2
children. People bidding on it wanted the two boys, even though they were much
younger, but really weren’t interested in the girl. They were looking for people to work
on the farm. At age 11, my mother made the statement that whoever takes the boys or
buys the farm takes all three of us. An uncle of theirs did buy the farm and he took the
three children and raised them. Then when Mother and Dad decided to get married,
Mother had the same condition, the two boys had to come with the marriage. So my
mother and dad raised her two brothers. She was really the outspoken one in the family
and the one that kind of set the stage for what happened in our lives, and she was very
active in the Baptist church. We were raised up in a very rural Baptist church, but it was
a great lifestyle. My children always ask me, “What did you do on Saturday night?” On
Saturday night, we were so tired; we really weren’t excited about doing anything.
However, we did kind of have a routine of going to town on Saturday. We didn’t have
any of the excitements that you have today. My kids all wonder what you did to get in
trouble. There really was nothing to get into. When you work on the farm all week,
you’re really not interested in getting into trouble on Saturday night.

M: I would imagill IOAPS VtW OFPB VlW M VtW tiue atoluet iuheTteryuld ioi htuauyyog’to.

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eight or nine miles apart, which doesn’t sound like very far today, but if you’ve got to
ride a mule to get over there, it’s an overnight trip, really. He met her at a picnic. They
dated for some time and got married and worked as just day laborers for quite some
time. A distant relative who was an old maid and never been married had this farm in
Chesterfield that had been left to her by her family. She was looking for somebody to
come move in and live with her to take care of her in her old age. In return, they would
get the house and about 40 or 50 acres of land to go with it. So that’s how Mother and
Dad got started in the farming business. Dad always wanted to own that farm next to us,
so all of his life and ours too, we kept trying to buy the next few acres next to us. He
finally expanded the farm until we had probably four or five hundred acres of land.

M: Did you have any tenants?

J: Oh, yeah. We had some sharecroppers. We had two, three, maybe four
sharecroppers.

M: Were they white or black?

J: Some of both. Growing up, I’d say about 50/50. But the family that owned the farm
next to us was black, and they had boys my age, so I really grew up with them. Even
though we were very segregated at the time in South Carolina, my relationship with them
was equal. We played together. We worked in the fields together. And we got along
wonderfully well.

M: Have you read Jimmy Carter’s memoir?

J: Yes, “Hour Before Daylight”. I can certainly relate to a lot of things he said in that
book. When daylight came, we were in the fields.

M: That was one of the themes in the book, his interaction with the black families.

J: I can distinctly remember how I got off the farm. I had graduated from high school. I
started to school at five years old, and we only had 11 grades so I graduated at 16 and I
was wondering, “Well, what am I going to do?” I knew I was going in the service.

M: What year did you graduate?

J: ’41.

M: That was an important year.

J: Yeah. I was plowing cotton in front of the house and wondering, “What am I going to
do.” I thought, “Well, I’ll work here during the summer [on] the farm and maybe in the fall
I’ll do something else.” My sister came by the house. Her husband was stationed at
Fort Jackson. We didn’t have a telephone or anything. Dad came out to the field about
11 o’clock and said, “Your sister’s at the house and she thinks you ought to get a couple
semesters of college before you go into the service. What do you think of it?” I said, “I
think it’s a great idea.” I could remember this very clearly because I had my pants leg
rolled up about halfway to my knees and it was hot as blue blazes. I had been plowing
that mule for weeks. And he said, “Well, take the mule to the barn”, so I took the mule to

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the barn and I’ve never been behind a mule since then. I did it with some emotions
because I knew that Dad had planned on me working that summer, so suddenly I leave
and he’s got to pick up the slack, which I kind of regretted, but I thought it was my
opportunity to get off the farm. I did go on over to the university and went to school for
two semesters. We were on a tri
-semester system because of the war. We got the
same

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Bainbridge, Maryland, for training. Just as we finished our training, they came through
the barracks one day and said, “Anybody in here that knows how to type and has been
to college, raise your hand.” Off I went to an outgoing unit and I hauled garbage for a

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a long
-time personal relationship with a good friend was to sell the business and we’d
split the money and go on our merry ways. That’s what we did and he and his wife
moved back to Shelby, North Carolina after that.

M: Do you remember what year that was?

J: I moved down here in ’57 and
 we sold out in the ‘60s.

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Avenue, so they had income from that plus some other rental property. And Mrs.
Chiles’ family owned quite a bit of property too that was divided up and she had, I guess
really, she probably owned or inherited most of the real estate that they had, but Mr.
Chiles managed it. So he had a parking lot in what used to be the People’s Bank. He
ran a parking lot there for a while. When I first came down here, he was running that
parking lot himself. After his heart attack, he wasn’t able to do much, but he was very
sociable.

M: And he was only in his forties when he had that. Mrs. Chiles’ family was pretty
prominent in the community, what was her maiden name and what were they involved
in, and did you ever meet them?

J: [Her maiden name was] Patterson. I met her sisters and brothers. [Her parents]
were dead when I came down here. You might
 be interested in this. Her great

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M: Is the old house still standing?

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M: What did you think when you heard he was going to run against Searles?

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lot of business with automobile dealers back in those days with the tire business and I
don’t know of any automobile dealer that I went to calling on to sell tires that thought

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Lawton was leading a very busy life and he was not here a lot of the time, and I was
pretty much confined to Lakeland, Florida.

M: During the late ‘50s and early ‘60s, besides his law practice, did he have any other
major business activities?

J: Yes. He obviously got involved with the very first Red Lobster to be built here, along
with Bill Ellsworth and some others, and they were doing some real estate development,
along with Skipper and Ellsworth. I really don’t know all their real estate dealings, but he
was involved in that.

M: Was most of his work civil work, or did he do any criminal work?

J: I don’t think so, no.

M: Can you go through the family, the children as they were born? Do you remember
the chronology there?

J: Well, Tandy…you talking about Lawton’s family? Tandy was obviously the first child,

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M: In 1970, during the campaign, were there any specific people that stand out in the
management of the campaign that you can remember?

J: Well, Jack Pridgen had to be the number one standout. Jack was the one that came
up with so many ideas for Lawton’s campaign, what to do and how to respond to
questions and problems. He was a great contributor to Lawton’s success.

M: Would you put him above Canady in terms of those early years?

J: Without any question.

M: His background was?

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J: Well, I ran for the City Commission and then you were elected as mayor from the
City Commission. But I had been involved in the chamber and had been President to
the Lions’ Club and I’d been very active in the community. George Trask was in the
Commission at that time.

M: Had you sold the tire business by that time?

J: No. I was still in the tire business. And I guess having worked in Lawton’s campaign
so much, you kind of get the political bug and you’d like to try it, so I decided to run. I
had two opponents.

M: What was the makeup of the Commission before you ran? Or at the time you ran?
Were you dissatisfied with some of the things going on?

J: No. No, this was just a vacancy and it was in the district that I lived in, so I thought it
was a good time to run.

M: Did people approach you to run?

J: George Trask and I had been talking about it and George, I guess, encouraged me to
run. Then when I started making a few comments about it, I did get a lot of support, and
thank goodness, I won. I didn’t have a runoff so that was nice. And Dr. Jackson was
running at the same time. He was our first black City Commissioner.