CENTER FOR FLORIDA HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **DOYLE CARLTON, JR.**
INTERVIEWER: **JAMES M. DENHAM**
PLACE: **WAUCHULA, FLORIDA**
DATE: **OCTOBER 15, 2002**

M= James M. Denham (Mike)
D= Doyle Carlton, Jr.

M: I am here with Mr. Doyle Carlton in his office in Wauchula, Florida, on October 15, 2002. My name is James Denham and I am representing the Center for Florida History at Florida Southern College. Mr. Carlton, I am really glad that you are with me today and I am looking forward to our interview. Can you tell me where you were born and what year you were born?

D: I was born in Tampa, Florida, on July 4, 1922.

M: Where did you go to school?

D: I went to school in Tampa, to Gorrie Grammer School. But then my dad was elected governor in 1929 and I went to the Demonstration School in Tallahassee. When his term expired, we moved back to Tampa. I went one year to Gorrie, to Woodrow Wilson Junior High School, and graduated from Plant High School in Tampa.

M: When you were growing up in Tampa, before your father became governor, what were your first memories as a child growing up in Tampa?

D: I have nothing but fond memories. People were very neighborly in those days.

D: Yes, he went with that firm right after he got out of law school and became a part of it, and then after his session as governor he came back and re-established himself.

M: Who would you say were some of his closest friends and business associates that he worked with at that time, before and after he was governor?

D: After he was governor, the dipping law was passed. Most people didnôt have any land. The land was owned by the timber companies and non-resident companies. Daddy needed to borrow $5,000. This was right after he was governor. He went to several banks in Tampa and couldnôt borrow the money. So he came to Wauchula, and Mr. J. Edgar Crews at the Wauchula State Bank loaned him $5,000. He started buying some of that land for $2.00 an acre. I will always remember Daddy being so gracious to Mr. Crews for making that money available. Of course, Daddy, you know, paid it back.

M: Well, that was a tough time to borrow money.

D: Oh, it really was a tough time.

M: When he was practicing law in Tampa before he became governor, what kind of law clients would he have had, cattlemen or businessmen?

D: I think he had some of each.

M: So he had a general practice? Did he specialize in anything, or was it pretty general?

D: Pretty general. I will never forget, while he was governor, the racing interests from the East were influential, the pari-mutuels. Well, Daddy did not have anything in the horse racing or dog racing, he later told me, but he said that the racing interests form the North spent several hundred thousand dollars buying votes in the legislature.

M: I have here that your dad began his practice in 1912 in Tampa. When did he decide

D: No.

M: I would imagine that your fatherôs campaign for governor would have been a vivid memory for you.

D: Of course, I was so young then, only about five years old.

M: So you donôt remember the campaign at all, the issues or who else was running?

D: No.

M: Someone told me, just as a legendary statement or something like that, that when your father was running for governor, and I donôt know whether this is true or not, that when your father was running for governor and was making a speech in Arcadia, that someone called him a Republican. Is that true?

D: I donôt recall that.

M: Someone told me that at one of your dadôs speeches, there was a hostile fellow and he yelled out ñHeôs a Republicanò or something like that.

D: I remember in the 1950s when I was 27 years old, George Smathers was running for the United States Senate, and George graduated from the University of Florida the year before I got up there. He played basketball at the university and I played basketball at the university. When he and I became acquainted, I remember he was running against Senator Pepper. I didnôt have anything against Senator Pepper but George and I were good friends. One of the first big speeches that I ever made was at Arcadia. We were at the courthouse, and there must have been a thousand people out there on the yard. A little lady from Lakeland, I forget her name, who was down there to speak for Senator Pepper and she spoke first, and then I spoke. When I spoke, I knew I was in cow

M: Do you remember what inauguration day was like in Tallahassee? Do you remember that inauguration?

D: I would have been about six years old. I remember that it was there at the old Capitol. And it was quite a program. I don't remember any of the details. There was a parade.

M: When you moved up there, did you move into the Governor's Mansion?

D: Yes.

M: Was that the same Governor's Mansion we see today?

D: It was in the same location, but I believe they have rebuilt the building. It was about a little more than a half a mile from there down to the Capitol.

M: Did you father walk to work every day or did he take the car?

D: I think he did some of both.

M: And it was the same distance for you to school?

D: No, it was a little further.

M: Are there any other stories that you remember very vividly of being the son of the governor? Governor junior?

D: I remember when I was in the 4th grade, and I walked down to the Capitol to see my daddy, and I wanted to get a dime from him to buy a cold drink or a bar of candy, so I went into his office and they said that the was in a cabinet meeting. Well, the doors of the cabinet were cracked open so I just played around a little bit out there. My daddy laughed and stopped the cabinet meeting and motioned me in, and I asked him for the dime. He gave it to me and smiled and patted me on the back. I thought how he could have told me if he had of been arrogant, "Son, don't ever interrupt me when I'm on the state's business" and run me out of there, but he was a loving father and I'll always remember that.

M: Do you remember any of the cabinet members?

D: I remember Mr. Bob Gray.

M: R.A. Gray?

D: Yes, R.A. Gray. He was the Secretary of State. He lived not too far from the

M: You lived in the Governorôs Mansion until 1933, went back to Tampa. Did you move back into your old house or did you buy a new house?

D: We moved back in the old house.

M: Did you keep your house while he was Governor?

D: Yes.

M: He went back to the law firm that he was with?

D: Yes, in fact, what was so interesting, we stayed in Tallahassee six months after h came to Tampa because my older sister was going to college there and it felt like it would probably be, money wise, better to stay and let her to finish college up there. Then we all came home.

M: By that time I guess you were about 12 years old?

D: About 10 or 11.

M: Do you have any other thoughts on Tallahassee ï growing up before we move on to when you moved back to Tampa? Did you go hunting, fishing, play ball, have any friends that you remember meeting up there?

D: I remember going hunting up there. I was just a kid and we played tough football in the front yard of the mansion. I will never forget the people who were maintaining the yards told Mother and Daddy to not lot those kids play ball out there because it was destructive to the lawn and they didnôt pay any attention and said if they want to play ball they can play ball. I remember playing touch football out there on the front yard of the mansion when I was just an 8 or 9-year-old kid.

M: Did you know Leroy Collins? I will ask you about his political career later on. But in those years, did you know Leroy Collins?

D: No, I did not know him in those years.

M: He would have lived, I guess, in the neighborhood at that point, but you didnôt kM , ' butÏ

D: Yes.

M: Was she a belle?

D: Yes.

M: Do you have any memories of her mother besides what she said bout your mother?

D: No.

M: So you moved back to Tampa, and you were about 12 years old. By that time, the Depression had really hit pretty hard and was really entrenched. What was it like growing up in Tampa in the Depression?

D: We really didnâ know any different as a youngster growing up. I think it was very educational because it taught us to be very frugal with our money. We werenâ going to just throw it away because we didnâ have any excessive funds. Of course, when the good times were going on, I was not old enough then, so I didnâ know any difference. But I think of those days and how thrifty and frugal we had to be because we didnâ have any money to throw away.

M: Did you have any interaction at all with the Cuban folks and cigar worker folks? Or was Hyde Park kind of an encapsulated neighborhood; did you kind of stay in that neighborhood? Did you interact with the Latino cigar workers?

D: Yes, they went to school with us. There were no problems. I remember playing basketball at Plant City High School.

M: that was a big high school even back then, I bet?

and people could get the land by just paying the state taxes in cash. I guess that would have had a major impact on future land holding.

Moving into the 1930 or I guess the year after that, your father decided to run for the Senate. Is that correct?

D: Yes, the U. S. State Senate. And I think one of the greatest things that ever