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[Transcriber's note: Due to its age, the audio from this tape is of very poor quality, with many inaudible words and phrases. There is no formal start to this interview.]

Samuel M. Gibbons: —Florida has had a—you could call it urban renewal thing, but it had a condemnation law that allowed something like urban renewal. The Florida Supreme Court—it was called, *Somebody [Burger] vs. the City of Daytona*—it'd be an interesting decision to read. Knocked out all this (inaudible) condemnation and power of developed land. At that time, I had tried to help three developments [in] Tampa and I studied the decision real closely, and decided to upset the decision, because I thought that was the only way we could ever improve a lot of the property.

I went to Washington [D.C.], got hold of model statutes and anything else, came back with an attorney by the name of Ralph Marcicano, who is now dead, who was a city attorney here in Tampa [Florida]. We drafted Florida's first urban renewal statutes. Also at the same time, we drafted a constitutional amendment and I was afraid we were going to have trouble with the Florida constitution, that's how the first (inaudible). I was able to get the statute passed, but I could never get the constitutional amendment passed.

They took the statute and decided here with [Tampa] Mayor [Nick] Nuccio;¹ have you ever interviewed him?

Robert Kerstein: (inaudible)

SG: He's alive; he lives out here in Ybor City [Tampa]—very colorful character. I haven't seen him in years. And with Lionel Smith, a city planner—whose wife still lives here, but he died a couple of years ago—I got the statute enacted by the Florida Legislature, (inaudible). Did you see all the (inaudible) about that?

¹ Nick Nuccio (1901-1989) served two terms as mayor of Tampa, from 1956 to 1959 and from 1963 to 1967. He also served on the Tampa City Council and the Hillsborough County Commission before being elected mayor.

RK: I haven't seen those, no.

SG: There's some interesting clips about him, because the *Tampa Tribune* ran a story that I had failed. And the *Tampa Times*, a fellow by the name of Bob Turner who now writes for the *Tampa Record*, got the story correct in the *Tampa Times* on the same day the *Tribune* comes out [with the] story: "Gibbons Fails in Urban Renewal Effort" (inaudible) *Tampa Planning*; [whereas the *Tampa Times*] headline read: "Gibbons Succeeds in Urban Renewal." They were both the same story, but (inaudible) covering—but the *Tribune* had only followed the constitutional amendment, and Turner followed both of them and realized that I had succeeded in getting them passed.

The statute—we took the case to the Florida Supreme Court and by one vote, they reversed themselves. In effect with this statute, they reverse (inaudible) case and declared that kind of (inaudible) following the statute that I had provided was a constitutional (inaudible).

RK: (inaudible) —which actors in Tampa were very interested in having urban renewal to be initiated?

SG: Not a hell of a lot of them! (laughs)

RK: Was it the ACL [Atlantic Coast Line Railroad]?

SG: I can't remember who was interested in it. ACL fought it until it became advantageous for them tax-wise for them to do it (inaudible) right on the riverfront and then they decided they would join it. (laughs) But that was after the statute was passed.

RK: Did Mayor Nuccio support it?

SG: Mayor Nuccio, no, didn't really participate. It was just an idea I had. I wanted to redevelop Tampa; I figure in order to redevelop it, you have to remove a lot of slums. The slums I don't know whether we got maps of it; ran from right down here where the Barnett Bank—not the Barnett, but the round thing—

RK: NCNB [North Carolina National Bank]?

SG: NCNB [Building]. They had a railroad slum, an old warehouse that had been built about the turn of the [twentieth] century. It was completely obsolete, but Atlantic Coast Line was still using it. So, the whole waterfront from there up to the Cass Street Bridge, which was just a railroad swamp—and they would not sell it, they would not redevelop it. It was full of rats and old rundown warehouses, cold storage and everything else. North of Cass Street, there had been an old sawmill that had worn out and gone and some other junk had developed in there. All the way up to the Fortune Street Bridge was just an old, worn out rundown housing Harrison Street.

The real urban renewal, though, the one that reversed the Daytona case, is what we call the Maryland Avenue Project.

RK: By Nuccio—

SG: By Nuccio Boulevard [Nuccio Parkway]. In the middle of that was a city incinerator and city jail, and there were old, wooden, dilapidated housing with no clearly defined streets, no sewer system, outhouses—really, a first-class black slum.

RK: Is that what they called the “Scrub”? Or is that something—

SG: Yeah, that’s the Scrub. Yeah, yeah. It takes up all where those housing projects are in there now. It started in Central Avenue and went all over. Funny part about this: the Florida Supreme Court would allow you to condemn land for public housing and redevelop it as a housing project, and that’s how the housing project got over there. But they wouldn’t allow you to take land and redevelop it for non-public housing purposes.

RK: I see.

SG: So, the Maryland Avenue Project, and there is a case in the statute books—not statute books, but the Supreme Court Reports of Florida—outlining the Maryland Avenue case. So you’ve got the Daytona Beach case and you got the Maryland Avenue case, and that’s where Florida reversed itself.

RK: Ah, I see.

SG: That statute that I had drafted with Ralph Marcicano’s help finally became the model for all urban renewal in Florida. Urban renewal had worked as well as it should. The redevelopment of urban renewal land had not been what I had expected. I had much higher aspirations than—but somewhere in the City [of Tampa] administration they fell down in redeveloping the land.

RK: Yeah. I wanted to ask, (inaudible) passed and that was your initiative?

SG: Yeah, that’s as far as I could go to get that done.

RK: Sure. Now, it was implemented in Tampa. You know who took the lead here?

SG: Well, the city did.

RK: Mayor Nuccio, then [Julian] Lane²?

SG: The mayor, yes. Nuccio did and Mayor Lane did, and they appointed an urban renewal redevelopment authority. But the authority for some reason—and I’m not sure why; about that time I was well off to Washington (inaudible)—just was not able to get

² Julian Lane was mayor of Tampa from 1959 to 1963, between Nuccio’s two terms.

the land developed into properly as they wanted to get the land developed at the riverfront down here. We developed that north of here to Tampa Heights by the river, and they redeveloped that Fortune Street, but in Ybor City, they just failed. They redeveloped the Maryland Avenue Project, but frankly, I get so mad when I see what they did out there; I see red. The federal housing people made them really put second-class redevelopment out there.

RK: Over on Nuccio [Parkway] there?

SG: Yes. Those buildings, oh, they're atrocious! They got no style of design, no—they're just cheap architecture, cheap construction. And when you think of what we had to go through to get that land and everything else, it was a poor redeveloped use of the land.

And the rest of the Ybor City project that never really took off like I thought it would. I can't put the finger on any one person or one reason, but it just has not worked out. Maybe if I could follow it closer, and had taken a greater interest in it, I could provide interest to getting it done. But by that time, I got interested in going to Washington, where I'd always been interested in going, (laughs) and it just kind of shot blanks.

RK: You came to the Florida House [of Representatives] in fifty-two [1952], and I believe there in Palma Ceia in fifty-three [1953]. And I think you were involved?

SG: Yes, I was. Yes, I was named "Tampa's Outstanding Young Man of the Year" for that effort. I actually ran on a platform that, if elected, I would put forward the annexation without referendum. They had lots of attempts to annex all that area, but they had all failed when they went to referendum.

RK: I see. Who voted against it?

SG: Well, the people inside the city would vote for annexation; the people outside the city would say, "Heck, no!" (laughs) "Not me!" And so it always failed; they'd have a split referendum. And I said, "Well, you know, we all know how you feel."

I made an issue out of it in my campaign. That time, my house district was county-wide. I represented all of Hillsborough County—you know, districts are very small today, but at that time there were only three of us; we ran county-wide—and in my campaign I made an issue of it. The other two members—Jim Moody from Plant City then went along with me, because he felt I had a mandate. So did Tom Johnson, who was the other representative from Hillsborough County. He said, "Well, give them (inaudible); let's go ahead and do it." And John Branch—who's now dead; the other two are still alive—the state senator, he reluctantly agreed.

So, after my election, about this time of year, I met with a city planner from Jacksonville [Florida] whose name I'm always forgetting, but he worked for the City of Tampa. He was their consultant and planner. We got in my old Studebaker, and we had some filling station road maps and we drove around Tampa and we outlined what we thought was the

appropriate boundaries and came back and put it in the finished map.

And then, I got the [Greater Tampa] Chamber of Commerce to hire me a lawyer. I knew it was going to be a tough, complex legal job to do it. They hired John Himes, whose son, Frasier, still practices law; John died a few years ago. And John was my lawyer, and together, we drew the annexation statute. We took in ninety-six thousand people and something like forty square miles of territory out of referendum, and everybody says you going to get (inaudible).

RK: (laughs)

SG: We pushed that through—I pushed that through, and they made these outstanding (inaudible).

RK: Can I ask why you initiated that one (inaudible)?

SG: Yes. That's a very important question. One, I thought there was a moral obligation for those who lived outside of the city and who worked in the city and who were a part of the city to become a part of the tax base and become a part of the leadership. And I think that part of the leadership worked even better than I had imagined, because generally the younger more prosperous people lived outside the city, and the fact that they then became part of the city gave the city a vitality it never had before. The leadership of the city rapidly improved; it was reflected throughout the community, and I think this was one of the prime things that put Tampa on the upscale.

But that's a very interesting piece of legislation. You ought to get a copy of it; it's in the State Archives. It took a lot of work to get that settled. Every other annexation attempt met with all kinds of lawsuits and litigation, and finally, the courts would throw them out and things of that sort. But this one, no one ever challenged.

RK: I got the impression from Mr. [W. Scott] Christopher when I spoke with him that the Chamber strongly supported it.

SG: Yes, the Chamber strongly supported it. The Chamber provided me with an attorney that they paid three thousand dollars to do all that work. (inaudible) got a hundred thousand dollars today to do that work.

RK: Yeah.

SG: He spent months working on that statute. First National Bank opened sixth—well, seventh—floor on Himes [Avenue]; my office was on the ninth floor. Mr. Northcutt was the President of First National Bank at that time, Mr. V.H. Northcutt; he lives out in Golfview today. His wife's dead, and he's not very well. But he's the one that—I said, "I need help. I won this election, I got what I think is the mandate to do the job." And he lived outside the city, but he thought that (inaudible). And he said, "Well, let's get together with the Chamber, and we can dig up the money and we can get you financed."

So he provided me with a lawyer and everybody (inaudible) with a planner. The planner and I actually (inaudible).

RK: Is it true that some people weren't eligible to sit on various city boards and so forth?

SG: Oh, yes! Yeah, well, they had all kinds of restraints that you couldn't participate in government unless you live within corporate limit, and just the normal thing. You had plumbers that could only work outside the city. You had electricians who normally worked outside the city. You had a different fire system, a whole different police system, and a different garbage system and—

RK: County provided?

SG: Well, sort of. It really revitalized Tampa: got it up and got it going, got interested people working in the government. There was an immediate upsurge in the interest in Tampa, because statistically Tampa looked much larger, and was much larger. And the people who had fought the annexation—and it really got brutal.

I remember one time at the fifty-two [1952] campaign, I walked into an establishment out on Hillsborough Avenue. One guy says, "You know, Mr. Gibbons, I've always wanted to meet you. Let me have some of your cards." And so, I handed him some of my cards. Then he got real (inaudible). And he says, "Now, get out of here, you son of a bitch!" and he threw the cards at me (laughs) and walked out the door!

RK: They would say higher taxes?

SG: Oh, higher taxes, and any of those city licensing laws, and voting laws—and the county had no zoning laws in those days. You could build anything anywhere that you wanted to; it was your American right to do that. And the city had some pretty (inaudible) zoning, but it was—at least it was effective.

RK: Were you—

SG: Go ahead.

RK: Were you involved with the Port Tampa [annexation] as well?

SG: Oh, yes.

RK: Could you tell me about that?

SG: Sure. Well, Port Tampa would've been left alone to the first Tampa annexation. You'd go out to Port Tampa; it was a poor little city. It wasn't doing anything. It wasn't providing any sewers, providing very haphazard police protection—it just wasn't functioning as a city. And we said, "Well, you know—you can't." We just thought it all ought to be all part of the City [of Tampa]. Representatives and myself got together; we

annexed it, just abolished it.

RK: The local bill?

SG: The local—yeah, we abolished it, the City of Port Tampa. That cost a lot of storm in Port Tampa. A fellow walked all the way to Tallahassee to protest it—just fired this presentation off the steps of the [State] Capital. But, we were able to get the bill passed.

RK: Did it (inaudible) city's taxpayers?

SG: Nah.

RK: How much?

SG: Four-fifty—just two small, two inches didn't (inaudible).

RK: Mmm.

SG: Railroads had to pay a little more taxes, but not much.

RK: Did Mayor Lane support it?

SG: Oh, yeah. Yeah, he did. I'd forgotten who was mayor then. He did been mayor then, but I forgot who was mayor.

RK: Did Mayor, I think, [Curtis] Hixon, was major in Palm Ceia.³ Did he support that?

SG: No, he took a very neutral position. He says that, "If that's what you want to do, I'll do it. But I don't want to go out there and get involved in the fight. It'll look bad, it'll look like I'm trying to grab all this territory for political advancement, and," he said, "I'm not." And for some time, I had trouble getting the lead city legal authorities [and] city engineers—I needed both of them in drawing this legislation and helping set the boundaries.

RK: Hmm.

SG: It's a heck of an engineering job to draw up boundaries. Courts upheld that the boundaries have got to be so precise. Here you're drawing up a boundary that's about a hundred miles long, and you can't just go out and say, "From this street to that street; to this street and that street."

I had determined, based upon a personal experience of my father's—when I was a kid, he'd been involved in an automobile wreck. He was riding to town with a neighbor and was caught on Morrison [Avenue] and Howard [Avenue]; he'd been hit by a car going

³ Curtis Hixon (1891-1956) was mayor of Tampa from 1943 to 1956. A pharmacist by trade, he was also on the Tampa City Council and the Hillsborough County Commission.

west on Morrison. It had knocked his car all the way up into the neighbor's car. My father was riding up to the grocery store there, and I had jumped on my bicycle and run down to find my father stretched out in front of this grocery store bleeding all over, and [had] broken ribs and a broken arm.

When we got to investigating it, the city boundary ran right down the middle of the street. And so, the city folks said, "We don't know where the accident happened. We can't tell where those skid-marks are or anything. We don't know if it happened in the city or the county." Well, it just happened that my father was hit—the city ended up in the county. And I decided, "Well, that's not gonna happen anymore."

So, I insisted that we go a hundred and fifty feet beyond the street, so that you don't get divided—city boundary running down the middle of the street, (inaudible) off someone's garbage can back there—there's a few of those horror stories I can tell you. But the city boundaries is—we set them in those days all up beyond the street, and so you won't get Howard Avenue divided half in the city and half out. You get (inaudible). See, the city boundary used to end at Howard Avenue, used to end at Hillsborough [Avenue], and it used to end out here about, oh, I don't know, about Thirty-Second Street or something like that. Tampa was really small. So we added ninety-six thousand people to it, almost double in size.

RK: Did that extend east as well?

SG: Yes, it extended it out to about—past Fifty-Sixth Street.

RK: I see.

SG: And up to Fowler Avenue, which is now—since that time, we've extended by taking University of South Florida. And it went down (inaudible)—it went roughly from about the corner of Fowler and Fiftieth Street down to the [Hillsborough] River, and then followed the other side of Fiftieth Street, on Fortieth Street on down (inaudible), and then intercepted with Palm River.

RK: The county commissioners didn't oppose it?

SG: No. They did not support it, but they didn't oppose it—that I know of. I never saw any (inaudible). Mr. Moody, who worked with the county commissioners, was a part of putting (inaudible). And two years later, we did the same thing with Plant City. He (inaudible) all represent the whole county, but he was out of the Plant City area and I out of the Palm Ceia area. Tom Johnson was out of the Seminole Heights area.

RK: So, I'm getting the impression Mayor Hixon really wasn't interested in growth and development so much.

SG: Yes, he was! He'd been a good mayor. But he thought, and probably wisely so, that if he got really involved in things it would take on political character, both people inside the

City of Tampa trying to grab the suburbs for the wealth that was in them. He thought that was an unbecoming attitude to have and probably negative, but he always told me, “Well, if that’s what you want to do, Sam, and if you can get it done, don’t worry about me. I’ll administer it.”

Well, as I said, I had a little trouble getting the help from the city engineers and the city legal department. But in about February and March, before the legislation session in April, the city engineers and city attorney and all of their staff was on board. And with John Himes the chief counsel for me, we were able to put together a successful annexation. It is technically a very tough job to do. (inaudible), you read it, and you realize that the hours and hours of research that went into it. We had to abolish lots of fire control districts and sanitary districts, and drainage districts and everything else. Had to leave some because of obligations and talking about financial obligations that they had acquired. We told so-and-so would finally liquidate themselves soon. It took the cooperation of really first-class technicians, as well as a political leader (inaudible).

RK: I was at the Planning Commission open house yesterday—

SG: (laughs)

RK: —and someone had mentioned that you had been there and that you had initiated that.

SG: That was one of my ideas, too!

RK: Could you tell why you did that? What motivated you?

SG: Well, I guess, you know, you’d have to go way back into my history. I was a parachutist in World War II, and I anticipated on planning for the invasion of Europe.⁴ I was a staff officer in the parachute regiment and we did our—you know, had a lot of experience in advanced planning and knew that things just didn’t happen.

And I knew that without planning, Tampa had gotten itself in a hell of a mess, but there was no planning anywhere in Florida. Planning was a dirty word; still is a dirty word, but not nearly as much. Hillsborough County didn’t even have a zoning ordinance. We had just forced zoning on the county in the legislation prior to the fifty-nine [1959] session. It was obvious to me by that time, the people who were directly elected could not do a lot of the things a planner could do. It was just too much heat on them to take care of the day-to-day emergencies.

You’ve got to have somebody who is responsible, not only for the land use planning but some overall functional planning of the county, or we’re gonna waste resources and waste opportunities. That’s why I set up the Planning Commission. And very frankly, it hasn’t worked as well as I wanted it to. We’ve always had a struggle between how much

⁴ Prior to his political career, Sam Gibbons was a 24-year-old captain in the United States 101st Airborne Division when the Allies launched the D-day invasion of Normandy Beach, France on June 6, 1944.

political power do you give them, being non-elected officials; and how much of it are they able to get, not having a lot of political power, through cooperation with the city and the county, and that's never been satisfactory. As they gain expertise—and you must remember, there was really not a lot of people around who could plan, that had any education or any training. Some people could do it intuitively, and some people picked it up but there was not a professional staff.

There was one person that had received some training in planning; that was a fellow named Milo Smith. You'll notice he appears in those minutes. His office was over on the ninth floor of the First National Bank building. He had a little bitty office—the whole office wasn't very big. He and a fellow by the name of Kennedy would call themselves “city planners.” They were really people who lay out a good practical subdivision. He had a degree in architecture and specialized in city planning, but he hadn't had experience. But he did become the planner for many cities in Florida; he died about two years ago. His wife runs Smith & Associates, the real estate.

RK: Oh, really? Oh!

SG: Yeah. Her name was Mary Dupree, and she married Milo right after the war [World War II], and they set up Smith & Associates, the realtor.

RK: The same who worked closely with you, I believe, in the annexation you set up in Palma Ceia?

SG: Yes! Yeah!

RK: Were you interested in setting up the Planning Commission as well? Did they work with you on that?

SG: No, I don't remember that. The next thing involved the Chamber. Well, in the fifty-five [1955] session, I probably had taken over Tampa U [University of Tampa]. (laughs) And that's an interesting story. After the fifty-two [1952] session—oh, it was a really interesting session for me. I've been mainly involved in local legislation and just getting my feet wet in the state. And in the beginning of the fifty-five [1955] session, I was appointed to be the Chairman of the Committee of Education in Florida. Quite an honor, and (inaudible) lawyer and such, spent a long time in school. And you know, I've never been in the school system; I've never been an instructor or anything. I didn't really know much how it functioned internally.

But it became clear to me just after brief that Florida needed plan for the growth that was already apparent. In other words, the Tampa school systems had been on double sessions ever since World War II. My kids were going to school on double sessions. It was really—and I could see all of this finally going to college. At that time—when I went to college, just before World War II, only 10 percent of the students ever went to college. It was us who were a little better off—our parents were better off financially—got to go. I went to school, to college, with a lot of poor kids. I don't consider myself poor, but I

guess I was by the standards of today. But I could see it coming.

And so, Tampa U is having a terrible time. They've expanded to meet the demand of the G.I. Bill, and the G.I. Bill was over and those students were all gone. Their enrollment figures were dropping. They couldn't get enough local support to build a big financial base on an institution. That old hotel building was falling apart, all the way around because it's so expensive to maintain. And I said, "You know, Tampa U's not gonna make it unless we can get some public support." I had seen the public fund drives. They said, "Why don't we take Tampa U, use its faculty and its filler as a (inaudible) to fill the institution right in the middle of downtown?" And I said, "The students can get part-time jobs easier, housing would be easier, and everything else."

We only had two state institutions that really (inaudible)—two black ones [Florida A&M University] and a white one up in Tallahassee [Florida State University]; the white one in Gainesville [University of Florida]. They were far removed and away from the population centers, even in those days. So I said, "Well, this is a golden opportunity to take advantage of me being the Chairman of the Education Committee and Jim Williams being the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee. And we got a need that exists here. Why not take over Tampa U?" And I approached them, the Tampa U people, who at that time were businessmen, as they are today, and they said, "Sure, that's a good idea. We need all the help we can get."

That went on for about a year, and then the Supreme Court of the United States—this was all during the desegregation, public desegregation—summoned the Girard case.⁵ The Girard case held that if you are a privately supported, privately endowed institution, you didn't have to be segregated. Well, the folks that ran Tampa U then thought, "Well, gee, you know, we hit the jackpot. And everyone will leave the public institutions because they don't want to go to school with blacks. And they'll all come to Tampa U, and we'll just have to—" So, they (laughs) passed a resolution. I remember appearing before the Board of Directors and pleading with them to submit these cooperative plans I had to make it a state institution. And they passed the resolution, turning me down.

At that time, I gained enough momentum; enough popular support around town, here, and I put together the University of South Florida. The Chamber was very active in that, because when I got through passing the legislation through the 1955 session, I didn't have any money to influence. I didn't have anything. I just had a piece of legislation that says, "(inaudible) of the State of Florida directed the study of the feasibility and desirability of establishing a four-year degree-granting institution in Hillsborough County Florida." Paragraph two: "The State Board of Education is authorized"—not directed, but authorized—"to establish such an institution." That's really what it is. It was House Bill 2006 of that legislature.

5

Vidal v. Girard's Executors, 43 U.S. 127. Stephan Girard bequeathed his estate to create a school for white orphans, thus barring African-American students. Due to its status as a private institution, it was not ordered to desegregate after the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, Kansas ruling, but was overturned in 1968.

I got that passed. It became law, (inaudible) that piece of paper. And a mandatory study—but that was all; just a study. So I went to see Scott Christopher, who was the chairman (inaudible). I said, “Scott, I gotta have some help. You wanna help me on the annexation now? Can you help me with this thing?” And Scott, who had taught at universities and had some background, he said, “Yes, I’d be glad to. You go see Louis Benito.” Louis was just starting the advertising business. “And we’re helping him, and he’ll help you get together some public relations-type thing for that.” Well, I did. Louis designed me a book, a sort of PR [public relations] campaign and we took off. I spent about two years selling the idea that Tampa was a logical place for a new state institution.

RK: Working with the Chamber?

SG: Working with the Chamber.

RK: Now, were the same people that didn’t want Tampa U to go public, supporting USF out there?

SG: No, there was a little competition between them. The people at Tampa U thought, “Well, this is gonna kill us. We’re not getting the hordes of white students leaving Florida and FSU to come to our school.” The drive to desegregate those schools was going very slowly. So they just thought it was the collapse of Tampa U.

I think it was Dr. [David M.] DeLo that came around right about that time; I can’t remember who it was.⁶ He said, “Oh, no, we can survive. We will survive. In fact, it may strengthen the interest in Tampa.” Anyway, there was reluctance without hostility. The whole idea that you could build a state institution here, just—man, it was hard to contain.

RK: There was really a lot of people supporting it?

SG: Oh, there was a lot of people supporting it. But then the competition got real keen. St. Petersburg wanted it over there. The *St. Petersburg Times* launched a campaign, and then the St. Pete Chamber of Commerce launched a campaign. Then the Sarasota people, they decided they want it; then the Lakeland people decide they want it. Then, you know, all over everybody wanted a state institution. And I kept saying, “You know, it won’t do any good; I’m the chairman of the committee.” (inaudible) it’s gonna be in Hillsborough County.

RK: (laughs)

SG: But everybody got to arguing over where it was gonna be, not whether if it was gonna be. And so the whole argument of whether there ought to be another school, got eclipsed by where it was going to be. When we finally got around to getting it established, people just overlooked the obvious: whether it ought to be. (laughs) It had jumped from where. It taught me something.

⁶ DeLo was, at the time, president of the University of Tampa.

The State Board of Control finished its study—in which I had participated extensively—and Dr. Byron Blee, who lives in Tallahassee still, who wrote for the court. (inaudible) The Brumbaugh Report⁷ said: “Yes, you ought to establish a state institution in Hillsborough County, Florida.” At that time, we had assembled this tract of land out here. Hillsborough County Commissioner Ellsworth Simmons, who was Chairman of County Commission; he was there last night.

RK: I missed him. I heard he was—

SG: Grand guy! You ought to talk to him. Finest chairman of the Board of County Commissioners I have ever known. What a great public leader.

We had assembled that land the county owned. It was surplus land from World War II that had been a training field for flyers, and the county got it from the federal government as surplus land after World War II.⁸ Pretty lousy looking stuff. But we used that as a site out there and we gave that to the state. And then, about this time of year, I met with one of the technicians from the Board of Control—that was over in Palm Beach—Ed Dail. D-a-i-l, that’s the way you spell “Dail,” I believe. He had been following my lobbying of the Board of Regents.

(inaudible) I went to see him. I said, “Ed, what are we going to do next? We got approval from the State Board of Control; let’s now go to the Board of Regents.” And I’ve got to get the Board of Education to act. They don’t have to act, the Board of Regents. The Board of Control had to act, there was a mandate that they act. (inaudible) So we decided that we had to get a resolution adopted by the Board of Education. Well, by that time, the Board of Education had gotten the fever. They wanted this institution and they got so many people lobbying all from Tampa, that they really wanted the institution.

And then I sat down and drafted at his house—I remember he lived on Pensacola Avenue. His wife was about eight months pregnant and he was a state bureaucrat, not paid very well, and he was renting a little house on Pensacola Avenue with a light hanging down at the ceiling by the cord—his wife scurrying around the kitchen and we sat there and had a bottle of—couple of drinks of bourbon and drafted this resolution establishing the university. We didn’t have a name for it; we called it a four-year degree-granting institution located in Hillsborough County, Florida.

We had a couple of aborted trips to the Board of Control, in which different members—to the State Board of Education, in which different members objected to this part of the resolution or that part of the resolution. The governor objected the most, but he finally came around.⁹ And they adopted it, and about the seventeenth or eighteenth of December,

⁷ The Brumbaugh Report (1956), prepared by the Board of Control Committee chaired by Dr. J.A. Brumbaugh, focused on the expansion of higher education in Florida. As a result of this study, the Florida Legislature authorized significant expansion of higher education, including the creation of a state community college system.

⁸ Henderson Air Field, which served as an auxiliary base and practice bombing range during the war. The base closed in 1945.

⁹ LeRoy Collins (1909-1991), who was governor of Florida from 1955 to 1961. He also served in the

1956, we had a university. Had a thousand (inaudible) of land, we had no money, we had no faculty, we had no students, we had no nothing!

So, Scott Christopher and I met again, and for the next session of legislature, we drew up a budget. By that time, I had enough clout to get the budget (inaudible), and that's how it came to be.

RK: Were you involved with economic development after that time? Trying to get (inaudible)?

SG: No, I wasn't, but the Chamber was, and I participated in the end in it, but not as actively. Lord, I had—I was trying to practice law, trying to raise a family, and trying to keep up my reserve obligation in the Army, and you know, had to get elected every two years. And I was up to my neck in civic activities, way past my neck! I cooperated with them, but I didn't put a whole lot out.

To elicit some competition between the university out there and Schlitz and Budweiser, in fact, the *St. Pete Times* ran front-page cartoons, they called it "Bottlecap U" [University]. It showed pictures of the drunken students and drunken football team coming up to the scrimmage line, you know, and just ridiculed the hell out of it. Always trying to torpedo the operation, yet over in St. Petersburg, where there were finer people—

RK: (laughs)

SG: Anyway, they failed, and all that just got people in Tampa madder and madder. By the time they got ready, they had torn the State Board of Education apart, and the State Board of Education (inaudible) finally adopted the resolution status as a university. The city was so united about it, and every time *St. Pete Times* had ridiculed it more, the right editorials about it—it just got people over here madder.

RK: So they were trying to get USF over there—

SG: So, it all worked out real well. But as far as the development of the industrial park, I knew about it, I—Chamber members and I participated the best I could. But that was all done. (inaudible)

RK: Can I ask you—I think I might be taking up too much of your time.

SG: That's all right.

RK: I think you actively joined the Chamber—

SG: Yes, I was.

RK: And I was—when you elected shortly after the Kefauver hearings.¹⁰

SG: Yes, that's right.

RK: Could you tell me about the climate and your form after that?

SG: Well, my brother was a principal mover in that. My brother, who is now incompetent—he's got Alzheimer's; he's two years younger than I—was made "Tampa's Outstanding Man" because of his cleanup efforts. He got out of law school a little bit before I did because he was so badly wounded in World War II. So were a member of other people: Sam Davis, still alive, still around here; and Marvin Essrig, who's still alive and still around here; my brother, Myron. And they were chief crime-fighters in Tampa. Tampa was, back then, known as pretty corrupt place. They did a lot in getting it straightened out.

In fact, when I ran for election in 1952, there was a big anti-establishment. Twelve had developed against the office-holder who was kind of a "throw the rascals out and put in the new generation" and I was able to take advantage of being a part of the "new generation." But they did a good job in pointing out the corruption. Then Estes Kefauver brought his traveling crime thing here, and they had the newspapers full of (inaudible).

RK: Was the Chamber pretty concerned about the negative publicity, given with the economic (inaudible)?

SG: No, I don't recall that at all. The Junior Chamber [of Commerce] then was a very strong and very little organization. Never has been a stronger (inaudible) as it was then. Had excellent leaders. Ed Rood, who was a lawyer here in town, was one of the leaders. Bill Judd, a lawyer in Tampa, was one of the leaders. Louis Benito, prime leader. Louis is retired now and lives over in Davis Islands. He's the head of—he was the owner, originator, of Benito Advertisement, one of the biggest advertising agencies in Florida, now retired. [They] were all chamber leaders; I was just a part of the gang. One of the principal goal objectives was to clean up Tampa, from that point of view.

I wouldn't say that local Chamber—Senior Chamber—members either were for it or against it. The Junior Chamber were against it. They were the ones who ran the show, yeah.

RK: Now, that was before Mr. Christopher really straightened the Chamber, wasn't it?

SG: Yes. Scott came to Tampa, I guess, at the beginning of 1952. Didn't he? I think. I first knew him after I was elected to the state legislature. I think he probably came about the new year of 1952. I knew he came from Miami. I remember that. At that time, the Chamber office was an old building no longer there (inaudible) on Kennedy [Boulevard]

¹⁰ The Senate Special Committee to Investigate Crime in Interstate Commerce, headed by Senator Estes Kefauver (D-Tenn.). The committee traveled across the country from 1950 to 1951 investigating corruption and organized crime.

and Morgan [Street], an old red building (inaudible).

Scott provided excellent leadership for the Chamber of Commerce. I have to give him credit for having really vitalized the changes. He was a good leader and he knew how to get things done.

RK: I spoke to him; he was very, very nice and very helpful. That's pretty much not holding—

SG: Well, blacks had never been, in my political term, discouraged [from] voting. But they didn't participate in the system designed to keep them confused. We never had those strict tests that became so ridiculed out there. But when I annexed the city, I discovered that the city had what was known as a white Democratic primary. Blacks could participate in it, but never lasted. But that was the way you got elected as mayor, through the white Democratic primary. And I just abolished the white Democratic primary and all the elections under what's now Robin Krivanek's office.¹¹

RK: That houses the—

SG: That's part of the actual—

RK: Oh, really?

SG: Yeah. I did away with all of the city's election machinery.

RK: Oh, really?

SG: They had their own election machinery and I just abolished it all, and consolidated it over there. Well, I had first run into it at my campaign. I kept talking to people. I said, "Are you registered to vote?" and they'd say, "Yeah," and pull out of the election primary, but they're registered to vote in the city election, when they're originally supposed to vote in the county election. Even if you were registered to vote in the city election, you couldn't vote at my election because—you just couldn't.

I said, "This is crazy." People would think they're registered, they go to vote, and find out they can't because they're registered in the wrong election, particularly the blacks. They weren't going to register in the white primaries. So I abolished the whole city election machinery and that cost a lot of consternation. They didn't like that at all. Got rid of the whole thing; just set it all up under the county, so you've got one place to register. We were the first county in Florida to do that. And Robin Krivanek, who runs the elections in every city and Hillsborough County—

RK: Yeah, I was at Florida State Law School two years while I was on sabbatical, and I did a research project on Florida election law.

¹¹ The Hillsborough County Supervisor of Elections. Krivanek held that office from 1974 to 1993.

SG: Yeah, yeah.

RK: I learned a lot.

SG: Well, Florida—Tampa, Hillsborough County, I just abolished it. Whole city election machines in all of the city.

RK: I'm sorry, just trying to understand this. White primary, partisan elections, but it was only Democrats, and only party, of course.

SG: Yeah, yeah. Well, they had a white Democratic primary in Tampa. But it was not closed. The blacks participated in it, but they had to go down to City Hall to register. And you had to register as a black in the white Democratic Party. Well, that wouldn't sit very well with a lot of them, and it wasn't very conducive, and they weren't very welcome. But that wouldn't help them to vote for a state representative, because you had to be registered with the county to register to vote for my election. So I said, "We're not gonna put up with this anymore. We're gonna get rid of this anomaly in City Hall." And we did.

RK: Were more blacks registered here after that?

SG: I think more were registered, but you know, that was primarily driven by the civil rights [movement] in sixty-four [1964] began to take place. Yeah. There has never been—in my time; there was apparently before my time—any intimidation of blacks voting. Blacks had been encouraged to vote, because they voted Democratic. (laughs) That was part of the system.

I do remember going through the City Hall. I mean, the county courthouse used to have this (inaudible). And the courthouse looked like Tampa U.¹²

RK: I've seen pictures.

SG: Yeah. Beautiful building. Stupid to tear it down. Would've made a great museum today, or public art gallery, or anything. Was basically—the building was very sound.

But I remember some fellow stopping me and saying what I was saying, "I hope you get elected, but let me tell you, we don't shake hands with blacks." (inaudible) I grew up with him, was in the service with him. I shook hands with blacks. But that was a—you know, we had to be segregated. We had segregated facilities: the restrooms were for white men and white women, and then for blacks, they just had "colored." It was unisexual. (inaudible) Yeah. That was all over town. All over Florida! (laughs) They had colored (laughs) facilities. They had white men's restrooms and white women's restrooms, and then you had the—that was 1952. In fact, there used to be the (inaudible) have the same thing.

¹² The former Hillsborough County Courthouse was located in downtown Tampa, built in 1892 by J.A. Wood, the architect of the Tampa Bay Hotel, which is now the University of Tampa's main building. The courthouse was razed in 1952 and replaced by the current building.

RK: They did?

SG: Yeah. Yeah.

RK: Until 1964.

SG: Ah, yeah, whatever the civil rights movement got really going.

RK: I've got about a million other questions, but I don't want to—I feel I should—

SG: Well, I should say, I can throw it back a long way. I can't go too far forward.

RK: I really enjoyed it. I really do.

SG: Thank you.

End of interview