JL: Then we sold—I guess it was eighty-four [1984] or five [1985] we sold out to them. They kept one or two of my executives. I wasn't (inaudible); I didn't work for the bank, but I did do solicitations, sold to stockholders. The executives that we had, they got rid of all of them.

All right, let's get back—

RK: During your term, what I'm really interested in is the urban renewal, because that was so important, of course.

JL: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

RK: And I know you—let me tell you a little bit that I know. I know that in May of fifty-nine [1959], the Maryland Avenue plaza by Nuccio Boulevard, I suppose, was designated as the first urban renewal area. I know in November fifty-nine [1959]—so, right after you became mayor, I guess—the Supreme Court of Florida upheld an act of the fifty-seven [1957] legislature giving authority to Tampa to do urban renewal.

JL: Yeah. Yeah.

RK: And then I know that the downtown was designated as an urban renewal area, and then Ybor City later on during your term, as well. And the other thing I know is that a Mr. Ragsdale was chairman—

JL: That's right, that's right.

RK: —of the group, and they had a committee, an urban renewal committee, of Harold Wolf, Cody Fowler, Joe Dalton, Henry Scaglione, and Mr. Stallings?

JL: Yeah.

RK: So, I know a little bit about it, but I'm really interested in your ideas in terms of who played a role in urban renewal, how you chose the sites, and so on.

JL: I guess Sam Gibbons, again, was responsible for it. He was senator then. We had the first urban renewal project in Florida.

RK: The Maryland Avenue one was the first?

JL: Yeah. We thought that was going to be the thing, you know. (laughs) Get rid of the slums.

RK: Was that the (inaudible) that area? Was that, or no?

JL: That's part of it. The idea, of course, was to (inaudible) tear them down and put it back—put the property back on the tax roll. I don't think very little, if any, ever got back on the tax roll.

RK: In Maryland? In all those three?

JL: All you got in the Maryland Avenue project—we got that little red house, and on the west side of Nebraska [Avenue], mostly Housing Authority projects.

RK: Oh, that was part of Maryland Plaza, too? The west side of Nebraska?

JL: Yeah, I believe it was.

RK: I see.

JL: Very little of it, I think, ever got back on the project. My viewpoint of urban renewal was that we all thought it was a great thing when we started. All in the world it did was tear down the ghetto areas, and they would move farther north. For example, the area between Florida and Nebraska Avenue going north from about—oh, what's that street? I guess its Henderson, Palm Avenue. That used to be a residential district. It's all deteriorated now and it's kind of slummy, and all the way—I would say all the way nearly to Buffalo Avenue. I was born and raised on Central, just north of Buffalo, one block. Seminole Heights then was a residential area—and Seminole Heights still is, but not like it was in those days. Everything from Buffalo south between Florida and Nebraska—well, I guess now I'd say the east barrier would be the interstate—is a ghetto.

RK: Because people have been displaced to urban renewal?

JL: (inaudible)

RK: I see.

JL: Now, when they went into the urban renewal on—well, I guess it was north of Cass Street, on both sides of the river. We thought, of course—again, we still thought urban renewal would stay, but it's phased out. I don't think—I don't even know whether the federal government has urban renewal anymore.

RK: No, they don't. Seventy-four [1974] was the last year.

JL: I think it's a failure. I couldn't see—well, we got the area north of Cass. We've got the performing arts [center]. That apartment was built, I forget the name of the apartment building on Fortune Street, right near the old Barnett Bank, which is there now, and Holiday Inn. That's about all you can point to.

RK: So, none of that Curtis Hixon, none of that was urban renewal, huh? Or the library?

JL: No, we had to buy that.

RK: You bought that from the railroad, huh?

JL: Yes, we bought everything from Lafayette Street there on the west side of the river down to Cass Street. Now, let me see. I don't recall whether some of that might have been urban renewal, but I do know that we had to buy the old Jackson Grand and the Security Feed Company building. Jackson Grand was on the north side of the railroad track, and Security, the feed company, was on the south side. We bought that.

RK: The city bought that.

JL: Well, I got some help out of the county on that.

RK: Oh, the county, too?

JL: Yeah. We had, at that time, Chester Ferguson—you've heard about Chester?

RK: Yeah.

JL: Chester married into the Lykes family, and he had a great ability. He knew all the people, very smart. I got him involved to help me. We had a meeting down at the old Saint Bank in the boardroom one day. I had the county commissioners, particularly Ellsworth Simmons. We wanted some financial help from them to buy that property. So, we came out of there—Chester, he's just one of those fellows that, "By God, you're going to do it, or else!" We came out of there with a little over three hundred thousand dollars from the county to help us purchase that property.

RK: Did the county gain anything?

JL: No, (laughs) other than of course they would as we built the buildings on there. They get their share of the taxes. But that cleaned up that waterfront. Now, Nuccio had bought—the city bought everything south of Polk Street, with the exception of the Security Feed Company building. That was the old Atlantic Coast Line freight houses and freight yards, I guess, warehouses. It was a mess. That was one of my campaign issues. We thought he spent too much money (laughs) buying it. Atlantic Coast Line was a powerful organization. They had a fellow named—

RK: Rice, or somebody?

JL: No, Ryan came along—Rice came along after that after the head of (inaudible). Mr. Rice, you could talk with him, but the one before that, he was a rough one. He wouldn't even talk to him.

RK: Why not?

JL: He just wasn't interested in selling it. He said he wanted to keep it. Mr. Rice, I used to hunt with him. They owned a great piece of land down around Lake Okeechobee, the coastline, called it Leco Land down there. We'd be invited down there for quail hunting.

RK: So, Mr. Rice was much more cooperative.

JL: Oh, yeah. He was much more cooperative. Of course, they were well-paid for the land. This other fellow, I can't think of his—

RK: I have his name down here. I'm just looking.

JL: He just wouldn't even talk to them about it.

RK: Maybe I didn't bring that one.

JL: I remember the day we broke ground on Curtis Hixon Hall.⁵ We had a big meeting of the Chamber down in the old Floridan Hotel, and had lunch there. After lunch, we went down to the grounds, the site down there, and the people had walked from the Floridan Hotel down Florida Avenue to—I guess we came down Polk. No, the street just south of Polk [Zack Street]; I always get them mixed up; either Twiggs or Zack. And I remember I was already at the site, and here they come, about a thousand members of the Chamber, walking right down the middle of the street. It was a great day. We thought at that time that that was going to revitalize downtown Tampa overnight.

RK: Yeah, Curtis Hixon?

JL: Yeah, but it didn't. But we went all over the country. We thought we had the best architect, the best acoustical engineers. And planning—we did some great planning, I thought, to build it. The doggone building cost us four and a half million dollars. What did they spend, sixty-five million on this other thing?

RK: Yes.

JL: I remember the Public Works director came to me one day and said, "You know, it's quite a fall from Ashley Street down to the river. We can put parking in there." So, I said, "Let's look at it." And sure enough, it was, and in essence I said, "We can do it." So, that is part of the off-street parking of the city, underneath Curtis Hixon Hall.

RK: I see.

JL: I don't know how many cars can go in there, but we sold the bonds for off-street parking. That's part of the Parking Department, so it wasn't part of the bond issue.

RK: Oh, it was separate.

⁵ This was a special events center located at 600 Ashley Drive, built in 1964 and torn down in 1993. This site is where the Curtis Hixon Park is now located.

JL: Yeah. They had planned—they stuck pretty close to those plans for the development of all the property, until the museum [Tampa Museum of Art] came in. I don't object to the museum, I think it's an addition. But then, somehow or other, I think it was Bill Poe⁶ that sold that south end to the same national bank that put that monstrosity up there.

RK: NCNB?

JL: Yeah.

RK: Oh. That was Martinez.⁷

JL: That's right, it was Bob Martinez.

RK: Yeah. That's a shame, I think.

JL: Oh, it's the ugliest building in town.

RK: I think it's terrible. I think it's worse now, with that yellow sculpture.

JL: Well, what that was supposed—at that end, it was parking, and of course a parking garage was built. And then, in between that and Curtis Hixon, the opera hall was supposed to go in there, where we had the garden. Then down at the north end was parking, which came in there, too. But where they really violated it was when they sold that piece of land to the old Exchange Bank, or NCNB, whoever bought it. Then we went on across and bought a little bit of the land. There was a (inaudible) motor company across the street. That was part of ours, but the rest of it was urban renewal.

RK: North?

JL: Yeah.

RK: Can I ask about urban renewal? Oh, I'm sorry. You mentioned Mr. Ferguson, how powerful and influential he was, and that's the impression I have from reading things. When he would go to the County Commission with you and ask for the money to purchase the land, what was he able to use to persuade them?

JL: (laughs) It's just his talk. He persuaded them. Of course, in those days the chairman of the County Commission was Ellsworth Simmons, and you could go to Ellsworth and whatever his decision was, that was it.

RK: There was no county administrator then?

⁶ William Poe was mayor of Tampa from 1974 to 1979, and the founder of Poe & Associates Insurance Co.

⁷ Robert Martinez was mayor of Tampa from 1979 to 1986, when he resigned to run for governor. He was Florida's governor from 1987 to 1991.

JL: No, we didn't have a county administrator. We only had five commissioners. They just thought—all of us thought that the county would benefit just like the city, and that they should participate in the cost of the thing. So, Chester sold them on it. We met for, I guess, an hour, and came out of it with a little over three thousand dollars, (laughs) 'cause it was for the county.

RK: As far as the urban renewal—I know you had this urban renewal agency.

JL: Yeah.

RK: What was the connection between the agency and the mayor? Were you close with them?

JL: Yeah, I appointed, I think, some of the members on there. I appointed them, and they were a good group of civic-minded people.

RK: Who was Mr. [A.R.] Ragsdale? What was he involved in?

JL: Let me see. Old Rags—

RK: Is he still around here?

JL: No, he's dead. It seems to me that he had a security outfit, I think.

RK: Securities?

JL: No, watchdogs, police, watching them—

RK: Oh, I see.

JL: I think.

RK: And Harold Wolf was Wolf Brothers, obviously.

JL: He was Wolf Brothers.

RK: And Cody Fowler was an attorney.

JL: Cody was an attorney, who was previously president of the American Bar Association. He was a wheeler and dealer. I had Cody on my Biracial Committee.

RK: I remember reading about that.

JL: I had forgotten about that. Cody was on that.

RK: And Joe Dalton? Did you appoint him?

JL: Yeah.

RK: Who was he?

JL: Joe was president of what used to be the First Federal Savings and Loan.

RK: First Federal—was that Mr. Church? I can't keep them straight.

JL: Hmm?

RK: Was that Mr. [Fred] Church's bank, First Federal?

JL: Yeah.

RK: Is Mr. Dalton still here?

JL: No, Joe—I'll tell you. Joe was very interested in athletics, and he was a football official. I think he played a little football at [the University of] Florida in years before. I know he worked football games when I was in junior high school, and he just kept on. [When] I got out of Florida, I worked two or three years as a football official with him before he retired. He was a nice person.

RK: What about Mr. Scaglione? Henry Scaglione? Did you appoint him?

JL: No, that was one of Nick's.

RK: Mr. Stallings?

JL: Yeah, I think I appointed him.

RK: And what was he?

JL: Let me see how that worked. Real estate, and mainly a title company, might have been in a title company.

RK: Okay. Now, Arnold Hicks was director of the urban renewal agency.

JL: Who?

RK: Arnold—oh, Arnold Hicks. H-i—

JL: That's right.

RK: Did you appoint him?

JL: I had forgotten. No, I'd forgotten about him.

RK: Who appointed him?

JL: The committee, the Urban Renewal Commission.

RK: They appointed him.

JL: But of course they had to have the approval of the mayor. The type of charter that we have here, it's a strong mayor type.

RK: Yeah. So, you were pretty involved with urban renewal.

JL: Yes.

RK: Whose idea was it to designate these different areas? Who chose them?

JL: I think that they would go to the federal government in Washington—

Mp3 file 1 ends; mp3 file 2 begins

JL: In those days—

RK: Yes.

JL: (inaudible) slum areas, improve downtown.

RK: They are still. So, did it go along with the general goal of yours of trying to pack more businesses downtown and so on?

JL: Yeah.

RK: Was it compatible with that?

JL: Yes. I was out of office, but I know one of the plans, of course, was Ybor City.

RK: Yeah. Now, were you in office when Ybor City was designated?

JL: No, I think it was—we instigated it, got it moving, and again, that was one of the reasons why [we chose] Ybor City.

RK: Was Ybor City in bad shape at that point?

JL: I think it's in worse shape today. (laughs) We went out there, our administration, and built the mall on Seventh Avenue.

RK: Okay, yeah.

JL: It was a big improvement, but (inaudible). You can ride down Seventh Avenue and go through the stores.

RK: Right.

JL: I remember the streetlights we have. We had to—

RK: They're nice.

JL: We had to get those built somewhere. It was kind of like the old lights we used to have in the city, but they quit making them. The Public Works Department found somebody that would make those lights. I like them. They have three or four bulbs on them.

RK: They're pretty.

JL: But I don't know; it didn't revive Ybor.

RK: Did like some of the major businesspeople play a role in saying Ybor should be an urban renewal area? Did they talk to you, and so on?

JL: Well, that goes back so long I don't recall. But there was. Some of the civic leaders, some of the people out there were also very interested. The one that ran the Las Novedades restaurant [Manuel Garcia Jr.] was involved big, I believe. They were all interested in civic activities, and pushed it very hard. And, of course, their feeling was that it would renew it. The only thing, I guess, would renew any of it is the ability of people to see if they can move in there with businesses and make a profit.

RK: Are you at this committee on the Central Business District, headed by Mr. MacInnes—MacNinnis?—

JL: MacInnes, MacInnes.

RK: —for the Chamber of Commerce? Did you work closely with them? I guess they—

JL: I worked closely with the Chamber of Commerce, yes. Mr. Mac was the mover and shaker, along with Fred Learey, who ran the telephone company, and (inaudible). We used Chester every chance we got. But the utility company, they've always been active, you know, in civic affairs.

RK: Were you involved with this committee on the Central Business District? Did they play a major role? Headed by MacInnes?

JL: Yeah, yeah. We made a few trips, you know, to Cleveland and New York with the Chamber, looking for additional companies to resettle down here. And you know, you'd get a few. They would all come because of economic reasons; they wouldn't come because they liked us.

RK: (laughs) I just meant—maybe this is the man you're thinking of. Tom Lane? Tom Love? Who was that?

JL: Who was he with?

RK: He bought thirteen acres from the Atlantic Coast Line, President Tom Love or somebody, twenty-five million dollars. My handwriting's so bad, I don't know. They also spoke about plans for a new hotel. They spoke with Mr. Frankland, the president of the First National Bank, and Carl Brorein, head of the Committee of 100.

JL: Carl Brorein was a Peninsular Telephone man.

RK: Peninsular Telephone? And they spoke with John Germany, and being active with you as far as trying to get a new hotel?

JL: John Germany served one or two terms in the legislature, the House, and was a young lawyer at that time, and was very active. I can't think of Tom—I want to say Tom—

RK: Could be my writing. (laughs)

JL: Tom was an Atlantic Coast Line man, wasn't he?

RK: Yeah.

JL: That's Tom Rice, I think.

RK: Oh, that's Tom Rice? Okay. My handwriting's terrible. Were you trying to get a hotel and not able to, near the Curtis Hixon?

JL: They all thought about another thing, but (inaudible).

RK: Why couldn't you get one?

JL: Nobody wanted to spend the money. Where we wanted the thing was on the east side of—

RK: Ashley?

JL: Ashley, between that and Tampa. They couldn't get anyone interested in it.

RK: From out of town, or in town?

JL: In town or out of town.

RK: To finance it?

JL: Yeah. I guess the first hotel was the one down—the one they built down in the urban renewal area was a Holiday Inn, although they did come along and start the hotel on the river there, north of—south of Kennedy.

RK: Yeah, the Hilton.

JL: And then the hotel over on—I guess they call it the Days Inn now, over on Cass Street.

RK: Oh, that was built during your time?

JL: Started, yes.

RK: How—I'm trying to figure out. With urban renewal, it didn't seem to have much of an impact on downtown.

JL: No. It did clean it up and clean it out. (laughs)

RK: Do you know why it didn't have an impact on downtown Tampa? 'Cause I know in some cities it did, that's why I'm curious.

JL: No, I guess we were a little ahead of our time, insofar as the progress being made in revitalizing downtown. We thought that's the way it would go; at least, the experts did. Instead of going north, it went south, but of course that was a long time afterwards.

RK: What about some people like Mr. Ferguson and Mr. Mac and so on? Were they not interested, especially in financing things downtown?

JL: No. No, they weren't. They wanted outside capital to come in, or some local people to do it.

RK: But not themselves?

JL: Not themselves. I don't recall ever them saying that they wanted to be involved financially.

RK: You know why not? They just doing other things?

JL: They may not have had the money. (laughs) Ten thousand dollars is a lot of money. My salary as mayor was fifteen thousand a year, and that was the general run of things. I

remember I had to hire a new director for Tampa General and had to pay him twenty-five thousand dollars to get him, and I was criticized. But we had to do it. (laughs)

RK: Some people say that they think the reason you lost to Mayor Nuccio was because you actively supported integration. Do you think that?

JL: Seminole Heights itself explains, and East Tampa out to around Gary. I took them in my first election, a big majority. But in the second one, I lost those areas.

RK: Was that maybe working class whites who lived there in those areas? Who mainly—

JL: That part of town is rednecks. (laughs) Oh, I was highly criticized for integration, but we had to do it. Hell, I went to court, federal court. We lost. It was the only right thing to do, was to integrate.

RK: But you supported it all along, didn't you?

JL: I had to, yeah. Of course I did; it's the only Christian thing to do. And I got a lot of criticism from those areas. I only lost, I think, by sixteen hundred votes.

RK: Real close?

JL: Yeah.

RK: Was the Chamber involved in integration, as well?

JL: Yeah, they were—yes. They were a little behind the scenes. They suggested—I think they were the ones who suggested forming a Biracial Committee, which we did. We had a very smooth transition, as far as we had no riots. I guess we were looked up to as an example in the rest of Florida and in the South for how we integrated. What we did, we had great cooperation from the news media. At that time, we only had the *Tribune*, and I think we had two or three radio stations and two TV stations. Jim Council was the publisher of the *Tampa Tribune*.

RK: Council?

JL: Yeah. Jim was very active in all this stuff.

RK: He's not around anymore?

JL: No. He drowned; he lived on Davis Islands, and he fell off the seawall and drowned.⁸ Some people think he committed suicide. But he was a fine man, a great help to me. I went to him, and I said, "Jim, what I'd like to do is see if y'all can withhold any publicity on any integration until after we do it." See, what we would do, we would integrate parks, or we'd integrate schools. I worked closely with Crockett Farnell, who was school

⁸ This happened on May 14, 1977. His death was officially ruled an accidental drowning.

superintendent. We would get no publicity, just like the sit-ins (inaudible). The people would not know it until after we got done. Mainly, they wanted to know—the blacks wanted to know that they could go.

I remember Perry Harvey on the theater, picture shows. It took me months to get anybody over at the old Florida State Theaters—they ran nearly all the theaters in the state. I finally got Lamarck Serra, (??) who was coach at Plant High School for years, and one of Rex Farrior's law firm members, got him down to Jacksonville to have a meeting with us. I told him, "Lamarck, all they want to do is to go." Old Perry Harvey, in the meeting we had—my Biracial Committee—he said, "How much does it cost to go?" and I think at that time it was a dollar and a half to attend the theater. And old Perry says, "You don't need to worry about our people. They can't afford it. All they want to know is they can go."

It's just like the dining rooms, the hotels and things. They just quietly moved in. If they wanted to go back, they could. The TV stations, all the news media, they withheld. Old Jim joined with me, and he got the others, the ones that he didn't control, to do the same thing. We would integrate today, and they'd find out about it tomorrow. (inaudible) It was the only way to go, the only right thing to do.

RK: In spite of that, I got the impression in the vote that some—were many blacks voting in those days? I guess not so much.

JL: Not a great deal, but most of them supported me.

RK: They did; yeah, they did.

JL: But where I lost was in Sulphur Springs, Seminole Heights, Gary.

RK: What's Gary? I'm sorry.

JL: Gary is out there on the other side of Ybor City; we call it East Tampa.⁹

RK: Oh, I see.

JL: You know where Spanish Park is?

RK: Spanish Park?

JL: On Broadway; they call it Seventh Avenue.

RK: I've never been.

JL: Gary is that little section from—I'd say where the railroad track crosses Seventh Avenue and going on east and just north of Seventh Avenue.

⁹ Gary was originally a city in its own right, but was annexed by the City of Tampa in 1923.

RK: So that's mostly black now, I guess.

JL: Yes, I think it is now.

RK: But then it was white.

JL: Then it was white. I had an old fellow named Harvey Rile (??) that lived out there, a cow dealer. I'd bought many thousands of dollars worth of cows from him, great supporter of mine. (laughs) But he fell out with me because of integration. Harvey must be ninety years old now; he's still living.

RK: Did you—I saw one quote that you were thinking of expanding the sanitary sewers and the water lines. Did you do that a bunch?

JL: Yeah.

RK: To what areas?

JL: You see, everything this side of Howard Avenue was not in the city—let me see. They came in before I was elected, but they didn't have sewer. I think they had water. But areas like that. We had quite an expansion of sanitary sewers.

RK: Palma Ceia already had it, right?

JL: No.

RK: Oh, no?

JL: No. No. (laughs) We had a unique way, at that time, of financing it. We sold bonds based on the revenue from the sewage—you know, the connections. I think we were one of the first cities in the country that went that way. And we could build them, and it paid for them.

RK: And so, what—I don't want to sound stupid, but I guess I do. What did they use, then? What did they use?

JL: Septic tanks.

RK: They did have septic tanks?

JL: I built this house here in fifty-two [1952]; we moved in in fifty-two [1952]. We had septic tanks.

RK: And wells?

JL: No, we had water. The city moved ahead with the water supply. We had water in Palma Ceia, city water.

RK: So, your main extension was to the area that was annexed, Palma Ceia. I see.

JL: We ran sewers out here, we ran them on out—we extended them out to all parts of the city where they didn't have them. We spent a lot of money in those days; it had to be a million dollars.

RK: And those new bonds that you had. Okay, well, I don't want to take your whole morning. Oh, can I ask one other question? Are you familiar with this Thomas Fox, who was relocation director of urban renewal?

JL: Yeah. Yeah, I hired him.

RK: You did. Did they play much of a role, the relocation people? Did they do much, as far as relocating people who had been displaced?

JL: Well, yes. They helped. Tom became head of the thing, eventually.

RK: Is he still around?

JL: No, I think he left. He hasn't died, but I don't think he lives in Tampa anymore. I think he went to some other urban renewal somewhere else in the country.

RK: I see.

JL: I thought highly of him.

RK: Did any of the people who were displaced end up in public housing at that point?

JL: A lot of them.

RK: Was public housing built during the time you were in office?

JL: Some of it.

RK: And that was by the Housing Authority.

JL: We had problems even then, trying to make them keep the place clean. Public housing in West Tampa had already been built, a whole area. But you had—I don't know whether that's the answer or not. We didn't have any problems in those days with drugs.

RK: Right.

JL: (laughs)

RK: Did you work closely with the Housing Authority that built that housing, or were they pretty much independent?

JL: The mayor appointed them directly. I guess the Council went with it. I inherited—we finally got rid of a fellow named Tom Goddard (??), who was (inaudible), and he ran it. But I finally got rid of him; it took a couple of years.

RK: Who was the next person?

JL: I don't recall who it was, but he was somebody that we searched for, and found a highly qualified person. We put him in charge. I don't think we had any problem with slums, not the problem you have today. I told the sanitary chief one day, "Look, let's have one week and let's clean up the housing projects." We got the corporation and the director over these projects, spent one week and man, that place was spick and span, all of it. It wasn't a week later that it was back like it was.

RK: The kids?

JL: Trash everywhere. But of course, public housing wasn't anything like it is today. We didn't have Cottage Hill or College Hill or whatever they call it; we didn't have that one.

RK: That came later on?

JL: That came later on. And there was a great need for it. I guess this is why most governments leave things as they are. They deteriorate. It starts off with good ideas, and I guess it was. It gave a lot of people good housing, but they didn't take care of it like I had when I was running the dairy down in south Florida, Hardee County. I think I had nine, ten tenement houses, and I got some families—I gave them houses. Some people took care of them; some of them didn't do a damn thing but tear them up. But that's normal.

I was there two years ago, and they didn't have any shortage of rental units down in that part of the county. None of them stayed vacant. I guess some (inaudible)—we make them keep the yard, pay for the garbage disposal. The county comes by once a week and picks it up. I get a hundred and fifty dollar, two hundred dollar deposit. When they move out, if the house is in the same shape as when they moved in, I'll refund the two hundred dollars. If there are broken windows and pulled out sinks, I'll charge them for it, we still need the money. I don't know what's happened to people. I think we're going down the road the Roman Empire did; we're passing through again.

RK: Downhill?

JL: Downhill. Of the twenty-one great world civilizations, nineteen of them were not defeated by invasion or aggression from the outside, but from their own degradation from the inside. We (inaudible) trouble we had with the county commissioners, in fact, in my

first hearing in the office of mayor, I think three or five of my city councilmen (inaudible).¹⁰

RK: The zoning?

JL: (inaudible)

RK: Were any of them convicted? I guess [Lee] Duncan was acquitted.

JL: Duncan was acquitted—all of them were acquitted.

RK: They were?

JL: Yeah. I didn't worry about it too much. This was when Dale Mabry was starting to expand. I'd hear things; they were only asking three hundred, five hundred dollars to rezone, and I didn't pay too much attention to that. But when it got up to five thousand, ten thousand, (inaudible). (inaudible) State's Attorney—

RK: Was that Mr. Farrior? No, not Farrior.

JL: No, Paul Johnson was State's Attorney at that time. He indicted them, and they all were acquitted. (inaudible) was the worst one (inaudible). They had one little problem with Fletcher Stribling. Well, they gave him a hundred dollars or so every now and then.

RK: The developers?

JL: Yeah. Well, we didn't have any great big—

RK: Not like today.

JL: But that's where the money came from. It was mainly from, let's say, Dale Mabry, where people wanted to rezone and build motels or restaurants and get liquor permits. If the dining room was big enough, if you could seat a certain number of people, you could get a liquor permit. Of course, the Council had to pass on all that.

RK: How far up did the city go then?

JL: Well, we went all the way to the bay, after we took in Port Tampa.

RK: And then north on Dale Mabry?

¹⁰ RK and JL are referring to a 1963 incident in which three members of the City Council (Lee Duncan, Dick Bacon, and Fletcher Stribling) were indicted for bribery in a probe of liquor zoning practices. The indictments came shortly before the election for mayor, which Lane lost to Nuccio. All three councilors were acquitted. Duncan was later reelected to the City Council and served several more terms.

JL: And north, we went—hmm. I think we went to what we used to call Drew Field; that's where the international airport is now. We went somewhere out that way. That was an Army Air Force installation.

RK: And then north? On Dale Mabry, you went north of the stadium—of where the stadium is now?

JL: Out that way, we went to Hillsborough Avenue.

RK: Hillsborough. So, there's a lot of rezoning asked for out there.

JL: Yeah. And then we took in all of Sulphur Springs to the river. I don't think we went across the river. Yes, we did; we went (inaudible), 'cause I remember the flood we had out there. Out there somewhere, about Fowler Avenue.

RK: So, did zoning play much of a role in the development of Tampa while you were mayor? I mean, did it influence much?

JL: (inaudible) influence the City Council.

RK: (laughs) So, it really didn't channel building anywhere, or anything?

JL: No. We didn't have a lot of problems then. We did—the battle we had at one time was on the Bayshore [Boulevard], for a high-rise. We had several meetings of the City Council and public hearing. Finally, the Council passed, coming out—I guess from about De Soto Avenue going on out to Gandy, and sold a strip of land coming back so many feet from Bayshore. Of course, everybody then thought they were going to start building those high-rises overnight, and of course they did build Harbor House. Then they built what they called Bayshore Tower down there.

RK: So, that zoning was changed while you were mayor?

JL: Yeah.

RK: And you urged that it be changed?

JL: And what's happened since then, the one tract just on the other side of us has been rezoned back to single-family. But the rest of it is still there. And we've had the high-rises coming along. (phone rings) It's been twenty-five years.

Pause in recording

RK: Did they have problems in the county, too, with the zoning indictments and so on, back in your day? Same thing?

JL: They didn't indict anybody until this last bunch, you remember. I remember hearing it on the radio, and I told my son—all we heard is the indictment, and I said, "It's related to zoning."

RK: (laughs) The county was growing real quickly, even when you were mayor.

JL: Oh, yeah. The county, back when I was mayor, they were just a small-time county. They had no public works department, really no sewer and no water. It was just a fine time. Each commissioner ran his own district, and that's the way it ran.

RK: Each elected by a separate district?

JL: Yeah. And they were slow, slow catching up. The county, it was growing then.

RK: Is Mr. Simmons still around now?

JL: Yeah. Old Ellsworth is still there. The *Tribune* did two editorials, because they appointed him—the County Commission appointed him to the Planning Commission.

RK: Oh, they did?

JL: Ellsworth, I think, is a highly qualified person. He's been in public office for years. He did get indicted, but he was acquitted. But the *Tribune* has just given him hell in two editorials since Jim Selvey appointed him to the board. Jim is from a district down there. Ellsworth, I thought, was a very competent public official.

RK: Did you interact with him much in your business? Did you interact with the county very much in your business? I mean as mayor, sorry.

JL: Well, we would meet. I got great cooperation from the County Commission, particularly from Ellsworth and the chairman. No, of course my business in land is out in the county, but you could go, in those days—

For example, I had my property down on what we call Carbon Lake Road, which is in the Wimauma area between—in those days, we called [State Highway] 674 the Port Lawson Road. That was the south boundary of my property, and [County Road] 672—we didn't quite go to that. We moved down there in fifty-nine [1959], and it was a sand road. So, it got so bad that trucks couldn't get in and out to bring the feed, or the tank trucks to pick up the milk. I called Ellsworth and said, "Look, we've got to have some help on that road." In those days, they were putting in what they called mix in place roads; it's asphalt mixed in place; didn't take long to do it.

Well, he got right on it and built it that week. The trouble was, it came from 674 right down to the gate of my barn. (laughs) I went down over the weekend, and there it was! I called Ellsworth and said, "You didn't have to extend that thing down to (inaudible)! The *Tribune*'ll be down there taking pictures!" (laughs) But that's the way you did things.

Nowadays, to get something done in the county you've got to go through a million things.

I remember I had a trailer that burned down some few years ago. Well, I needed a trailer, so I went and bought a secondhand trailer and we moved it right in, hooked it up to the septic tank that we had the permit for, and the electric company came out and hooked us up to the electric. Well, I never heard anything from the county about the electric, but they got all over my phone. But hooking it up to the septic tank just raised hell. Finally, a plumber down there called me and said, "Mr. Lane, if you don't go down there and get a permit, they're going to take my license away."

Well, I went down to the courthouse and found the department. I walked in there, (doorbell rings) and they told me—

Pause in recording

RK: —taking a lot of your time.

JL: No, I'm enjoying it.

RK: Well, this is related to Mayor Nuccio: some "road to nowhere"? He refused to discuss it at one point. It was said it was in his district. I was just curious. Did you ever hear of that?

JL: No, the "road to nowhere"—that was built by the county or the state out there in the area around the university. It went on north, and it ended out there in the woods somewhere. I think it's that road—you go down Fowler Avenue, it goes on out now to Tampa Palms. [Bruce B. Downs Blvd.]

RK: I see.

JL: I think it was the county.

RK: There were some charges of irregularities or something?

JL: All I know about it, I read in the paper, which designated it a "road to nowhere."

RK: When did they start Crosstown [Expressway]?

JL: The Crosstown?

RK: When was that built? The first leg?

JL: Well, there was a lot of talk about it for years. What they had planned to do—and in fact, we met with the railroad and with the County Commission. The movement was to elevate Adamo Drive along about Nineteenth Street, along the railroad right-of-way, and

take it along across town—this was in the beginning—take it on across town and bring it back down to the ground level there west of the old fairgrounds, where the railroad track runs, and then extend it on out the railroad right-of-way, which is right over here, to Gandy. That was the original plan, but it never got off the ground.

And then later on, a few years later, the County Commission decided to move ahead with the toll road, and they located it—the engineers wanted to locate it in a different place, which is where they built it. And they built this end first. I would get on it down at (inaudible) coming back out down there at—oh, just east of Florida, Morgan, I guess it is. That was built several years ago.

RK: I just wondered, 'cause some people said there were some problems as far as where they chose to initially construct it; there wasn't that much of a need.

JL: Well, I disagree with them. I'll tell you, it's—

RK: It's going to be widely used now.

JL: This end wasn't as important as the end going east to Brandon.

RK: That's going to be—that's real important.

JL: They've got to extend that for the people in Brandon. I go out that way three or four times a month, in the morning, and traffic around 7:30, 8:00 coming in is backed up at the tollgate sometimes all the way to [U.S. Route] 301. (inaudible) I use it every day; I get on it right down here. I think this end now, since they raised the price fifty cents, it's not worth it to me. I come on at Bayshore, 'cause Bayshore is a limited access road. I'll get on it down at—I guess its Florida Avenue, somewhere in that area—and take it on out and hit [Interstate] 75, and then go south on 75. That thing is packed. And the thing that I don't like, they keep talking about the taxpayers—gasoline tax. Well, after all, all of us who drive on there, we pay gasoline tax. I think the gasoline tax ought to pay for part of it.

end of interview