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Robert Kerstein: You began working as a newspaper person in thirty-seven [1937] or so. Is [that] when you started?

Hampton Dunn: I went to work May the fourth, 1936.

RK: Thirty-six [1936]. Okay.

HD: At the old *Tampa Daily Times*, which was an independent afternoon newspaper.

RK: Now, can I ask a very general question about that period? I know the thirty-five [1935] election [for Tampa mayor] is the one that [Robert E.] Chancey beat [Donald Brenham] McKay, and I read your article about that and so on. I have read a few things that you have written. Matter of fact, I have one of them with me. It's just a very general question: Who would you, at that point in time— How would you characterize the political regime, for lack of a better term, in Tampa? And who would characterize as the major political actors? Not just those who held office, but just generally.

HD: Pat Whitaker was serving the, I think—I guess he was state senator. Although he was an outstanding lawyer, a criminal lawyer. And I think his firm, if not himself, represented a lot of the gamblers of the day.

RK: So he was very important.

HD: Yeah. He had a brother named Tom Whitaker. And Tom was the brains. Pat was real brainy, but he was also a dramatic lawyer in the courtroom and really knew how to sway

a jury and was a great arbiter. Tom Whitaker has a son named Tom, who is a Stetson lawyer today, and himself was at one time a state senator.

RK: And does Pat Whitaker have a son as well—Pat Junior?

HD: Yeah, yeah.

RK: And he's active; he's around, too, isn't he?

HD: Yeah he is. I don't know what he is doing. I haven't seen him.

RK: Now I know at that point you had Chancey with Whitaker. And I know that the officials were important—the judicial officials, constables and sheriffs and so on and so forth. And the *bolita*—

HD: At that time—well, let me see, thirty [1930]—I guess Jerry McCloud was the sheriff at that time.

RK: Okay.

HD: Jerry had been managing editor of the old *Tampa Daily Times*, where I was. But I didn't work under him; he had left. In 1928, I think, he covered the governor's campaign and I think [he] became press advisor or something to government for Doyle Carlton, who was a Tampa man too and was very influential. And Jerry got appointed WPA [Works Progress Administration] administrator. And [he] held that job until I guess he was elected as sheriff. In those days, they were changing sheriffs like we change shirts. But—

RK: He was the WPA administrator for the city and county?

HD: Yeah, for this—

RK: Area?

HD: Tampa District, I guess they called it.

RK: Who appointed him? Who would have—

HD: I think it was a federal government appointment. I am not sure how that went.

RK: Were they used as patronage jobs to a large degree?

HD: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

RK: And who were the dominant politicians who got their friends jobs—WPA jobs and so on?

HD: Well, of course we had a United States Senator—a couple of old-timers, Park Trammell and Duncan Fletcher. They had died off about that time because— In 1934 Claude Pepper took on, he was an obscure unknown. [He] had served in the legislature from here in Florida. And he took on Park Trammell, who was one of the old regulars. And he was very, very influential.

[to unidentified person] Yeah, okay. Thank you.

Uh—1934. And that's when they stole the election from Claude Pepper. He made a great impression. And he was one of the best orators I have ever heard.

RK: Claude Pepper?

HD: Yeah.

RK: Hmmm.

HD: [He had] been all his life. But he was a dynamic guy— And Park Trammell, of course, had control of, in those days, the courthouse gang; very much main state officials. A candidate would come into the county and sweep through the courthouse.

RK: Now were the county officials the courthouse gang?

HD: Yeah, yeah.

RK: So the sheriff?

HD: The sheriff and the county commissioners, the various tax collectors.

RK: I see.

HD: I am not so sure that the judges played too big a role. But mainly the sheriff and the county commissioners. Anyway, it was a very narrow margin. And it was pretty openly discussed that [the election] was stolen, right here in Tampa.

RK: By the courthouse gang for Park Trammell.

HD: Yeah, yeah. Jimmy Clendenin, who used to be editor for the *Tribune*, wrote a preface—a forward from one of my Tampa books in here.

RK: Which one is that?

HD: This is a new Tampa book?

RK: *Tampa Pictorial History*.

HD: Uh-huh.

RK: I don't have that one.

HD: Yeah, this one came out several years ago.

RK: I have seen it in the library, okay.

HD: Yeah. This is what Jimmy said about that period, "Hampton Dunn and I arrived in Tampa the same year. He was a university student. I was a reporter for the *Tampa Tribune*. Nineteen thirty-five. What a year! It was in its way as much a watershed as that year a half-century earlier when the coming of Henry B. Plant's railroad transformed a shrinking village into a boomtown."

"In 1935, Tampa was as corrupt a city as could be found in the United States. Jamming joints and houses of prostitution ran wide open. Underworld characters were in partnership with politicians. Elections were so brazenly stolen that the whole state knew one of its United States Senators owed his seat to Tampa's hot votes."

"The turning point came in the municipal election of 1935. The struggle for power between the city hall and the courthouse gangs, each of which recruited hundreds of armed hoodlums to police the polls. The threat of bloodshed was so great that the governor sent in the National Guard to preserve order. And all this in the midst of a hurricane. Even calloused consciences were pricked by the disgraceful state to which Tampa had fallen. Civic organizations, urged on the newspapers, began a clean-up campaign. Step by painful step over a period of years the reformers forced the conversion of sin city to a self-respecting and respected community."

"Hampton Dunn is a reporter for the *Tampa Daily Times* and later as managing editor was both a recorder of this history and a participant in it. His interest in current events brought him to revive the curiosity about the historical forces of change." And so forth.

But that story I did on the 1935 election pretty well told the story of the situation at that time. They—Mayor Chancey and Mayor McKay, I guess—

RK: Well, Chancey was mayor at that time.

HD: Oh, Chancey, yeah. Chancey brought in, he swore in a lot of special police, and Sheriff Spencer swore in a lot of deputies. And they squared off.

RK: Spencer was tied in with McKay, right?

HD: Yeah, uh-huh.

RK: Now, sticking with Pepper for a second, I just happened to run across the fellow this weekend in a meeting who heard Pepper's campaign manager or somebody like that speak back in thirty [1930]. He was campaign manager back in the mid-thirties [1930s]. And he said—in thirty-six [1936], I guess, Pepper won, didn't he? Or thirty-eight [1938]?

HD: That's right. It became such a scandal, and so brazen and so well known that it was stolen. And he was a smart politician, this Pepper. He just took it very gracefully and commended and congratulated Senator Trammell. And spoke well of him, you know. But his attitude at that time was so—that made another impression that in 1936 he was unopposed.

RK: He was unopposed. So he didn't beat Trammell. Obviously he beat someone else.

HD: He beat—Trammell died—let me see. Duncan Fletcher died.

RK: Uh-huh, okay.

HD: So he ran for that—

RK: No challenge for the primary even?

HD: No.

RK: Because that was the important election.

HD: I really need to check on that. But I am almost positive that's—

RK: Okay. In thirty-four [1934], as far as Pepper losing, would it have been Charlie Wall as an important figure as far as throwing it?

HD: Oh, yeah.

RK: He would be important, right?

HD: Charlie Wall was Mr. Big at the time.

RK: Now is he tied into very specific politicians or more generally?

HD: Well, he had the gambling concession, apparently. He had done all that. I don't think there was much drugs. It wasn't a big deal around here then. Although, I think he was indicted and maybe served a little time for drugs.

RK: Oh, he did.

HD: But that was before he became so big. But he definitely was a figure.

RK: Who would be the major—?

HD: He was tied in with—I guess you can't prove it—but he was tied in with the Lykes' interests.

RK: Now, I figured he was. I mean I know in terms of related and so on. And how would he be tied in?

HD: Uh—Charlie Wall was part of the very prominent—(inaudible). And I am not sure whether there was blood kin there or not. It has been so long since I have thought about that.

RK: Were [the] Lykes politically active then?

HD: Yes. Well, they were in the background. They never ran for office or anything.

RK: Can you explain it?

HD: Well, they had money. And the family was very prominent. Charlie Wall was the black sheep of the family. But everybody else was highly respected. But when a candidate came to town, he always had to check in with—or if anybody wanted to run for office, they had to check in with the Lykes.

RK: Local candidates, state candidates, and others?

HD: Yeah, yeah.

RK: Even for the city council?

HD: I think he figured in those as well. But it was important that you had the whole apparatus including the state attorney and the county solicitor. We had both at one time.

RK: County solicitor was for the smaller crimes?

HD: Well, the county solicitor had a lot of power. He was a one-man grand jury.

RK: Oh.

HD: He could issue—he could file, what did they call it? Information, I believed they called it. And the information, which had—was the same as an indictment by the grand jury.

RK: Huh.

HD: And so he could be—there used to be a lot of talking about who is responsible, and why wasn't this mess cleaned up? Well, they both had that power.

RK: They both [were] elected?

HD: Yeah. Yeah.

RK: Was the one person county solicitor for a long time?

HD: I am not sure there—I think, no, I don't think that there was anybody who stayed in that job for too long; it was so hard and sought after. It was the last county solicitor [that was] elected was Paul Johnson. And then he got elected state attorney.

RK: Okay. Can we skip to post-Kefauver? Nineteen fifty-two, or whatever. You were managing editor of the—

HD: I was managing editor of the *Tampa Times*—

RK: Okay.

HD: —in 1950, wasn't it?

RK: Yeah.

HD: That's when John Kefauver came to Tampa.

RK: Okay. Can I ask please, how are things—did things shift after that?

HD: Well—

RK: If they did.

HD: There was a big turnover in the underworld starting in 1941, when Hugh Culbreath became sheriff. Hugh Culbreath was here; Red Fisher was county solicitor; Rex Farrior was state attorney. Those are a lot of—

Well, all in the late thirties [1930s] was a big turnover, and the Italians were trying to take over. Spanish and Cubans had pretty much been in charge of the gambling. And I am not really sure just the names of all the players at that time. But I do know that starting in 1933 and continuing until 1950 or fifty-one [1951] there was a series of unsolved gangland murders, gangland-style murders. Which were interpreted to be gangland here. And they were real professional jobs. And nobody was ever convicted, or charged even. Just were not able to get any clues. (chuckles)

I was covering the police and the sheriff at one time. I didn't know what was going on. I'd get a call in the middle of the night [saying], "Oh they got another one." So we'd go out there and they'd go through all the antics of bringing in bloodhounds and trying to find the cover; somehow they never did. So there were about twenty-two of them, I think, all together; twenty-two gangland murders.

Now do you know that, during that scramble there, Velasco—Roy Velasco—was killed. And his family and surviving brothers sort of spilled the beans, and that's when Kefauver—of course, Kefauver was building up to run for president. And this was his vehicle for publicity. He got himself appointed and got this prime investigating committee appointed. He became its chair.

He himself did not come to Tampa. But there was a subcommittee that Senator Hunt—Lester Hunt—from way out there in Wyoming, I think. Somewhere [one of those] states out there. Wyoming is where I think he was from. And he presided here in Tampa. And they called in Rex Farrior and they called in police chief J.L. Eddings. You ought to go back and read the papers at that time. Maybe you have.

They tried—they had a subpoena out for Manny Garcia. They made him get served, and of course he wasn't around when the *familia* was in town. But they had scolded, scorched Old Farrior, so his record was zero. When actually he went in as sort of a reform candidate in 1933 and had been on the team which elected Dave Scholtz for governor. And he made a name for himself by convicting some killers of this—

RK: The guy from Vermont—[Joseph Shoemaker, who started] the Modern Democrats. In 1935.

HD: Yeah, yeah.

RK: I read about that.

HD: What was their names? (talking in background) And he actually—Pat Whittaker represented the defendants. But Rex Farrior was pretty gutsy and fought that thing. But, even though they got convictions I think there's—I'm not sure what—

RK: It was overturned, I know of.

HD: Huh?

RK: Most of them were overturned, I know.

HD: Yeah. So Rex laid the claim. Now I know I have to be real careful because I don't have—

RK: Sure.

HD: Since there is no real table of organization. (chuckles) But he is supposed to have been tied in with the Italian crowd.

RK: One of the factions?

HD: Yeah. The *Italiano*. Red Italian.

RK: Red Italiano.

HD: Yeah.

RK: Was he from Tampa?

HD: Who, Red?

RK: Yeah.

HD: Oh yeah. Yeah. Red— he had a very legitimate business up at Miller's Beer— Miller's High Life. He was a distributor for that. I don't know if they are still around.

RK: Is that the same family as Nossa Italiano or no?

HD: Yeah. I am not sure he is directly, but that is part of the same family, yeah. *Bolita* was big. That was the big money maker.

RK: The city jobs in the thirties [1930s]— did the mayor control them or did the city council people?

HD: Well, city council could get some jobs. But mainly it was the (inaudible) mayor's. Chancey had a lot of jobs. Actually, there wasn't any jobs to be had except for the WPA jobs.

RK: And who controlled those, a mix?

HD: Well, your congressman handed out— The mayor— Each project had to have a sponsor, a government sponsor. So the city and the county, school board and all that would do the sponsoring. And I guess they had little say on who got a job.

RK: I know in [Gary] Mormino's piece in that *Sunbelt Cities* he said that Nick Nuccio said he was able to get something like a thousand jobs for his people, WPA people.

HD: I'd believe that.

RK: Yeah.

HD: He was the only county commissioner in our city.

RK: (speaking at the same time) Yeah. I think it was county—

HD: He was on city council first, and then got on county commission, and then got elected mayor.

RK: Was Curtis Hixon an active councilperson and commissioner?

HD: Yeah. Well, he was only commissioner—they were a bunch of—Well, I didn't remember too much about him because I was overseas all during World War II. Of course, he got elected mayor in—

RK: Forty-three [1943] or so? Roughly.

HD: Uh-huh. But he was just a good old Cracker boy out of Seminole Heights. Which was Cracker territory out there. And generally, I don't know that he had any ties with underworld. I don't know that.

RK: Now they say he did. But I guess you never know. (laughs)

HD: Yeah, you never know.

RK: Can I ask—You became managing editor when, sir?

HD: In forty-nine [1949].

RK: Okay. Sometime—I don't know what year, but at least certainly by the time Nuccio became mayor right around that time—there began to be a focus on downtown; trying to clean it up and develop it. Can you tell me where this emanated from, and why we get a focus now on downtown?

HD: Well, the [*Tampa*] *Times* had a lot to do with it because my first project, you know, crusade in the paper, when I came back from the service—I came back in early forty-six [1946]; actually, the end of forty-five [1945]—was trying to get the damn railroad out of downtown Tampa. They used to have long freight trains rolling through there at midday. Right in those days, everything was focused downtown. So you had a lot of traffic and a lot of people down there who were inconvenienced by it.

But I carried on one hell of a crusade to get the railroad moved. (music in background)
The city council made a pass at it, and they put some restrictions on the number of cars they could have and the number of hours they could operate. But they never really put the beat on the railroad.

RK: ACL [Atlantic Coast Line Railway]?

HD: ACL. Now, Hixon was a good friend of Phil Lee, who was vice-president later, and I think later president of the ACL. No, he never was president. He was a good friend of Hixon. Finally, in Nuccio's election, Nuccio took up the fight and the *Tribune* joined in that. And I think Howard Frankland, the banker, and Jim Council, who was publisher of the *Tribune*. The mayor put them on a committee and they had the thought to get the railroad out of—you know where Curtis Hixon Hall is and all that?

RK: Yes. I heard it was—(inaudible) and so on. The switching—

HD: Oh, yeah. When I called, I called the railroad going through town the Polk Street Switchyard.

RK: (chuckles) Were other business people strongly supporting you there—chamber types?

HD: No, they were—

RK: See, why not? I would expect they would. They just were not doing anything?

HD: The only ones, we got some help from Dave Falk, who had ran O. Falk's Department Store—

RK: Yeah.

HD: —which was a big rival of Maas Brothers [Department Store]. But the [*Tampa*] *Tribune* was not involved. They didn't— it was our campaign, and they let us. Later on though, when Nick was mayor— Jim Council, I guess, got the *Tribune* involved.

RK: I am trying to think, Mr. [Carl] Brorein—was he active? Did he try and help you too, from Peninsular Telephone?

HD: No, I don't remember him doing anything.

RK: See, the reason I am asking is, I would expect these big business types to be interested in that. They just weren't, huh?

HD: No, because the railroad was big business too.

RK: Yeah. And they had ties?

HD: Yeah. We were on another project that I was fighting—

RK: I'm sorry, can I just ask one thing? I'm sorry. What were some of the ties between the railroad and some of the other businesses? You said Hixon was close to railroad and he didn't want to push them out. But [were there] any other type of ties?

HD: Well I am not real sure he was— Phil Lee was a civic leader. (inaudible)

RK: Was the chamber active at that point? We're talking like forty-nine [1949]–fifty [1950] and so on.

HD: Yeah, it was active but it didn't really get organized on any base until Scott Christopher came.

RK: Okay. Okay.

HD: And when was that in?

RK: About fifty-three [1953] or so.

HD: (inaudible)

RK: And I'm sorry, I interrupted you. You said you were getting involved with another project also.

HD: Oh, yeah. While I was away during the war, let's see—oh, there was a big hassle over about building a new courthouse. When we had this built by the same architect that built—

RK: (speaking at same time) Yeah, I have seen pictures; it's neat.

HD: Yeah, they had that dome on it. It's a great building. But they decided they wanted a new courthouse and the big hassle was where to locate the courthouse.

RK: Now, who is ‘they’?

HD: Well, the town. A lot of people, the county commissioners, the decision was theirs. They got M. Leo Elliot, the prominent architect, and his idea was to use that present site, which is where the Sun Bank is now, in that parking lot. His concept was a big ten-story mausoleum, we called it. Anyway, nothing came of it. They were going to have an election a straw vote or something, but the courts ruled it out because—

Our idea, the *Times*’ idea was to clean up that whole east side of the river from Platt Street to Cass Street and utilize it for public structures. But we lost that battle. The *Tribune* was screaming for it to be where it is, which we called the worst location. It’s a bad location.

RK: Down on Jefferson [Street], or whatever? Twigg [Street], yeah.

HD: Yeah, yeah. Whatever it is. And yeah—

RK: Why did they want it there?

HD: Well, their building was closed there, and I guess they had some business buddies that—we never did really nail down why. But that fight was followed almost immediately, when I came back—was to put the State Building— the State of Florida had started building branch offices around the state. And so we raised hell. We wanted them to clean out that—All you had up there was from Cass Street and around there was—north was terrible slums; white owners of black tenant houses.

RK: Mr. Pizzo told me there were some Italians living there also?

HD: I am not sure. There could have been but I always just thought it was only blacks.

RK: Where the Performing Arts Center is now, is that where we’re talking about?

HD: Yeah, well, north. What I was talking about was north of Cass Street—

RK: North of Cass. Yes—

HD: Which is north of the library.

RK: Yes.

HD: That’s where it would be, right in there by the Performing Arts Center, yeah. Let me see, who was the governor? I think— now hold on— I think [LeRoy] Collins was. And the cabinet had to decide where the thing was going to be. But the alternate was to put it where the old state building [was] down there by the courthouse.

RK: Yeah.

HD: It's now school administration, school something.

RK: On Kennedy [Boulevard]?

HD: No, not on Kennedy, that's a different building.

RK: Oh, okay.

HD: No, it was on the north side of the courthouse. We called it the worst location they could get. And it was in a crowded warehouse district. But they went—you know when they get their cards all set they would roll.

RK: The State?

HD: Yeah. They built it there. And then a few years later they really decided it wasn't a good site and they moved it to where it is now, which is up on Franklin Street.

RK: During [Mayor William] Poe's administration?

HD: I believe that's right, yeah. Franklin, unfortunately, is where it is now. Which is still not an ideal location. What we envisioned was putting courthouse and the federal building, the state building, the library, all these other things, the city hall—all of these things spread out along there with beautiful landscaping with a lot of parking facilities. But we lost. I am used to losing.

RK: Now then, Mr. Nuccio comes in and he did what you wanted to do in terms of purchasing the railroad land, correct?

HD: Yeah. Yeah. He did. Yeah.

RK: Now, what do you attribute his aggressive action there to?

HD: Well, I think it is tied with, well, you got the *Tribune*, for one—

RK: This is fifty-five [1955]–fifty-six [1956] roughly whatever—

HD: Yeah. And you have got Howard Frankland.

RK: He pushed it strongly?

HD: Yeah.

RK: And was Mr. Christopher involved now, the chamber, more actively than before?

HD: They— no.

RK: Not so much?

HD: They tippy-toed around that thing because as far as getting the state building, they didn't want to buck the *Tribune*. And they, they didn't—the *Tribune* were in a more powerful position than we were.

RK: And they didn't push so much to purchase the ACL's old land either, the chamber?

HD: I think they did on that.

RK: That? Okay.

HD: I think they did. There was a period in there from 1958 [when] the *Times* was sold to the *Tribune*.

RK: Oh, I see.

HD: The *Tribune* kept all the Indians and let us chiefs go.

RK: I see.

HD: I had been writing for twenty-two years and so— I was out of a job—

RK: Oh.

HD: —after twenty-two years there at the *Times*. But that was okay. It could have been the other way around. I guess I'd have done the same way. Anyway, I went to Miami. I had a lot of offers and I went to Miami.

RK: Oh, so you weren't here, like in the sixties [1960s]?

HD: I wasn't here in fifty-eight [1958] and fifty-nine [1959].

RK: Oh, I see.

HD: I came back in late fifty-nine [1959] and started work here for AAA [American Automobile Association].

RK: Okay. Can I ask about something? Maybe you didn't focus on that so much at that point.

HD: That's right.

RK: But you had some major renewal projects, as you know. The one in Maryland Plaza where Nuccio Parkway is now, and north of downtown where the Performing Arts Center is now, and Ybor City. Did you have any involvement in that, or at least observation of it?

HD: The only way that I guess we—the spinoff of that courthouse—statehouse fight. We had put out bumper stickers saying, “Slums must go.” And that's when they came through with Sam Gibbons, who pushed his urban renewal.

RK: I see.

HD: He got it through Congress and that's when they cleaned out a lot of Ybor City and cleaned out—

RK: And the bumper stickers—“Slums must go”—that was pushed by who? By the *Times*?

HD: Yeah. Oh yeah.

RK: And—

HD: And the small business guys up on skid row up on North Franklin [Street], they weren't the skid row-types. You had, I remember, Silas Telander was one of the leaders. George Holtsinger had his Ford agency up there.

RK: North of downtown?

HD: Yeah. Uh-huh.

RK: And they were pushing for that slum to go, over where the Performing Arts Center is now?

HD: Yes, yes.

RK: I see.

HD: They called themselves the Uptown Merchants Association.

RK: The Uptown Merchants Association—now that was separate from the chamber.

HD: Oh, yeah.

RK: It was a group within the chamber perhaps—

HD: (speaking at the same time) They were the outs. They weren't the in crowd, you know.

RK: I see. And they were able to persuade Gibbons or encourage Gibbons?

HD: Gibbons; also a Republican congressman we had for the first time was Bill Cramer.

RK: Yes.

HD: And Bill helped with that.

RK: Is he still around, sir?

HD: Yeah. Cramer—I think he is back in St. Petersburg. That's where he was from. He's an attorney. And he's still big wheeling and dealing in Washington.

RK: Oh.

HD: He had an office up there. He had one in Miami. And I'm not real sure where Bill is at this time, but it think it is over in St. Pete.

RK: And it's C-r-a or K-r-a?

HD: C-r-a.

RK: C-r-a. And so when you were pushing the "Slums Must Go," were you thinking as well about the area where they clear out around Lucia Parkway there or was that not—

HD: We didn't get involved in that, no.

RK: I see. So it was north of downtown.

HD: Yeah. We were just bound and determined to clean up that little waterfront, riverfront.

RK: Now, was their any attention focused on the people living there, you know, as far as relocation, and so on?

HD: Well, that was something that I guess the federal government was supposed to be involved in.

RK: Right.

HD: I think that was part of the package; getting the urban renewal, and getting rid of the substandard housing.

RK: So you weren't focused on Ybor City either.

HD: No, no. We didn't do much on Ybor City.

RK: Do you know how that came about? That was sixty-five [1965], Nuccio's second term.

HD: Well, the urban renewal program—

RK: Yeah. Did the chamber get involved with that, do you know? I am trying to figure out, sir, if the chamber got involved with this urban renewal effort.

HD: I am not clear on that.

RK: I see.

HD: But what you ought to do is see Scott Christopher.

RK: Yeah, I spoke with him one time and I should see him again.

HD: Was he—

RK: He said they weren't heavily involved, but I do know that Mr. MacInnes—I read this in the paper—was head of some chamber committee on downtown. I forget the exact name. And they pushed for a variety of things that are compatible with what you're talking about.

HD: He—as I recall, MacInnes favored that state building where it went.

RK: Oh, he did? You don't why, though, huh?

HD: No, I don't. It was ties with—

RK: Landowners?

HD: With the power people, yeah?

RK: Were the power people landowners?

HD: Landowners and the *Tribune*.

RK: Were there a few major landowners downtown, sir?

HD: I think it was pretty broken up, but there's probably some big landowners down there. I don't know the breakdown on it.

RK: Do you know who might be aware of things like that? I spoke to Marshall Tyson, he used to work for the city.

HD: Yeah. There's a fellow named Pellhank. I don't know—he's getting older now. He lives out at the John Knox Village [retirement living facility].

RK: Now, he was comptroller? He was comptroller?

HD: He was city comptroller, and before that, he worked for this county commissioners. And he worked for the tax—he worked for the budget board.

RK: I see.

HD: We used to have a budget, a county budget board. As I far as—I ain't seen him in several years. But he had his marbles then, you know.

RK: He would be knowledgeable about that?

HD: Oh, yeah. He would know a lot.

RK: Where does he live? I'm sorry.

HD: John Knox Village.

RK: By USF [University of South Florida]?

HD: Yeah, it's a retirement community out there—a home.

RK: Yeah, I have seen it.

HD: —apartments. I don't know whether he will talk—you know, because he was in politics all his life. He came here at nineteen to get into the real estate business. And worked with the promoter and the developer of Oldsmar.

RK: Oh. At one point, obviously, Tampa became a growth-oriented community—

HD: Became what?

RK: Growth-oriented—very concerned with growth and development. When would you say this occurred, began to occur?

HD: Well, I guess—let's see—in the forties [1940s]. The late forties [1940s], and maybe early fifties [1950s]. It's when they—we had our first shopping centers. Britton Plaza, and what was that one? North Gate.

RK: Yes.

HD: North Gate. And I guess that was the first realization that downtown was getting crowded, and things were dispersing. I think that's when their eyes opened to the population.

RK: Well, that's interesting, and the eyes focused outside of downtown, huh?

HD: Yes, they did. Because parking became a problem downtown—

RK: Some cities have these big downtown booms, you know, relatively big, office buildings and so on. We didn't have that very much at all.

HD: We didn't have—nothing happened until—our skyline stayed the same from 1920—in the 1920s. During the—

RK: Yeah.

HD: —real estate boom when Stovall—who used to be the publisher of the *Tribune*—built the skyline. He built the Stovall Office Building, which is now the insurance company building. And he bought—and he built the Stovall Professional Building, which is no longer, it was noted. It was on Morgan Street there—it's gone. And one other building—Wallace S. Building. The Wallace S. building, I believe they called it. But it stayed the same—the town stayed the same up until, well, the first breakthrough—breakout from that was when First National Bank had built their tower. We thought we were really big time.

RK: That's what became NCA—or that's what became—

HD: No, that's—

RK: Florida Federal. Or whatever it's called—

HD: No. This one is—it's First Florida, First Florida.

RK: That's what I meant, I'm sorry.

HD: Yeah.

RK: Yes.

HD: Yeah, yeah. And Chester Ferguson was big, and he's part of the Lykes.

RK: Sure, and he's—he was building that building there?

HD: Oh, absolutely, yeah. And he was very influential all over the—on everything.

RK: And why did they now go downtown? I know it wasn't much, but you did get that building—the other two banks built buildings, right?

HD: And then, after that, and I'd go over, and it was quite a while after that, they build the quad block.

RK: Yes.

HD: They acquired the land, put these—put it all together, and that's when they really, really started up with the skyscrapers.

RK: And why were we so slow, compared to many other cities, at least? Limited downtown development, in other words.

HD: I don't know. Unless—had a lot of old timers that just aren't very progressive—the banks. I mean, I think they just weren't all that progressive. And it's only when new money came in here and new high technology and the yuppies started coming in here, and there was opportunities. And the climate and all of this screamed for development.

RK: Yes, from out of town, mainly.

HD: Yes.

RK: Because in town there were other ways to make money, I guess.

HD: Here in Tampa?

RK: Yeah, as far as people were already here.

HD: Yeah. Although, the cigar industry was dying, with the machinery and the moving to New Jersey, wherever. And of course it really got—really got hurt when Castro took over and they couldn't get the fine Havana tobacco.

RK: Right. Well, I guess I'm not asking the question right at all. But in some cities you had a coalition of people that supported downtown development. Landowners, downtown land, sometimes utilities—

HD: Well, we had a Committee of One Hundred. I guess that was the nearest thing to what you're talking about. And it was kind of a coalition of the old timers, and some of the new—

RK: Right.

HD: New interests.

RK: But they didn't focus on downtown so much, did they? Till late, at least.

HD: Till late.

RK: Yes.

HD: Yes. That slipped away from them as these Westshore developments and this—we moved out here in this building in 1965.

RK: Boy. What was out here then?

HD: Nothing. There was a little store across the street there that was Rex Kane's furniture place. It's still there. There was a building—a couple of buildings next door here, one of them is still there. One of them was occupied by Tampa Transit Lines, which ran the bus system. There was an engineering company out there that—there was beautiful woods. I had an office down on the first floor and just look out of my window there, and there was trees and birds and squirrels. And then Austin came out here. (coughs) Excuse me. He built, built his theatre right down the street, and then started building his towers.

RK: Is it the airport that stimulated it?

HD: Oh, the airport didn't impact none of this. Up until that time the thoughts were that the city was moving out toward Twenty—Hillsborough Avenue and Twenty-Second [Street]. Where, you know, Sears Roebuck went out there.

RK: Oh, I didn't know that.

HD: Yeah, that's where [the] Urban Vocational Center is now. And Sears moved out there because they—all the, you know the subdivisions were moving north—

RK: North.

HD: Yes. And west. Or east, I guess—both ways. But O. Falk's—[David Falk]—he had two big department stores, Maas Brothers and O. Falk's. And O. Falk's finally went by the wayside. Dave, I guess, died. And Maas Brothers now is in trouble.

RK: So as far as the chamber in this community, they obviously were very powerful. They became powerful, correct? With Mr. Christopher later on?

HD: Oh, yeah.

RK: And—

HD: Well, they've always had the big names.

RK: But they became more active, I guess. Is that true?

HD: Yes, yes, that's—oh, yes. Scott [Christopher] apparently is a fine organizer.

RK: Can we just look at Tampa in say, sixty-five [1965]? And I know you're busy, I won't stay any later. Who would you say were the major business actors at that point?

HD: In sixty-five [1965]?

RK: Yes, roughly, yes.

HD: Well, definitely Chester Ferguson.

RK: Yes.

HD: I would have to say that Al Austin was emerging.

RK: Okay. Was MacInnes one?

HD: Oh yes, definitely. Yeah, oh, yeah. He was—he was—and then Ellsworth Simmons who had been on the county commission, he had a lot of say.

RK: And he was close to MacInnes, wasn't he?

HD: Oh yeah, oh lord, yeah.

RK: They were almost one in the same? I mean, they thought alike, and they—

HD: Well, I think, yeah. They were certainly business associates or friends.

RK: And they were growth oriented, weren't they? Speaking—wanting development any growth?

HD: I'm sure MacInnes did, but it was our—(inaudible).

RK: Sure, sure. Was Mr. Leary a major person at that point? Or—

HD: He emerged, yeah. He became very influential. Still is—even though he's retired—long retired. But he was I think, one of the good leaders, I think, one of the good guys.

RK: Yes, I spoke with him recently. So you had this business group form, and was it fair to say they were all interested in development? Was Mr. Ferguson growth oriented—would you say—for the city, in terms of development?

HD: Well, I think he wanted to control it (laughs).

RK: Yeah. He wanted—

HD: By himself—by his group, whoever they might be.

RK: So, it isn't just that they wanted—

HD: But I think—I think he was fairly progressive. Certainly more progressive, maybe, than, say, the Lykes—the older Lykes. And he became the spokesman for that.

RK: And the other Lykes were more inner-directed? They wanted their own business interests to prosper and that was about it?

HD: They had, yes—they had theirs. And the steamship, and I guess real estate. I'm not sure what all they had.

RK: But that was their concern, their own inter workings and—

HD: Yeah.

RK: Own wealth.

HD: Oh, yeah. They were seven brothers, you know. And they came down here, and the very beginning of Tampa almost.

RK: Can I just ask one other question?

HD: Sure.

RK: Just a general question. It ties in with that. A lot of people describe Tampa—let's say prior to mid-fifties [1950s], whatever year we're going to use—

HD: Right.

RK: —as kind of—the business leaders especially, as kind of conservative, not at all forward looking. Maybe concerned about their own well being, individual well being, as opposed to the communities at large. Would you say that?

HD: They had control of the money. I mean, the banks just didn't want to—they were very careful who and how much they lent out, and who to. That changed a little bit when a fellow named George Howell—

RK: Marine?

HD: Marine Bank, yeah. His widow just died this weekend. And his son is—what is he doing? Is he in Raleigh or something? George Howell—

RK: George Howell, Jr.?

HD: Yes. He's a young businessman. But he was a very progressive and outgoing type. He believed in getting new money and new people. The others wanted to keep control of it.

RK: Loan only to certain people, and so on.

HD: Yeah. And they wanted to be sure it wouldn't hurt somebody that was already established here.

RK: Yes. Mr. Howell lent to Al Austin, is that correct? The others wouldn't?

HD: I'm not sure about poor Al.

RK: Because someone mentioned that—

HD: Poor Al got his money. He was—I think his daddy was pretty well off, I'm not even sure—he was sort of a new star, came on the horizons—

RK: So the others, it's fair to say, the other banks especially—it'd be First National and Exchange, right?

HD: Yes.

RK: And Exchange was tied in with TECO [Tampa Electric Company], as far as—

HD: Yeah.

RK: And First National was tied with several major business people? I have the people on the boards.

HD: Yeah, oh, yeah. They were—

RK: Can I just peek here?

HD: Sure, sure.

RK: I like it as Moody's here. Moody's—

HD: They had Jacks, and Jackson, and Hick Jackson—

RK: Let's see. I have sixty-one [1961]—First National—Can I just read some of the names to you?

HD: Yes.

RK: Oh, you want to look at it?

HD: No, go ahead.

RK: Okay. Well the offer said, "Liggett—Chairman; Franklin—Vice Chairman; R. E. W. Johnson—President."

HD: Elwood Johnson.

RK: Okay, and then they had like directors. They had Allen Binicker; C.W. Campbell; J.L. Ferman—I'm not reading them all—W.H. Franklin; Holtsinger—I guess you mentioned him before, G.M. Holtsinger.

HD: Yes. George.

RK: A J.R. Himes? I guess Himes Boulevard?

HD: No, well, yeah. That was for his father. But Judge Himes, he was a judge.

RK: Oh, he was a judge. J.T. Lane? Not Junior, I guess that's another Lane. J.T. Lane?

HD: I don't know what that would be.

RK: The A.C. Liggett, R.A. Liggett.

HD: The Liggetts were part of the original plan that built—

RK: First National?

HD: Yeah.

RK: C.P. Lykes—

HD: Charlie.

RK: V.H. Northcutt.

HD: V.H. Northcutt.

RK: They were tight close. They were always close, weren't they?

HD: With the Lykes?

RK: Yes.

HD: Yes.

RK: W.M. Taliaferro?

HD: Taliaferro, yeah. That's part of the original family that controlled—owned and controlled the First National—

RK: J.W. Warren.

HD: Jim Warren. He was head of Coca-Cola.

RK: Oh, he was head of Coca-Cola. R.C. Wooten?

HD: I should know him, but I don't remember.

RK: I think I mentioned him, but R.J. Binicker?

HD: Yes.

RK: I've seen that name. But he's old family too?

HD: Well, he was—came up in the bank. And ran the bank. I'm not sure how he got so powerful in it. But—

RK: How about J.M. Kelley? Is that part of the Fowler White [law firm], and so on?

HD: No, don't really think so.

RK: So is it fair to say—okay, how would you characterize this group of First National people? This is sixty-one [1961].

HD: Well, they were your movers and shakers. And they had the money—control of the money—a very powerful group. Ferguson wasn't listed there then?

RK: No, sir.

HD: No. He came in later.

RK: And you don't see these people as especially growth oriented or progressive in a certain sense?

HD: I didn't know them.

RK: Okay. Well, a lot of people will agree. Can I read a few others? Do you mind?

HD: Yeah, go ahead.

RK: Kick me out when, you know. Then we have Exchange, sixty-one [1961]. Exchange Bank. Offices—I'll just read a few—Peter O. Knight Jr. Is that the Peter O. Knight, or is it his son?

HD: No, that's his son. I think he's a doctor.

RK: Oh Really? J.R. Griffin. He's with them a long time, right? J.R. Griffin?

HD: Is that the—oh, that's the Exchange Bank.

RK: Yes.

HD: Oh yes.

RK: Yes. Vice Chairman—

HD: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Dick Griffin.

RK: He was big in it, right?

HD: Yes.

RK: Cueto? Isabel Cueto? C-u-e-t-o.

HD: She was there—I think she was a career bank woman.

RK: Henry Toland. Henry Toland.

HD: He was a prominent lawyer.

RK: He was in the aviation authority. I noticed that.

HD: Yes, he—Henry is still there?

RK: He is?

HD: Yeah.

RK: And or—

HD: Must have been—He's an attorney.

pause in recording

HD: His office is at 400 Ashley Drive.

RK: Really? It may be good to speak with him.

HD: Yes, I don't know how much he'd tell you. (chuckles)

RK: (chuckles) Then for the directors, can I just mention a few? R.M. Clewis? C-l-e-w-i-s.

HD: Yeah.

RK: Henry Toland; C.C. Whitaker. Now that's not part of the Whitaker—Pat Whitaker, is it? C.C. Whitaker II?

HD: Not Pat, it's not—I don't know whether they were related or not.

RK: Now then they have Chester Ferguson as the Director of Exchange at that point.
C.H. Ferguson.

HD: I'm not sure how that happened.

RK: MacInnes is on it.

HD: Yes, he was definitely—

RK: But then you have Mr. Woodberry. Is that the cigar Woodberry? D.H. Woodberry?

HD: Yeah, yeah.

RK: Now, how would you characterize this group as far as the whole progressiveness or development orientation, or whatever?

HD: Well, of course Woodberry built up the—how Tampa—well Eli Witt is the one who really put it on the map. Then Woodberry had come up through the ranks, I think. Well, they were substantial businessmen at the time. I'm not sure how you'd—

RK: Is there any way you can compare them to the First National people? I know it's hard.

HD: I think probably First National probably had a little more influence.

RK: Yeah. Did they have political influence as well? These banks?

HD: Oh, I'm sure they did, but they low-keyed it.

RK: (inaudible)

HD: Yeah. Yeah.

RK: I'd be curious to know what, which of these people, if any, played a role in urban renewal. But that's hard to find out, I suppose.

HD: Yes. You might talk to Sam Gibbons. I don't know how much he'll tell you.

RK: Yeah, he told me something about that, but then—

HD: Because he was, he was in on it.

RK: He was intimately involved, obviously.

HD: Yeah.

RK: I should speak with him again. Now can I read the people from Marine? Please? This is sixty-one [1961]. So George Howell, as you say, was chair. A.C. Howell— President. Is that another family member? L.D. Smith? L.D. Smith? J.W. Grey was an officer?

HD: Wally Grey, yeah.

RK: What did he—

HD: He—I think Wally went with Western Union. And I'm not sure how and where— (loud brush against microphone) or just how he got into the bank.

RK: One director was Shackleford. Is that the law firm Shackleford Ferrier and so on?

HD: Yeah, yeah.

RK: Mr. Brorein was on it.

HD: Carl?

RK: Yes.

HD: Okay.

RK: Mr. A.C. Clewis.

HD: Yes.

RK: Corral. Is that [the] old cigar [family]—J.J. Corral?

HD: Yes.

RK: A.C. Howell, okay, this is the director's—now these people you were saying were a little more forward. Was it the people generally were more forward? Or was it specifically Howell?

HD: Well, Howell was the real pusher.

RK: Yes, they brought him in from outside, from New York or somewhere, right?

HD: He married into that—

RK: He married.

HD: He was family.

RK: Okay. All right.

end of interview