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Interview with: 5 H X E L Q 2 ¶ ' $ V N H Z
Interviewe r: James M. Denham
Location: Tallahassee , FL; 5 H X E L Q $ V N H Z ¶ V R I I L F H
Date: October 19, 2006

JD= James M. Denham
RA= Reubin Askew

JD: Good afternoon, Governor Askew. Can you tell us a little bit about the first time you met Lawton Chiles, the first time you laid eyes on Lawton Chiles? Where was it, and what did you think?

RA: Lawton and I were in Law School together, so I met him in Law School and liked him, had no reason not to like him. I think Lawton was a pretty likeable guy. He finished a little bit ahead of me in Law School as I recall, but I met him in Law School and we worked together on some projects. We worked together on a Blue Key project on what would be the slogan for homecoming at the University of Florida, 1955. It was D V O R J D Q F R Q W H V W D Q G Z H I L Q D O O \ F D P H X S Z L W K ³ 5 H O D [thought was beautiful.

, ¶ Y H J R W D S L F W X U H V R P H Z K H U H office, of Lawton and I giving a K H U H L Q V check to the young man who won it, and it showed a very, very young Reubin Askew D Q G D Y H U \ \ R X Q J / D Z W R Q & K L O H V , W K L Q N , ¶ Y H J R W W K D

JD: Now that would have been, I guess, after he got back from Korea.

RA: Yes, yes.

JD: As I understand, that was kind of an interesting time because people were coming back; people were postponing their Postgraduate education and even first four \ H D U V ¶ H G X F D W L R Q V R \ R X K D G D U H D O P L [R I S H R S O H R I

RA: You did but I went into the Airborne Paratroops at 17, finished close to two years and went to Undergraduate School at Florida State and then was in their) 6 8 ¶ V I L U V W ROTC unit, which happened to have been the Air Force, and the Korean War broke out when I was in summer encampment.

$ Q \ Z D \ W K H \ Z H U H J R L Q J W R R U G H U X V W R D F W L Y H G X W \ Z materialize and then the whole class of 1951 throughout the entire nation in every unit, every branch of ROTC, got called to active duty. So I was called to active duty just as I J R W D % D F K H O R U ¶ V ' H J U H H I U R P) O R U L G D 6 W D W H , D O U H I our degree, took off our robe, we had our uniforms on, I got commissioned, so I spent two years, came out and then went to Law School.

So I had already served the second time and during the Korean conflict I went to France and Germany, so mine was never interrupted. I had a pretty good situation. I got out of high school, I went right into the Army, finished the Army, right to FSU, went straight through FSU in three years, got out, went back into the service for two years, and then Law School straight through for 2-1/2 so there were people like Lawton who had their education interrupted.

But Lawton was not in, see I was in twice, and Lawton is a little younger than I am, a couple years. So we met in Law School and as I say we worked together on some projects.

JD: Were there other people that you remember that were his friends there? Any who were particularly close to him?

RA: I would think Dexter Douglass. Of course he was close to Worley Brown but :RUOH\ LV GHFHDVHG QRZ , GRQ¶W NQRZ /DZWRQ KDG D C done his Undergraduate there and he had been very active in Student Affairs. Of course, Wilbur and Lawton became close friends.

JD: Wilbur Boyd?

RA: <HV :LOEXU %R\G EXW KH GLGQ¶W JR WR VFKRRO DW governmentally- ZLVH PLJKW ZHOO KDYH EHHQ /DZWRQ¶V FORVHV

JD: Did they meet while they were in the Legislature?

RA: 7KDW , GRQ¶W NQRZ , WKLQN WKH\ SUREDEO\ GLG EHF the Legislature at the same time. We served in both the House and the Senate. I served in the House four years and in the Senate eight years.

Lawton served eight years in the House and four years in the Senate, and then we both got elected statewide at the same time, so we continued to have common goals, and when you want me to I can get into some of the really exciting things in that campaign.

JD: You were both elected pretty much the same year in the State Legislature. 7KDW¶V D UHPDUNDEOH WKLQJ Did you work together on any legislation?

RA: , UHPHPEHU RQH LQWHUHVWLQJ WKLQJ DQG LW GLGQ¶W but the old small county group, often called the Pork Choppers, Jim Clendenin named them that in the Senate; so you really had the Pork Choppers in the Senate and the small county group in the House. When they would caucus every once in a while to GHFLGH ZKHWKHU WKDW¶V a small county issue in which they would block vote, they were caucusing and we used to sit around.

$OO WKH UHVW ZRXOG MXVW VLW DURXQG XQWLO ILQDOO\

JD: Yeah.

RA:

He had his problems. I thought at the time anybody could defeat Kirk, but I believe it would have been a much tougher race had Faircloth been the nominee because Faircloth came with a lot of baggage himself. At any rate, he was controversial.

JD: , JXHVV WKDW ZDV P\ ZD\ RI VD\LQJ WKDW\ RX ¶UH WKLQ
µ V IRU *RYHUQRU 'LG \RX KDYH DQ\ LQNOLQJ WKDW /DZW
Senate? Had you ever talked to him about that?

RA: , GRQ¶W KDYH D UHFROOHFWLRQ RI WKDW H[FHSW /DZ
possibly as being another Spessard Holland running in the United States Senate. He pictured himself in the Senate, he told me this many times, and he has said this publicly.

Contrary to what some people might say, I never pictured myself being elected statewide. I thought that my chances would be pretty good for Congress. Lawton and I both supported Roy Collins in trying to keep out a bunch of school closing legislation. Bob Sikes wanted me to take his place. Well Bob Sikes was eternally running every two years, the next year he would run, and so I really felt like I could, not walk in, but that I would have a very strong possibility of winning for Congress but the first Civil 5LJKWV YRWH , KDG ,¶G QHYHU JHW UHHOHFWHG , GRQ¶W
Lawton

RA: Well our campaign started meshing when we both won the nomination. I will tell you that probably the most exciting, electrifying moment of my political career, and people will say when you gave the keynote and all that s W X I I D Q G W K D W ¶ V D O O I L dandy and I was inaugurated twice, but the one that was electrifying was when I came out of nowhere and Lawton came out of nowhere. The Republicans were all set to run against Faircloth for Governor and Farris Bryant, people who had been around. So we came really out of nowhere.

, Z L O O W H O O \ R X , Z D V V X U S U L V H G Z K H Q , V X U Y L Y H G W K H / D Z W R Q Z D V E X W , G R Q ¶ W W K L Q N / D Z W R Q Z D V W K D W F R Q I L doing away with the runoffs you know, and you stop and think of Collins or myself or / D Z W R Q R U % R E * U D K D P \ R X J R G R Z Q W K H O L Q H 7 K D W ¶ V G R L Q J D Z D \ Z L W K W K H U X Q R I I V D Q G , G R Q ¶ W W K L Q N L W ¶ V

But right after we won, our first app

I have no idea whether they expected Kirk or not but he had every right to be there, he was a Republican nominee and the incumbent Governor. But when they did the commercials, they showed Nixon holding his hand up like this, and then on one side it had Cramer, on the other side it had a hand.

7 K H \ F X W R I I & O D X G H . L U N F R P S O H W H Cramer had done a good job in Congress and I thought was probably the strongest Republican. I was running against a

JD: And that was at the Capitol?

RA: Right in front of the Capitol in Tallahassee.

JD: Appalachee Parkway.

RA: 7KDW¶V ULJKW WKDW¶V ULJKW 7KHUH¶V ORWV RI SLF VKRZ P\ FODVV ZKHQ /DZWRQ ZDV *RYHUQRU ZKHQ WKH\¶G lost weight you know, but I had gained a little more than he had prior to that time.

Anyway, I love Lawton and think it was great, and it was just a pleasure to work together. And of course one of the important things we did was to rebuild the Democratic Party and Lawton and I sat down and talked to John Moyle. We just GLVUXSWHG SRRU -RKQ¶V OLIH %XW ZLWKLQ DIFRXSOH RI Wkonsidered think as fine a state chairman as there is nationally and in my opinion the best. So it was the closeness of both Lawton and me that helped us then rebuild.

Of course, senators are limited in what they can do in rebuilding if they have a governor in the same party. I mean, I was told by Jane Love, my appointments chief, when I left that I had made 14,000 appointments. I was staggered by that amount. But the Governor with all that patronage power and his presence on the scene has such a JUHDWHU DELOLW\ WR LPSDFW RQ LW 7KDW¶V ZK\ , VD\ ,¶ Governor.

See, when Lawton died, the outpouring was just unbelievable +H ZDVQ¶W VHHNLQJ recognition but people understood him and realized he was a guy who was committed to the people. HH ZDV LQ QR RQH¶V SRFNHW DQG ,¶OO WHOO KRX one other story.

,I¶ tell you probably lots of them, and this is jumping a good bit ahead, when he got out of the Senate race, against my better judgment, it was probably the worst political decision I ever made for my own standpoint personally not politically, was to get in that 6HQDWH UDFH LQ D UDFH WKDW FHUWDLQO\ ORRNHG ZI FRXOG¶YH J,RWQHO,FWHG ³, PDGH But on the assumption I WR JHW ZRXOG ´

RA: : H O O , G R Q ¶ W W K L Q N V R V R P H W L P H V E D F N Z D U G V Z K H Q K H J R W to the Senate, he really developed and of course he went all the way up to being Chairman of the Budget Committee.

But he just agonized, and I never saw that as Governor. But I also never, ever saw, I only know this from having talked to him about the Bork decision and whether he did the U L J K W W K L Q J R U Q R W D Q G , V D L G ³ 3 H U V R Q D O O \ , W K L Q N \ Lawton. You need to put all that out of your mind. < R X ¶ Y H J R W W K L V F H P S D L J Q Z D V I U D Q N O \ D O L W W O H F R Q F H U Q H G Z K H W K H U K H F R X O G S he thought that.

JD: You think he was just really tired? Worn down?

RA: < H V 2 K \ H D K 7 K D W ¶ V Z K D W L W Z D V D O O D E R X W 7 K D just exhausted, fatigued. I just V D L G ³ / D Z W R Q 7 K H Z R U V W W K L Q J W K D W L V \ R X O R V H ´ D Q G , N Q R Z W K L Q N ³ W K D W ¶ V E H F D X V H \ R X ¶ Y H E H H Q ´ W K H U H ¶ V D O Z D \ V W K D W S R V V L E L O L W \ , Q H Y H U , but I will tell you that I never saw Lawton be indecisive.

One of the things that he told Doug Cook and Doug Cook tells this story well. He told P H D Q G W K D W L V K H V D L G ³ 5 X E H P D \ Q R W D O Z D \ V E H U L J thought what a compliment and then when he said something about it in his second inauguration, I was sort of hurt that he had mentioned that generally. Once Lawton P D G H X S K L V P L Q G K H Z D V D O U L J K W E X W K H Z H Q W W K U R X think he should have. To me, frankly, I told him it would have been an easy decision to vote against Bork, be that as it may. I just think Lawton was terrific.

Ultimately he made up his own mind according to his conscience regardless. Period. H H G L G Q ¶ W J H W T X L W H D V far out front with reapportionment as I got out K H G L G Q ¶ W J H W T X as far out front with Civil Rights as I got. The only thing was, he was so strong, that he was just a tremendous legislator and frankly, as I say, made a great governor.

JD: What would you say were his greatest skills as a legislator?

RA: As a legislator? I think getting along with his colleagues. I think Lawton got D O R Q J Z L W K K L V F R O O H D J X H V D O L W W O H E L W E H W W H U W K E R \ V ¶ D Q G , Q H Y H U Q R Z D V , G U L Q N D Q G V R P X F K R I W K legislature is around the bottle, of course Lawton never had a drinking problem at all you know, but he was able to socialize. Even more than that, he was a hunter and I Z D V Q ¶ W D K X Q W H U J U H D W Q R U G R R U V P D Q G L G Q ¶ W S U R I H V V

Lawton just naturally got along with his peers I think better than I did. Plus, people respected Lawton. You could disagree with Lawton, but in the end you knew when he made a decision it was his decision. His closest friend could have thought something else. Lawton just had enormous integrity and in his own way was so folksy.

Of course, Bob Sikes must have turned over in his grave when Lawton used the word
³he coon´ E H F D X V H , K D G Q H Y H U K H D U G W K D W S U L R U
to Lawton saying it in that debate with
Jeb Bush , O D X J K H G % H F D X V H Sikes was known as Z K D W % R E

/ D Z W R Q K D G D F H U W D L Q V N L O O S R O L W L F D O O \ W K D W , G L G
and that is he could come up with a folksy thing, old sayi Q J W K D W Z D V Q ¶ W S D U W R I
Y R F D E X O D U \ M X V W O L N H Z K H Q K H W D O N H G D E R X W He Z K L O H L
Coon, and what about the dog ±

JD: A bit dog barks?

RA: Bit dog barks. He was fantastic. In fact, Lance de Haven, whom you may or may not know, is now one of my closest friends, attributes a remark to Lawton that was important in terms of bringing the cracker vote around in the race against Bush.

JD: Reelection? In 1994?

RA: < H D K µ F D X V H W K D W ¶ V W K H µ L & D W Z H E R W L W Z D V L Q ¶
Bush W K H µ L & D W Z H E R W
2 N D \ µ F ¶ D X V H Z D V 0 D U W L Q H] , Q Z K L F K % X V K V W D U W H G W D O N
V D L G ³ , V G R Q ¶ W S D Q L V K , V L W D N F D D F N H U
Lawton was able to relate to a whole group of people frankly. A lot of the Civil Rights thing, when I got up on the bussing thing, which I felt very strongly about, a segment of the state sort of gave up on me, but Lawton had such a wonderful way of thinking at the moment the right thing to say that could relate to people and particularly to a decisive group.

If you assume that a third of the state is Democrat, a third is Republican, talking about voting patterns, a third Independent, or more now, but so much of the Independent
Y R W H U V Z K D W S H R S O H F D O O W K H F U D F N H U Y R W H S H U V R Q
I was called a cracker, you know. Som H S H R S O H Z D Q W W R D V V X P H U P L W ¶ V G R Q ¶ W E H O
Perjorative that at all.

JD: , ¶ Y H Z U L W W H Q V R P H D E R X W W K D W P \ V H O I

RA: I always tell people when they talk about red-necks ±

K H ¶ V J R W D V W R U \ W K D W G H I O D W H V W K H Z K R O H S U R S R V L W story.

JD: Can we go back a little bit to the U.S. Senate, 18 years, and eight of those years when you were Governor? Can you remember anything during those first eight years that you consulted with Senator Chiles national legislation?

RA: Oh yeah. Well the first thing we did, we teamed up on the mini-convention of 1974 in Kansas City on urging the Democratic Party to bring some sunshine into the meetings and all of that. Lawton and I both were active on the Sunshine Bill. People will often confuse, and the press does a good bit, the Financial Disclosure Amendment and the Ethics Amendment of 1976 that I proposed and by the initiative. The Legislature objected to it tremendously because it stopped the revolving door on the Legislature.

Lawton and I felt strongly that we needed to open it up so we did that at the mini-conventi R Q Z K L O H Z H G L G Q ¶ W R S H Q L W X S D V P X F K D V Z H ¶ G O that a party would want to reserve to itself whether you call it back room or otherwise. It allows you to build a consensus without aborting it, without revealing your whole hand.

having time to do your job because every little subgroup, I was in charge of trade negotiations for the United States, and I mean everybody wants you to come up and creating all this news behind them. As I say, I really almost had to fight to keep from

JD: Do you remember what year that was?

JD: So you were Governor then.

RA: Oh I was Governor. He wanted me to come up as Governor to testify. And it opened it up. And then of course, one other thing that Lawton and I did together, in 1972, we were both steering pretty clear on taking positions on it, but the fact of the matter was, we were both quietly favoring Scoop Jackson.

I had really gotten to where Governor Wallace was making his big play and of course Governor Wallace wound up carrying Scoop was closer to Lawton. I bec relationship with him up there. During that campaign, we got a commitment out of Scoop Jackson on the big cypress to help us with the Federal funding of it, which proved to be extremely important. While we Wallace was swamping everywhere, including all the way down to Dade County, all 67 counties.

When the election was over, Scoop Jackson (who I think is a guy that should have been President at some time or another), I think he was that competent, did everything that he said he would do in trying to help us. So I went up and testified for the federal purchase in creating this Freshwa that Lawton and I collaborated on. Of course, in 1972, we got to the Land Conservation Act of 1972.

He had created two big bond issues when the Constitution became effective in 1968; we could have general obligation bonds which you had never been able to have, even if they were secondarily pledged. Bob Graham played a very key role in this. I got the Legislature to allow me to offer $40 million had a $200 million purchase of environmentally endangered lands and $40 million for the recreation park. We almost doubled the park system at that time, and so I was able to go up there strong by virtue of having a check in my pocket for $40 million which the state was prepared to give the federal government so they could begin purchases in the creation of the Big Cypress.

But Lawton played a key role in that. He got credit, but he should have gotten more basically than he did because the key guy was Scoop Jackson, he was Chairman of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. Dante Fascell carried the water a great deal in the Senate and of course it being a big project that brought in Federal government, it Z D V Q ¶ W K D U G I R U W K H + R X V H W R V X S S R U W L W % X W W K D W collaborated on.

And you know, if Lawton Chiles would have asked me to come up there, I would have

RA: <HDK L¸¶PWKH EDWKURRP DQG µ,¶P JRQQD DQQRXQFH IR
And then of course, I think it changed his life a great deal. Rhea can tell you that because both of them kept a regular daily devotional together, which frankly I have done for most of my adult life. Rhea is such a strong person and they were just made for each other and they fed off the strength of it, but Lawton got an awful lot of strength IURP 5KHD EHFDXVH KH¶V WROG PH WKLV DQG ,¶P VXUH W
him. While we were always good friends, better than average, we became much closer friends.

I remember when Lawton had his picture hanging as Governor. He asked me to speak, which I did. Right off the bat to begin with he asked me to be Master of Ceremonies, I think for his first inauguration. I participated in each of his two inaugurations. I was honored by it and that was done. He then wrote me a letter thanking me and I got that letter he wrote to me, after he had died. At the bottom of that letter, and I still have a FRS\ RI LW KH VDLG ³:HOO DW OHDVW WKH\Reuben QR ORQJH
:KR´ 6R ZH HQMR\HG D WUHPHQGRXV UHODWLRQVKLS 7KH
/DZWRQ WKDQ PH GRQ¶W PLVXQGHUVWDQG PH +H ZDV D J

When I moved to Tallahassee in 1997 toward the end of his second term, I told my wife, 'RQQD /RX WKDW ,¶P QRW JRLQJ WR ERWKHU KLP +H¶V EX
DQG KH¶V WLHG XS , VDLG ,¶G ZDLW µWLO KH JHWV RXW F
times tog HWKHU VLQFH KH¶V JRLQJ WR EH VWD\LQJ XS KHUH E
blow to a lot of people for him to go out of nowhere. But as Rhea said, he left at the
heigh him (C>-3<e)-3( )] ET BT m [(h)-3(l6 BT 1 0 0 1 72.02051>-3<00-)6(n)6([( )] TJ ET EMl5 k