CENTER FOR FLORIDA HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: T. TERRELL SESSUMS

INTERVIEWER: JAMES M. DENHAM

PLACE: TAMP5l.26 Tm [(T)-8(A)26(M)-3(P)-17]m67]m afternoon about your memor

can see. We want to be able to divert from this as necessary, so feel free to do that as we go along. Canbou Ct(anb)14(ou)3t( )-4(Ct(anb))-4(Ct(on)1.t(a)13( )6(f)-a)o Cnecsa r8E4(C)5(hi)6(l

because I had been elected Student Body President in the spring R I ¶ D Q G V H U Y H G X Q W L O W K H V S U L Q J R I ¶ D Q G Z D V J U D that year. I found that the responsibilities of Student Body President and the demands of an entering law student were pretty conflicting, so after the first semester, I retreated to the safety of the graduate school and took some courses there until the spring. Then several sets of orders were canceled because of Air Force budget cuts, but before I could re-enter school, I got a new set of orders and I went on active duty in, I think January of 1954, and served two years in the United States Air Force. I took a little leave time in order to get back to re-register for law school, and then I, with the help of

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T: Well, ATO was a major fraternity on our campus, beautiful fraternity house, large fraternity. I knew some of the brothers. The member of the fraternity who was most involved during my undergraduate days was a gentleman named Leon Hanley who had been a candidate for president of the student body. Leon, I think, may still practice law in Orlando, Florida. Leon was not elected. A young man from Bartow named Emory

M: Right. He ran against Roy Searles. Okay.

T: But Roy Searles, I think, had been a little bit of a heavyweight in the legislature but he
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never met. The only reason we had it was the State Representative from Levy County, where there was a nuclear power plant at Crystal River, wanted to chair a committee,

promulgated his own court apportionment plan, which apparently was drafted and proposed to him by Dr. Manning Dauer at the University of Florida. Well, what he did was get the numbers balanced out, the ratios. But the way he did it here, Hillsborough County was a little under-represented with six representatives. Pasco County, Hernando County, and Citrus County, were a little over-represented with one representative each. So his order was just to put the four counties in one district and gave them nine seats and there were 10 incumbent legislators. No, is that right, nine or 10, but that was the first wave of reapportionment, and that did mathematically straighten this out so that the balance shifted from the small county or rural caucus to the urban caucus. But a third fa F W R U F D P H L Q E H F D X V H L Q W K D W V S H F L D

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M: Well, I can certainly find out.

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senators; these were not representatives.

M: Yes. Can you remember who was in the forefront of that legislation at the time, who was pushing it the most?

T: The Last Resort legislation?

M: Yes

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were a number of senators at the hotel meeting, but the senators were not all from the biggest counties. Some of them were there from smaller counties. I recall Doyle Carlton, Jr., being there, Doug Stenstrom being there. I think Ed Price may have been there. Scott Kelly was there. I remember discovering Scott Kelly must lift weights because there were some weights or barbells scattered around on the floor.

M: We went through some of this with him, too, a couple of weeks ago.

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M: He mentioned it but not in the specifics that you did.

T: I think they left with firm agreement that on their honor they would vote to uphold the veto if that became necessary.

M: Where do you think Lawton Chiles would have come down on all of this? This would have been, I guess, his first session. In your mind, just speculate; feel free to speculate about what he would have thought about all of this.

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M: That would have been, I would imagine, an eye-opening experience for you. Can you also tell me a little bit about what lobbying was like back then? What kind of rules were there? Were there hunting junkets, you know, dogs, fishing.

T: Yes. The whole legislative scene was more social then, and legislators as a group do not prepare many pieces of legislation. They were ordinarily prepared by the Governor or Cabinet Members who give them to them to sponsor or introduce. Every now and then they may have done something on their own initiative but there was virtually no legislative staff. It was a small legislative reference bureau with 3-5 people.

M: Was it a process of the lobbyist actually writing the stuff and handing it over to them?

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inflation. It permitted us to move ahead before things got worse than they were and to
get transportation improvements. So, I negotiated ZLWK WKH *RYHUQRU¶V +RXVH
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can see some fairly good arguments for it and we perhaps might agree to at least vote
for it so the people can have a shot at it, but yo X¶YH JRW RXU ELOOV DOO ERWW
committee, primarily our bill to establish a medical school at the University of South
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and our delegation was for it, and so Emerson Allsworth, who was a State
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T: I remember that Governor Askew invited Neva and I to go with him to that F R Q Y H Q W L R Q D Q G Z H G L G D Q G W K D W Z D V Q W W K R H I L U V W D Q G watched them on TV but that again was a very educational experience, and Senator McGovern was all over Reubin to be his Vice Presidential candidate. But, you know, we W R O G 5 H X E L Q W K D W 6 H Q D W R U 0 F * R Y H U Q Z D V X Q G R X E W H G O going to get many votes in Florida. The best we could ascertain, he might be able to

T: Yeah. And I know Bill Nelson was very disappointed and he felt maybe not Lawton D V P X F K D V % X G G \ 0 D F . D \ Z H Q W E D F N R Q W K H L U Z R U G E H F D candidacy until he was assured that they would not be candidates. But he persisted and I stuck with him. As soon as the primary was over, I immediately sent Lawton my contribution and helped him and was glad that he was elected Governor.

that was very much in the public interest. I was disappointed that his administration never got more involved or was never more supportive of education, not to the extent that Bob Graham had been or even Reubin Askew. His focus tended to be on other issues. And part of it was, I guess, fiscal reality, and an unwillingness after the service tax debacle to be a militant crusader for tax reform or something.

M: Do you remember the people in his office that you worked with the most closely, his aides, his advisors?

T: I had a contact or two with his General Counsel, J. Peterson, and a lot of it with Buddy MacKay and I had been asked at one point to draft a proposed answer and stipulation and everything to give to them, which I provided to Buddy MacKay, but nothing ever came of it, and they just joined in the general State Board of Education response. The main burden of defense was carried by the legislature, who retained former Florida Attorney General Bob Shevin to represent the state in that action.

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frustrated with the Democratic Party? We both know that the Democratic Party was losing ground, a lot of ground in the nineties. What do you think his thought was on

social issues ranging from gun control to abortion, you name it, but Lawton got a good lick in there.

0 : H O O , J X H V V , ¶ P k y o x to conclude this, W Can you then comment on what do you think his legacy for Florida will be, or for future generations, and also, what do you think he should be remembered for mostly in terms of his contributions?