

An Interview with
JOHN W. LANGDALE

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JOHN W. LANGDALE

HKS: Let's start by talking about the previous generation. John J. Was he in the family business?

JWL: John J. was my father's oldest brother.

HKS: Okay.

JWL: My grandfather, John Wesley for whom I'm named, died at age fifty-one in 1911, leaving six children. John J. was the oldest and then Noah, and then Harley. My father was the third eldest and the third son. Then they had four girls, one of them died early, about age fifteen. So John J. was the oldest one, and he remained down there in Clinch County and managed the land and the turpentine operations for the family after my grandfather died.

HKS: You say down. We are almost in Florida so you must mean that east of here is down to you. Is it all in the way the water flows?

JWL: I don't know, we just always referred to it that way. It is almost due east, yes.

HKS: But Noah, he's not been involved in the family business?

JWL: Noah, my uncle? No, they operated that as an estate more as a partnership until 1917, and my father then incorporated that into the J.W. Langdale Company. Must have had maybe eighteen or twenty-thousand acres in that, what we called the homeplace down there at that time. The stock was distributed to the heirs, and they gave Uncle John 20 percent of the stock in consideration of him staying on the place and managing it. He had managed all during this time, since my grandfather's death. That left five children, each one of whom received 16 percent of the stock. My father and my brothers and I started buying up those shares during World War II. Daddy bought the stock of the other family members.

HKS: The stock was held only by family members.

JWL: Yes. There were the six children.

HKS: How do you establish value of a privately held stock? If you go public and people buy the shares, that establishes the value. But how do you do it in a privately held company?

JWL: They didn't do it by any sophisticated method. Of course when you're dealing with the Internal Revenue Service you have to be more sophisticated with appraisals. They never did do that, they just traded and of course it had been operated for a number of years with practically no dividends having been paid. During those years the fruits of the land for that type of land were not very great, so they had gone through a long period without any dividends. Daddy was in a position to make an offer, and they accepted his offer.

HKS: So the income to family members would have been only to those who were employed by the company.

JWL: Right, during those early years. It was practically all timber land and what we might call flatwoods or swamp timber lands. The main value during those early years was its value for turpentine usage. They operated a turpentine camp there, had some labor there on the place, and

a turpentine still. They had woods cattle just roaming free. They had woods hogs roaming free, and they got very little stumpage value when they did sell timber for sawmill purposes from time to time. Harley can comment on that phase of it a lot more accurately than I can, you know, on the value of the timber.

HKS: Is that because lumber was sold on a local market but naval stores--turpentine--was a national market?

JWL: Our people were pretty frugal, and using that property for turpentine purposes was a little longer range and required more work, more enterprise. A lot of people when they would come into an inheritance would have the tendency to sell as quickly as possible and get what they could out of it. If you sold all of the timber for sawmill purposes for example, you'd get your money quicker. But I believe our people had the idea that if you operated it for turpentine purposes that timber would still be there, you see, and you'd get more over the long period.

HKS: Okay, let's talk about yourself for a while. Was it part of the family plan that you're the lawyer and Harley's the forester and the family business needed that, or did you decide it on your own?

JWL: My father was fairly stern, I would say, as a parent. And back in those days when we were growing up you listened to your parents, and your parents pretty well told you what they expected you to do. A child did not have much independence when we were growing up. In the early years I was probably making good grades. I might have been regarded by him as a little bit more of a scholar. He tapped me pretty early and said, "You are going to be my lawyer." And I didn't argue. Now on reflection over the years I might have resisted that, but from, I guess, the time I was eight or nine years old I was destined to study law.

HKS: Have you ever practiced law. Are you admitted to the Georgia bar?

JWL: Yes. I was admitted to the Georgia bar in 1940 and practiced law, I joined my father's firm when I got out of law school, that year, practiced law for about a year until September 1941, when the winds of World War II were blowing and I got a low draft number. So I enrolled at the Naval Reserve Midshipman's School in Chicago, Illinois in September 1941 and got my commission as an ensign about one week after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

HKS: Exciting times. I mean you weren't really anticipating that.

JWL: I had graduated from high school when I was sixteen, and I went to a little college in North Georgia. It was a part of the University System of Georgia, North Georgia College. Daddy was president of the American Turpentine Farmers Association, that he had established in 1935 or '36, and he was going to Washington quite frequently, lobbying for the turpentine farmers. He reported at the dinner table that night, "Look, I was talking with Senator Walter George yesterday, and he said he had an appointment to the Naval Academy. Would you like to go?" I said, "Yes, it sounds good."

HKS: And you were already second lieutenant.

JWL: No, this was in 1935.

HKS: I've got the chronology confused.

JWL: So Daddy got in touch with Senator George, and he got this alternate appointment for me to go to the Naval Academy. About a week later I got word that I was accepted, just that quick. I didn't know what I was getting into. I had been an above average student in college in English, history, and languages, but when it came to math and the sciences I had no aptitude, really. I just struggled in those areas. I did not realize that when I went to the U.S. Naval Academy I was pursuing an engineering degree. Can you imagine that, with all the counseling that students have in this day and time to prepare them for their proper field?

I went to the United States Naval Academy not even knowing that the only thing I could get was a degree in engineering. When I got up there I got quite a shock and found out that I was competing with these students who had a much better background in the math and sciences than I did, and much more propensity for pursuing a degree in that area. Plain pride caused me to make a super effort to keep from getting embarrassed, but I finally gave up after nearly two years I spent up there. I washed out after nearly two years in the Naval Academy. Then I went to the University of Georgia and got my law degree and a bachelor's degree in economics. In the summertimes between my law school years I was getting some courses to get my bachelor's degree, and I completed my bachelor's degree in economics in the summer of 1939, my law degree in 1940.

HKS: So you didn't have to have a bachelor's degree in order to get into law school?

JWL: Not at that time, you did not. You could get in after two years of college, they later changed it to three, and then finally, of course, now they're requiring the bachelor's degree before you go to law school. But I found it much easier after I had learned the discipline of studying, and in particular studying something I had no aptitude for, I mean just forcing yourself to study. It helped me a lot to do that, those days at the Naval Academy. Another thing Daddy had impressed on me, when you say you do what your father tells you and particularly Judge Harley Langdale, when he told you to do something, you would pretty well do it or have a good cover-up for not getting caught in failing to comply. He told me another thing. He said, "Now son, I'm going to pay for your education, but remember this, don't you get married. I don't want you to get married until you can support a wife." The implication was that if I got married, you know, he's through paying for it and I had no assured way of making a living. This put another change in my possible social activities in college, I couldn't get close to a girl to the point that I might be getting married or getting close to getting married. So here I am in 1940 when I finally graduated from college and I'm ready to get out and start making a living, and they started out lawyers at \$75 a month in law firms in those days in south Georgia.

HKS: What would an engineer or another professional make? Just to compare.

JWL: In those times, as I recall, they were making more, maybe \$150 to \$200.

HKS: That much more?

JWL: Back in those days. But the idea was when you started in a law firm you're not going to be able to make any contribution. In consideration of us (the senior members) helping you, you're still in the learning process as a young lawyer, we'll only pay you \$75 a month. We're letting you come into this law firm to learn how to practice law.

HKS: Could you live on \$75 a month then?

JWL: A single man could. The first job I had was in the turpentine woods at age thirteen or fourteen. Of course that was in the height of the depression, and we were paying turpentine workers mostly on the piece rate basis. The starting work was dipping gum. Go around with a bucket and dip the crude gum out of the cups on pine trees, then carry that bucket to the barrel, which was in a fixed position or on a wagon which was hauled around, and they paid, at that time, fifty cents per barrel.

HKS: Per barrel?

JWL: Per barrel--and the most, a mature, strong adult could dip in those woods where we were working at that time was two barrels a day. That's a dollar a day. And the most I could get was a barrel and a half. I made on the average about sixty or seventy-five cents a day.

HKS: It sounds like you walked many miles a day from the barrel out to each tree.

JWL: At that time Harley was about sixteen and he was the dip squad foreman, and he didn't show me any partiality. I was in a dip squad with about five or six blacks. You would walk one abreast. If you had six dippers you would walk along parallel trying not to miss any tree, because if you missed a cup full of gum, your owner, or your operator is going to lose money every time you leave a cup and have it overflowing.

HKS: How long did it take to fill a cup when the sap's running?

JWL: In good gum, probably two weeks, or maybe an average of three weeks. You wanted to dip them when they were an average of three quarters cup full so you wouldn't, in the better running trees, have those cups running over. From the employee's standpoint--the dipper's standpoint--you'd like to have them all overflowing, you see.

HKS: Sure. That must have been awfully messy work. That was sticky and...

JWL: Your hands get sticky and, initially, until you got accustomed to it, you got blisters on those fingers and on the palm of that hand. And when that gum gets in those blisters it exacerbates an already painful situation.

HKS: What causes the blisters? What are you rubbing against?

JWL: Just rubbing against the handle. Carrying the heavy weight you know, for a boy who has come right out of town with tender hands and not accustomed to that hard work, and then immediately go out there and started doing that hard labor.

HKS: How are the cups attached to the tree?

JWL: By a nail driven into the tree.

HKS: So you pull the nail out?

JWL: No, a hole is in the cup. We have two types of cups, we had clay cups which look like a flower pot.

HKS: Is that what Charles Herty invented, supposedly?

JWL: A different type of a cup. Then we had tin cups and we had aluminum cups. You had a higher grade gum from aluminum or clay cups than you had from just common tin that would maybe have some rust on them, you see. But I did that the first year and I got some experience chipping the second year. Chipping is very difficult and it takes a good bit of experience.

HKS: I can see that.

JWL: Because you are required not to go too deep but deep enough to scarify that face and make the gum run. And for a boy it was a tough job. You had about a five pound weight on the handle of that tool, it was called a hack. You had your sharp end on this end, and your weight on the bottom to make it heavy enough to pull through.

HKS: I see.

JWL: You've seen a hack haven't you?

HKS: Yes I have.

JWL: I think there's one in Harley's office.

HKS: Were you moving up fast because you were in the family, the second year you were hacking, is that something...

JWL: Yes. Probably a fourteen or a fifteen year old boy would not. I was doing that just to get experience--true.

HKS: Were you paid by the tree then?

JWL: Still being paid by the tree. I don't remember what the rate was but I could make a little bit more money than I did on the dipping the year before, but not too much.

HKS: This was your father's idea of discipline and training and making you appreciate what had to be done in the woods?

JWL: Yes. Blacks had nicknames--most of them. We had a black in my dip squad that we all called Dad, because he was so much older, although I doubt that he was older than sixty. We thought he was real old. We would go home late after we'd finished the days work on Friday. We would go home for Saturday, and then we'd go to Sunday school and church. We'd have recreation maybe on Saturday, go fishing or some form of recreation, go to Sunday school and church on Sunday and then go back to the camp on Sunday afternoon. Well late one Friday afternoon, this fellow dip squadsman named Dad approached me and said, "Mr. John, are you going to town today?" I said, "Yes, Dad." He said, "Well, I want you to do something for me." I said, "What's that?" He said, "I want you to get me a dime's worth of castor oil and a dime's worth of sulphur and a nickel's worth of epsom salts." I said, "What do you want with that,

Dad?" He said, "Well, my old lady"--he referred to his wife as his old lady, that was common at that time--"is sick, and she's about to die. They tell me that this will help her." He said, "I thought if I could spend a quarter and save her, I'd go ahead and spend it." [laughter] Now that is true. I mean that is true. I mean he debated whether or not he could afford to spend that quarter or not. See that was maybe a half a days wages for him.

HKS: So \$75 a month for attorneys is still not much, but the laborers made \$30 a month, or not that. They're working six days a week, how many days a week would you work?

JWL: Five days, you mean in the law firm?

HKS: No, I mean in the woods.

JWL: Five days. You see common laborers were making \$40 a month, you see, maybe at that time, of course this was on the bottom of the totem pole in the turpentine woods.

HKS: What would happen when someone was too old to work, if they didn't have family?

JWL: In those early days we had no federal welfare system.

HKS: Right.

JWL: We had county poor farms, they called them, that the county would provide for people who were in that situation and send indigents to the poor farm. Most of the ones working under the turpentine system looked to the owner/operators to look after them some way. And most of your owner/operators continued to look after them. Or what you would do, indirectly, you would not run them out of the quarters that were provided for them, and you couldn't turn them down when they came to the commissary, and you'd give them credit. And of course the owner/operator would end up paying for the bill, because he could never pay it back.

HKS: Sure. So you worked those few years while you were in high school. And then you went off to...

JWL: Third year I worked in the summer, I worked in the office and learned something about basic bookkeeping.

HKS: Why did you choose economics?

JWL: Well, when I came down to the University of Georgia from the Naval Academy, I was interested in getting a degree in the area of business. This was the easiest way to get my AB degree in that area, considering the electives that I had already earned and could put together and the required business courses added to those electives, this was the shortest way to that AB degree.

HKS: You knew you were going to work for the company.

JWL: I did not know it at that time. I knew that I was going to practice law, but I knew I needed to get all the training I could in the area of business. I practiced law in the law firm and spent full time practicing law after the war, came back, and I believe that I started out at \$150 a

month after the war. Might have been \$200. I think it was \$200 when I came back and started, right after the surrender. I stayed in the service for fifty months. When I got out I came back to the law firm. From January '46 to sometime late in 1951, I practiced law full time.

HKS: Which firm was this?

JWL: Langdale, Smith and Tillman. It was my father's law firm, and I practiced law as an associate for about two and a half years, and then as a partner for about two and a half years. In 1947, I incorporated the Langdale's business. Our business at that time, Daddy's business primarily, consisted of anywhere from eighteen to twenty separate partnerships in the turpentine business.

The way he did business, if he bought a new turpentine place, the first thing he had to do was get a suitable manager. And to give that manager incentive, he usually made him a partner. So all of these partnerships had been building up from the time Daddy started, while he was practicing law started this from about 1921 or '22. He got his law degree in 1912. Then in addition to his interest in the original family turpentine place, The J. W. Langdale Company, he started in the turpentine business on his own while he was practicing law as a young lawyer. And from 1920 or '21 until the time when I came back after the war, 1946, his businesses had built up to approximately twenty separate partnerships.

HKS: With different sets of partners?

JWL: Usually a different partner managing each one of those. There were several exceptions where he employed his manager without giving him any equity in the business. I incorporated The Langdale Company in 1947, and we put these various partnerships in the company. We did not want to give or sell any stock in The Langdale Company to any of these partners, so we started buying out those partners at that time. By this time, most of The J. W. Langdale Company stock had been bought out from Daddy's brothers and sisters, and we put the stock that we had bought out in The J. W. Langdale Company, including Daddy's share of The J. W. Langdale Company, into the Langdale Company, the new corporation, together with the assets of these various partnerships.

At that time also, Harley had started us in the processing business. We had had turpentine stills, the old fire method of distilling turpentine at each camp scattered all over a number of counties and three states. Each turpentine partnership had its own still, its own cooperage business for making rosin barrels. And Harley got us into the central steam distillery here. He did that in 1945, I think he completed that when I came back from the war. And we then got in the treating business at this same time, right after the war. And we put the wood treating business into the new company, made it a part of The Langdale Company.

HKS: Was that mainly creosote at that time?

JWL: Creosote at that time was what we were using. Later we used penta--pentachlorophenol--and then later the so-called salt treatment.

HKS: A barrel of gum produced how much turpentine? It's a fifty-five, fifty gallon barrel roughly?

JWL: Harley can reel off those figures, that's his area.

HKS: Alright. Were there any other by-products? You've got turpentine, what else?

JWL: Turpentine and rosin.

HKS: Okay. Which was the most valuable?

JWL: It varied. See actually the rosin is a residue after the turpentine cooks off in the form of steam and it's distilled, I think they got more money out of the rosin than they did, in most periods, out of the turpentine.

HKS: Besides a violin player, who uses rosin?

JWL: The biggest use at that time was sizing in the paper-making process. They used it for shellacs. That's an interesting thing, that developing of the turpentine, the rise and fall of the turpentine industry is very interesting, that is Harley's technical field.

HKS: Okay.

JWL: He'll give you more information than you want to have in that area.

HKS: No, that's fine. So now you're combining all these companies.

JWL: We combined them and issued stock. The owners of the new corporation were father, H. Langdale, and the three sons, Harley, John W., and Billy.

HKS: On equal basis?

JWL: Twenty-five percent each. We had to put in some cash, and amazingly enough, you see when I went to the Naval Academy they paid me \$75 a month. That was a good incentive for me to go to the Naval Academy too.

HKS: Sure.

JWL: In addition to giving you a free education they paid you, and that was given to my credit. When I left there I had over two thousand dollars saved up, and that was drawing interest. The interest rates were low in savings accounts in those days, but I had still saved money from the time I worked in the turpentine woods. I added this money to that and I let Daddy continue to keep his contract to pay for my education, you see I didn't spend any of that money. Then, like I say, I didn't spend much money when I was in college because I didn't do much courting.

HKS: Sure.

JWL: Then I spent the fifty months in the navy, forty months of it was sea duty.

HKS: Didn't spend much there.

JWL: I didn't spend any money. All that money was accumulated. I had just about twenty-five thousand dollars, believe it or not, saved up.

HKS: That's a lot of money in those days.

JWL: Yes, but you see the way it happened is that I saved that money and it started compounding and then all of that pay in service was saved and started compounding and that was what we were shooting for from each stock holder--twenty-five thousand dollars in cash plus the assets. I had most of the money required. I didn't have to borrow but very little. Then, of course I still hadn't married and I did not marry until December '46, by that time they raised my salary to \$300 a month in the law firm, and I could support a wife on that. Not high, but I got by. Well I know I got some money for a car, I bought my first car when I was a senior in law school and I paid about \$600 for it, but when I went into the service you know I sold that car for more than I paid for it.

HKS: I'm sure you did.

JWL: You know things were that tight then. And that money went into the bank account too, and I might have got the initial money from Daddy to buy that car [laughter]. I don't remember. That money really accumulates if you don't spend it.

HKS: So now the three sons and the father are partners in The Langdale Company.

JWL: Yes, or equal stockholders.

HKS: Equal stockholders, and all four of you worked for the company as well, were employees in the company?

JWL: Yes, when I incorporated it I was not. Daddy was president, Harley was vice-president and I was secretary. I believe we made Billy treasurer, although he had no duties in that area. [laughter] But Billy worked in the woods, Billy was a very good woods operator. His first job I believe was managing a turpentine place. Later on he became wood procurement manager. Billy is a good outdoor type and gets along with people very well, so he did not, in those periods, work much at the headquarters.

Of course I was very part-time during those five years that I was practicing law. I was just doing mostly the legal work and some administrative duties as secretary, you see. But then in the latter part of 1951 we decided that the company would be better off if I would withdraw from the law firm and move my law office out here. We built this building here in 1951, and they built an office for me. I brought my law books down here, and my goal was to contribute 50 percent of my time to the company and 50 percent to my outside legal work. I enjoyed practicing law because I've always enjoyed serving people. I've just always had a love for helping somebody do something that they couldn't do for themselves. So that worked pretty good until about '73 I think. I tried to give up my outside law practice starting about that time and contribute full time to the company.

HKS: I don't have the dates, but you were also county attorney.

JWL: I was county attorney in Echols County for about twenty-seven years during this period. We owned a lot of land in that county, and we have a lot of friends in that county. I guess I knew 90 percent of the people in that county. That was one of the smallest counties in Georgia, I mean in population.

HKS: So as county attorney at the board of supervisors, I'm not sure what...

JWL: The board of county commissioners.

HKS: County commissioners. If there was a legal question they turned to you, and you were paid a flat fee so much per year or so much per month to offer advice.

JWL: So much per month. Daddy had had that job before me.

HKS: I see.

JWL: For about twenty years. And then I think I held it for twenty-seven years.

HKS: But it wasn't too demanding in terms of time, it sounds like.

JWL: No, not too much.

HKS: Then you got involved with state politics.

JWL: Yes, I ran for House of Representatives in 1948. For a two year term, 1949 and 1950 I served in the House of Representatives.

HKS: That was a biennial, they pick every other year...

JWL: Met every year for forty days. We were supposed to have forty-day sessions January and February. Of course you had other duties during the year, but so far as the actual legislature, it was in session only forty days a year.

HKS: Were you involved in any kind of forestry legislation at that time? I mean was there forestry legislation during the time you were in the legislature, forest practice, fire protection act, or something like that?

JWL: Yes. Back in that time the American Turpentine Farmers Association had suggested that Georgia change it's name from the Peach State to the Turpentine State. And they sponsored that bill, and I authored that bill. That was a mistake.

HKS: You already had a tarheel state.

JWL: Already had a tarheel state in North Carolina. We really could not get up enough support for that bill because you know, the number of turpentine farmers in the state were so small in number, and peach sounds so much better than turpentine. [laughter]

HKS: To most of us it sure does.

JWL: I think with hindsight we should have recognized that. Even though we had a lot of friends up there that would pat us on the back and say "we're for you boy, go to it," that was impossible and we lost that effort.

HKS: But at that time Georgia led the nation in turpentine production?

JWL: Yes. And that is what we tried to show. We at that time were not the leading peach state. South Carolina had already taken over that early as the leading peach state as I recall.

HKS: What's South Carolina? What's it's symbol? I should know that.

JWL: At that time I think it was the palmetto state, I believe.

HKS: Then you went on to be state senator.

JWL: I served two terms. I served a second term in the House, '50 and '51, I had no opposition. Then at the end of that term I decided that I was not going any further in state politics and it was taking more time. I had done my voluntary duty and served and that was enough, so I did not run. There was another idea, I could already see, if you have very much of a conscience you don't need to be in politics, because you have to compromise so many times what you really believe in if you're going to be successful so many times. I had really gotten involved about as much as my conscience would allow, and I could see, if I'm going to keep on staying in this position, I'm going to have to change. I can't be as independent as I've been in the past. So...

HKS: Was Talmadge governor when you were in?

JWL: Talmadge was governor when I was in the House, yes.

HKS: I see.

JWL: At that time we had a rotating system. The state senate district was comprised of three counties--Lowndes, Echols, and Lanier counties, and we had the county unit system back in that time. Lowndes, here in Valdosta, had a much higher population than the combined populations of these other two counties. But to give them a state senator, the system was to rotate this district. Lowndes, Lanier, and Echols, every two years you'd rotate. So in 1957, I guess it was, it came Lowndes' time for a state senator. I hadn't even thought of getting back into politics, but I got a little pressure, I forget exactly the circumstances, but it doesn't take many people to come to you, you know, before you get a mandate to run. [laughter] So the people were demanding that I run. So I succumbed to that pressure.

HKS: Sure. What was your campaign theme, what did you stand for?

JWL: Back in those days you didn't have to get very much involved in issues as long as you had a good reputation, a reputation for honesty and a reputation for not throwing away money, that was the best way to politic. You could stay away from these individual issues, and that's the way I politicked. I tried never to get involved in these various issues, and of course, overriding everything this theme of capital vs. labor was developing pretty good during the '50s, you see. You couldn't spell it out, and if you would be successful in politics you didn't want to get labeled either as a capitalist or as a labor leader, you see. So for a person like me to be successful politically, the best way to do it was just to be a good old boy and ride on your reputation with a good family name. I just steered clear of these other things.

Of course what has happened over the years is the working people have demanded more and more, just like a union leader does in a company. In order to justify his job he's got to get more benefits every time the new contract comes around. This is what's happened as I see it in government on the national and on the state level. Just more and more and more, and a lot of the benefits are desirable and should be enacted, but yet it's pretty obvious that in a lot of areas, you just keep on and on and on. For example every time one of these new laws is enacted, business costs go up. The one that goes into effect next on the national level is the Employees Disabilities Act, I believe it is. An employer has to sit down and say now what do I have to do now to keep from getting a big lawsuit What is the cost going to be? It's more cost. To make sure that you don't discriminate against disabled people, you know, it's going to be more costly. Every time something like this is enacted say every two years, it adds more cost to your business, and we have to compete on an international level now. I think this is one of the things that our people overlook. Every time they get a new benefit they don't figure in what's this going to cost.

HKS: The 1955 Saturday Evening Post article begins with "Valdosta has the highest per capita income of any city in the United States, maybe the world."

JWL: At one time.

HKS: At one time, I don't know how far back that...

JWL: At one time when we were the Sea Island Cotton Capital of the world. That was some years prior to 1955.

HKS: Okay. Before the depression or way back. When you were campaigning for office, those kinds of issues--capital/labor--were the growing concern, Taft-Hartley in 1948 and all the rest, and that was an issue here. You said you ran unopposed.

JWL: For my second term in the House I didn't have any opposition. At that time there were two posts for representatives, two were to be elected, and they were not separated. The two who received the highest number of votes would be elected, there were four of us running in the election, I received the highest number of votes of the four. Then when I ran for the state Senate, there were three of us running. And I got the majority in the three-man race without requiring a runoff at that time. So I served in the Senate those two years. Marvin Griffin was governor that time.

HKS: Talking about labor, and agricultural workers as opposed to industrial workers, what were "woods workers" and what was the issue?

JWL: The position that the turpentine people took, and that the loggers took also, much of this work was being done on a piece-rate basis, and it was fairly low-class labor and...

HKS: Is this New Deal legislation that we are talking about?

JWL: Wage-Hour Act. We had talked about the exemption from the Wage-Hour Act from the minimum wage and the overtime provisions of the Wage-Hour Act. The problem that you had with turpentine workers or with forestry workers was that with most of these, it's not like working in a factory where you can have one supervisor and could maybe take care of fifty

workers, and you had a time clock and you could keep up with their time, and their overtime. You might have this turpentine, this logging crew working forty or fifty miles from your headquarters. To keep up with your hours and overtime and minimum wage, you had to get away from the piece-rate method and go on straight hourly basis. You had to have enough qualified supervision to keep up with that. So we were successful; early on woods workers were exempted on the basis of the number of workers, as I recall. If you had ten or less working as woods workers and agricultural workers (and turpentine workers came under that definition), that exempted them from the wage-hour act. Later on they were covered but only the largest employers were covered. See if you had ten or less, you were exempt, and then finally of course it was amended to cover everybody. That was the progression of that law. But you can understand where if you're doing business, paying them on the basis of piece-rate (how many buckets or how many barrels or how many faces) then you still have to keep up with those hours and pay them additional if they don't get enough to come up to this minimum hourly requirement, and it was a costly thing for forestry and turpentine to comply with that act.

HKS: Because it's piece work with this....

JWL: It made it very difficult, you see, you're getting away from piece-rate and putting them on an hourly basis which required supervision.

HKS: Was this a political issue you dealt with when you were in...

JWL: No, this was mainly on the national level.

HKS: I see.

JWL: This did not address us at the state level, but this was one of the lobbying efforts of the American Turpentine Farmers Association, you see, and of the various forestry associations.

HKS: I see in your resume you were involved in the Georgia Forestry Association and so forth. These were some of the issues, lobbying in Washington about...

JWL: Yes.

HKS: I read one article on this, and I don't know how important it was but I'll ask, was peonage labor common in this area? The article is about Florida and we're almost in Florida right now. First of all, is Florida much different from Georgia, generally speaking?

JWL: No, not very much, you mean...

HKS: Are they the same kind of people, same kind of industry, the same kind of...

JWL: In North Florida the people are very similar.

HKS: North Florida. Again, that's a federal law we're dealing with. Or was that...

JWL: Yes, that was a federal law. That was before my time really, when that was a problem. Now there were some mean people in this business. I guess you had to be mean to survive. Some of them who mistreated those employees and the problem was that, of course, the

turpentine operators had commissaries to provide them with their basic necessities and you let them have groceries throughout the week and you paid off on Saturday. And you usually credited it and then when you paid off, most of them didn't have much cash coming.

HKS: But they couldn't have gotten into town anyway. That's the only place to buy what they needed.

JWL: That's true, most of the turpentine places were out maybe fifteen or twenty miles away from town.

HKS: When we interviewed the McGowins years ago, I'm not sure exactly where all their operations were other than in Alabama somewhere, but they had a company town. They also provided law and order, they were the government, as there wasn't any other government functioning. Was the turpentine industry like that, the larger companies were...

JWL: You didn't usually have a place as big as one of those big sawmill towns. These were all smaller camps where you very seldom would have a total of more than fifty people working for you at any one time. That would be a big operation having fifty. You might have had two or three hundred in those sawmill towns. You had some turpentine camps as small as twenty employees maybe.

HKS: There's a lot of companies on the various resumes that have Langdale positions, and I don't know if I can unravel them all here. In 1947 and '48, you incorporated, started bringing all of these companies in, and yet there's still a lot of Langdale Companies that aren't a part of that.

JWL: We've still got The J. W. Langdale Company, which was the original homeplace that my grandfather started. That's The J. W. Langdale Company, named for him. And then Daddy and Uncle John, John J. Langdale, and Harley bought some land adjoining The J. W. Langdale Company land in Florida. They incorporated that as Langdale Woodlands, Inc. That was incorporated about this same time, maybe a little before we formed The Langdale Company. Then Harley and Billy and I started buying some land and decided we would buy it separately from The Langdale Company, that was started, I don't remember whether it was the late '50s or early '60s, so we incorporated Langdale Timber Company for that purpose. We bought, I don't know, maybe six thousand acres of land in several different purchases and put it in that corporation. That's purely a landholding corporation. Our landholdings are primarily in The Langdale Company. The land that was already owned by those turpentine companies was put together in The Langdale Company when we incorporated in '47, and then additional purchases were put in The Langdale Company from 1947 up until recent years. Of course those purchases have slowed down because there haven't been many values on the market in recent years. So those are the ones, let's see you've got the Langdale Company, The J. W. Langdale Company, Langdale Woodlands, Inc., Langdale Timber Company and the other companies that we've formed. We had a reorganization of The Langdale Company. We separated our manufacturing operation several years ago, and we formed Langdale Industries for that purpose. Langdale Industries, Inc. owns our manufacturing organizations and our service organizations, so we have become in a sense, where I centralized it into The Langdale Company in '47, now we've become decentralized in our manufacturing and service businesses.

HKS: Service would be like the Ford company and the Sheraton...

JWL: Well, not really. Those are separate. The Ford company and the Sheraton were formed by us individually, outside and apart from The Langdale Company. Now we later bought out our individual stock in the Sheraton, so that Langdale Industries does own the Sheraton, but we individuals still own Langdale Ford Company. Harley and Billy and I plus our manager owns Langdale Ford separate. We had service companies, such as Langdale Tire Company, Langdale Fuel Company, Langdale Willis Insurance Company. We sold out Langdale Willis Insurance Company to our manager, Ed Willis, several years ago. We had a retail business called Southern Builders Supply Company and Billy, Harley, and I and Bill Tullis who was our manager owned that.

Bill Tullis died, we bought his stock from his estate and then about two years ago we sold our individual stock in that retail business to Langdale Industries, Inc. Langdale Industries owns Southern Reman which is a remanufacturing business, taking various items of lumber and making some other not very sophisticated items from those. That is owned by Langdale Industries. And there are several other little businesses like that.

HKS: So you see an opportunity or a need, you collectively, the family and you decide what it's going to cost to capitalize it and you agree to capitalize it by your own resources or you borrow money. Is it always equal shares or does it just depend on what's going on at the time?

JWL: It all depends. We haven't had any standard format on that.

HKS: As the family attorney you must have a lot of influence on when something needs to be done and why specifically.

JWL: I did, I used to. [laughter]

HKS: Used to, I mean as part of business grows, it almost achieves its own identity after a while, its own manager.

JWL: I used to stay very busy on those matters. As I say we simplified and got rid of those eighteen or twenty partnerships by incorporation of The Langdale Company in '47, and then in the '80s we've ended up with over twenty corporations again.

HKS: I see you have been or you are chairman of the Valdosta Savings and Loan. Is that a Savings and Loan that the family capitalized?

JWL: I got involved with that when that Savings and Loan Association was started in 1957. I've been chairman of that, that was bought out by Liberty Savings Bank about three years ago. I'm still chairman locally but I should give it up. I've resigned several times. [laughter]

HKS: I was looking in the phone book for the local college, I see there's a Langdale Hall. Is that from your generation?

JWL: Yes. I served in the Senate with Carl Sanders; Carl became governor later. Carl asked me to serve as a regent on the university system of Georgia. So I served two terms as chairman of the board of regents of the university system. During the late '60s and early '70s was a very big expansion program, the legislature appropriated more money for our institutions of higher

learning in Georgia. We had been running behind in higher education and this got us more on a level with other states such as North Carolina and Texas and Florida that had been making strides a lot faster than we had. Those were growth periods, and one of the areas was here at the local college, Valdosta State. They gave me credit for the growth here at Valdosta State, which really was part of the entire growth, but they gave me undeserved credit for that. Under the policies of the university system, they cannot name a building for a living person. The president at that time came up with the idea that since my grandfather is John Wesley Langdale, the same as mine, we'll name this building for John Wesley Langdale. My grandfather never had any education at all.

HKS: What is the building used for?

JWL: It's a five-story dormitory, girls dormitory.

HKS: What does a board of regents do to make a university system better? You lobby in the legislature to get more money.

JWL: That's your main thing.

HKS: That's the main thing.

JWL: When I went on the board, it had the reputation for being about as free from the political system as you can get. Formerly all these institutions of higher education were operated separately by boards of trustees, and each one of them, every time the legislature met, would come up there independently and lobby for their own institution. Governor Richard Russell consolidated them. He introduced legislation to consolidate these and to have all of the institutions under the control of the board of regents, who are appointed for staggered terms and so that it couldn't be under the control of any one governor. It worked for years. It got more into politics under the administration of Jimmy Carter than any other.

During the governor's campaign, one of these colleges would say, "Look, we need to help our college go from a junior college to a four year college," and the governor would say, "Well look, I'll help you do that. You get me support and I'll help you do that." Of course you consider the merits. You try to tell most of them, "Look, you're better off operating as a good sound junior college than you would as a poor four-year level college." Now the same thing is true in the transition from a college to a university. Our local college for several years has been trying to become a university.

HKS: That means it offers graduate programs?

JWL: Yes. They've been offering the masters of course for a number of years, and some doctors degrees, but they're still not categorized as a university. One of the other institutions in south Georgia, Georgia Southern, got designated as a university two years ago ahead of us, mainly because they had been making more political effort for years. They were operating that college as a local industry, if you know what I mean, and putting all of their effort into getting that, getting something for that college over there, while we were standing back on our laurels and saying no, we're not going to get into politics. We're just going to go for quality and not go for numbers.

HKS: I want to see the campus here. I saw the campus in Milledgeville, it's a beautiful little campus.

JWL: Yes.

HKS: This was originally a junior college, then it became a four year college, in Valdosta.

JWL: It was originally a woman's college, a four year college. Georgia State Woman's College, and then they opened it to men as a four year college in about '51.

HKS: Johnny and Robert's kids, will they go to school locally or will they go off to the University of Georgia?

JWL: Johnny's boy is just completing at the junior college at Tifton, which is a part of the university. They are more agricultural and pre-forestry at Abraham Baldwin College at Tifton. So both of Johnny's boys went to that college, both of them being oriented to agriculture and forestry, is the reason they went there. Now Valdosta State has done very good in pre-med, and pre-law. They've had some very good students in those areas.

HKS: So they go off to Athens when they leave here?

JWL: Yes, they're going to Athens. Johnny's oldest boy will start up there. I don't know when he'll go to Athens. I thought he might go in January. Harley went to the University of Georgia School of Forestry.

HKS: And the Citadel before that, right.

JWL: Yes, one year.

HKS: Alright, I'll ask him about that tomorrow. You've been active in the Rotary Club, both local and international. Has that taken much of your time? I don't know what you do when you're active in Rotary other than organizing meetings.

JWL: Believe it or not, I served as district governor of Rotary the same year I served as chairman of the board of regents. And I did work overtime that year. In fact I hired for the company a young lawyer right out of the University of Georgia law school to come down here and assist me here with the company, and he stayed with us for about two or three years. He assured me that he had no desire to practice law, that he wanted to work for a corporation. But he stayed with us for about two years.

I was on the road a lot of the time. You know we had fifty Rotary clubs in this district, and I had to visit all of those clubs in that time and spent two or three days a week out of the office, so I used that young lawyer to help him get started. He's now district attorney. He got lured away into a law firm, which was the best thing for him. Then we tried another young lawyer after that to work with us as in-house counsel, and it didn't work at all. Then my nephew got his law degree from Mercer, Billy's son, Bill Jr. got his law degree in the early '70s, and we use Bill as our general counsel now. But it's still a lot easier in many cases people in our organization to come to me and can get an answer about something where I already know the background. I can give them the answer in ten minutes, and they avoid having to go to his law office. Bill Jr. does an excellent job when our people go to him.

HKS: I'm sure that your experience is impossible to replace within the company. You put it all together into one and then seen it breakup into subsidiaries again.

JWL: We don't have many people, not many of the Langdales desire to work with details. You can understand that. If you're a good executive you know how to get things done by getting somebody else to do them. I guess I have been closer to a detail man. One of the lawyers that worked with my father at the American Turpentine Farmers Association said Judge Langdale was a good executive. He said you could always count on the judge carrying the stool at a piano moving party. [laughter] He knew how to get things done. Well Harley's that way too and I have tried to be moderate, in not getting wrapped up too much in details, but it's hard to do, and to see the forest and not get cluttered up with the trees.

HKS: Robert and Johnny are the next generation from the family.

JWL: Yes, and Bill Jr. is the lawyer. But he's not in the company, he's general counsel. He's not in-house you might say. He's operating his own law firm.

HKS: Sure. And the generation after that? Johnny's kids, are they going to be involved in the company you think?

JWL: Well, right now it's hard to say, and I wouldn't want to judge what's going to happen, Pete, nobody knows. Right now, my grandson Wesley, Johnny's boy, as I see it, has got some good qualifications. He's a well-disciplined young man, and he gets along well with people. So I don't know which one of those will emerge.

At this time, of course I'm partial, and I see Wesley as being a part of the future. He loves the outdoors part of it, yet he's disciplined enough and his personal characteristics, at this point, are such that he can do the job, as I see it. Johnny made it possible for him to buy a truck when he was sixteen. Wesley paid for it himself, he kept about three jobs going while he was in high school, and while he was in junior college he'd go back and forth between work and school. He earns his own money and he's just an unusual type boy. He's never gotten into alcohol or drugs. I'm fortunate to have four other grandsons and one granddaughter. They all have promise for the future.

HKS: Somewhere in the last twenty years, large companies like the Weyerhaeusers must have looked at Langdale Company and talked to you about acquisition. Seems like they talked to everybody. Obviously the family kept the company.

JWL: I guess it's been the last twelve or thirteen years these people have changed their idea about expanding their lands. Oh twelve to fifteen years ago we could have sold out or merged with those people beneficially. There were no direct talks but the door was open during a period of time covering about ten or fifteen years, but that door has not been open recently. There hasn't been very much demand. They have reached the conclusion, I think, that they can do better by letting somebody else own the land.

HKS: St. Regis bought somebody over near Fargo, I remember reading in this packet of materials that Johnny gave me, is that right?

JWL: St. Regis had a sixty-five year lease with Superior Pine Products Company.

HKS: Oettmeier's company.

JWL: Oettmeier's company, covering over two hundred thousand acres in Echols and Clinch counties, Georgia. And much of that joins our land. That lease expires about 2010. Let's see, that was dated in '46 or '47, our law firm prepared that lease. We represented Superior Pine and that was one of the first of these long term leases.

HKS: I didn't realize it was a lease.

JWL: It was a lease and it was couched in terms of a long term timber purchase for capital gains purposes, to meet the capital gains tax requirements.

HKS: Then of course Champion acquired St. Regis. Is it still active over at Fargo?

JWL: Yes.

HKS: The Oettmeier's, are they managing this land? I guess they've been very active in the Georgia Forestry.

JWL: Bill Oettmeier, Jr. is still managing that Superior Pine tract. Of course he doesn't have very much to do, after that lease was done. All they had to do was see that it was complied with. There's a certain amount of timber that's required to be on the land when it's terminated, so they haven't had a lot of management to do.

HKS: The McGowins in Alabama and the Dierks in Arkansas. If the family had decided to, you probably could have sold out to one of the major corporations.

JWL: Yes, we never did crack the door open and indicate that we were a prospect during that time, so we never did have any negotiations with them.

HKS: Did you talk about it as a family, though?

JWL: We talked about it some. Harley and I talked about it.

HKS: What was the main reason why you didn't? Just because it was family and you had generations coming on?

JWL: The main reason was, we asked ourselves the question what would we do, what would we do with the money--all we're going to do is to spoil family members. That was the main reason. We could have ended up with a big sum of money or stock in one of these big paper companies. But we said, "My goodness, we don't need that, we don't want the money." We never had developed into the habit of living high on the hog. We didn't think we wanted to live that way and we didn't want to encourage our children and grandchildren to live that way. So let's go ahead and keep on going like we'd been going. We have really missed that opportunity now. Now it may come again, probably will.

HKS: Yes. What's going on with federal land these days, the private supply is going to become more and more important.

JWL: In other words, land is not worth as much today as it was fifteen years ago. Even in today's dollars.

HKS: That's interesting. Maybe that's one of the reasons that they stopped too, it's getting awfully expensive.

JWL: May be, but they can get it lots cheaper than they could twelve or fifteen years ago.

HKS: I'm going to ask Harley about this but let me ask you. We're jumping back in time to the turpentine factors. I guess the process is not unusual to a lot of industries. Is it as simple as someone locally having some money and going to bankroll the turpentine industry. Is it a little bit like sharecropping in terms of the process? You borrow some money and then you pay it back with the proceeds year to year?

JWL: Those people, as I understand it, were performing three main services. One was banking, loaning you the money.

HKS: What kind of people were they, were they the bank? Were they bankers?

JWL: They were bankers primarily.

HKS: Okay.

JWL: They had to have some capital. But in order to loan you the money, you see they had more knowledge about the business. Back prior to World War II banks did not want to loan money on timber lands or the turpentine business. They didn't have enough knowledge of those operations and they were afraid to get involved. In the history of the business a lot of people in times of depression had gone broke, you know. It was a make or break business, had that reputation. But these factors came in and said, "Yes, we'll make you a loan provided we're going to get some action in two other areas. You're going to have to market your products through us, and we're going to get a commission on that end. Furthermore you're going to have to buy all of the groceries and things that you buy for your commissary through us." They operated a central purchase and supply business for commissaries--wholesale grocery business you might call it, and they were brokers for selling the products.

HKS: That article, again the one in the Post, I think your father was saying that he had a credit of thirty thousand dollars and his assets were only five thousand. That really wasn't a collateral basis, but you just described partly how they could do that. They had various income streams from that same thirty thousand dollars.

JWL: Yes. They got you three ways.

HKS: And it wouldn't have done them any good to foreclose anyway.

JWL: That's right, they had to keep you going to get the money back.

HKS: But what caused that system to stop? Today you go to a bank and borrow money from them. There's a lot more rules and regulations. You have to have certain kinds of collateral and

all the rest. Is that the main difference is that the banking laws have become stricter? Why do we call them factors anymore, what's happened to them?

JWL: I don't know, the turpentine business itself gradually died out, you see. And what caused that was your labor problem, mainly. It depended on that low cost labor.

HKS: I thought it was the...

JWL: And the paper business had a lot to do with it too, because they started getting that by-product out of the paper making process a lot cheaper than you could go out and gather it by hand.

HKS: When I was here before we went out over to the Okefenokee Swamp. I could see trees along the roads with the slashes on them. Is that for an economic project or an experiment? Why are people still gathering gum today?

JWL: There are a few of them. And the only one that can do it economically is where a man owns those trees and he's got maybe a couple of boys that he wants to keep busy.

HKS: So there's still a market for gum.

JWL: Yeah, still. But I think there's one person buying gum in the southern area, and I think that's over in Baxley.

HKS: I was really surprised because I thought that process was no more. This bottle on your desk, is this gum turpentine? That's not still available in this kind of bottle is it?

JWL: No, we quit doing that about fifteen years ago. We used to keep that on hand if we had a cut or something, you know you dipped your finger in there as an antiseptic.

HKS: Driving in from the airport I see all the treated poles out here in your yard. What else do you produce here in this facility?

JWL: Utility poles, fence posts, piling and lumber and timbers, heavy timbers and material for docks, marinas.

HKS: Is there a sawmill here, too?

JWL: Yes.

HKS: You make 12 by 12s and whatever heavy timbers?

JWL: Yes. Sawmill, planing mill. In the manufacturing business, we got into the central steam distillery for processing turpentine and rosin, then the wood preserving, then the sawmill and then the planing mill.

HKS: Other than a plant in Tennessee, is this all of your company here? All of the manufacturing?

JWL: No, we've got that wood preserving plant in Sweetwater, Tennessee, that we got into in the fifties, and we've got a fence post processing the initial peeling of fence posts in Homerville, Clinch County. And we've got a pole yard and a pole peeling machine in Chauncey, Georgia. And we have another pole and log processing plant in Blackshear, Georgia.

HKS: Blackshear, that's in northern parts?

JWL: No, that's over near Waycross, on the other side of Waycross, it's southeast Georgia.

HKS: The plant in Tennessee, that's a big jump geographically. Administratively somebody has to commute to go periodically, weekly or monthly. Do you have a company plane, you fly it up?

JWL: Yes.

HKS: But it was still a decision to decentralize that way, not decentralize but to spread out.

JWL: That was a small plant that became available. It was a nice little operation for a number of years until the environmental problem started. And that really caught us by surprise.

HKS: Which problem was this? The pollution in the streams?

JWL: Around that treating cylinder there's necessarily going to be some run-off, even after you take your material out of the cylinder and put it out there to dry, there's going to be some dripping, you see. That's got to go somewhere. We had a holding pond and some of that was running off into this holding pond. We didn't think much about it. We thought, you know, what did seep in through the earth would go through a natural filtering process. We never dreamed that it could do any harm anywhere.

HKS: To the groundwater or...

JWL: Yes to the groundwater. We just felt that by the time that it got down deep enough to that level, it would have filtered itself. That just wasn't in the knowledge or the teaching at that time, during all these years. Then when we passed the new laws and the EPA was given all this authority and they started making inspections and testings and they came along and said, "Look, this is contaminated thirty feet down. You're going to have to take all of this material out and either haul it off to a certified waste facility or take it out and treat it or something." So when this came along, as I say, we were in a state of shock. I guess it cost us three million dollars at Sweetwater and at this plant to clear all of that up. It's a continuing thing. We have wells at various points on our yard and even outside of the property we own, and there must be continuous monitoring to see how that's moving. If it is moving laterally or what's happening to it. We just have to measure it for the EPA, and it's a continuing expense.

HKS: So it's since NEPA in 1970s, EPA, this is a federal statute.

JWL: Right. Georgia is operating, and the other states are operating, of course subservient to the federal laws. Each state has their own department. They have EPD in Georgia, I think they call it.

HKS: Do you use a consultant or do you have some one on your staff that handles it?

JWL: We have a full time employee from North Carolina, a graduate of North Carolina State who is in charge of that. Of course he has to depend on outside consulting environmental engineers from time to time.

HKS: So that's a new position created just to monitor that.

JWL: Yes.

HKS: Any other environmental laws in particular, or situations. I've been talking to Harley about wetlands, but that's not a contamination. It's a different kind of environmental question.

JWL: Yes.

HKS: So it's the chemicals you use for preservation, that's the issue, and that drips off into the soil. You stopped using creosote because there's something better or what was wrong with creosote?

JWL: Creosote did have some of these carcinogenic qualities, or whatever you call it. And pentachlorophenol did too, they say. But of course our people tell us it's so minute that it's ridiculous. The standards that they hold us to in this regard, is so many parts per million that they require you to clean it up to, it's just ridiculous.

HKS: So the green posts out here that you see, that's pentachlorophenol?

JWL: Believe it or not, those green posts have arsenic in it. When laymen hear the word arsenic, you immediately say that's poison. We've had less problems with this. That's not on the objectionable list, least I don't know whether that evaporates or what happens to it, but we don't have the problem with that. It's, let's see, copper, sulphate, arsenate. It's got copper, chrome, copper chromated arsenate. It's got chrome in it. And chrome is a problem. Copper, chrome and arsenic.

HKS: But you're still operating in Sweetwater.

JWL: We're still operating and probably from an economic standpoint we probably should not be operating because we're losing money and a lot of it is attributed to the environmental problem.

HKS: I only have a few more questions on my outline of some of the other board of directors you've served on and so forth.

JWL: Incidentally I ran across this last week. I went over to the Clinch County courthouse to see if I could find anything of any interest, and while I was there I ran across the news clipping, I ran across the obituary in the Clinch County News for my grandfather. It's most unusual, in fact it's almost crude, but this is in 1911 and it states that he leaves an estate valued at something like a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. It is said that he had thirty-five thousand or forty thousand in cash in the bank. [laughter] Now can you imagine, even in 1911.

HKS: That's right.

JWL: I hate to see that in part of my book, you know how that is. But I'm not going to tell you how to write your history. But this does have some other good things said about him, some of his attributes in there. No doubt the Langdales have always been frugal, but John W. Langdale was reputed to be a good businessman. A main reason I was researching in the deed records was to determine when the first land was bought down there, and I found a copy of the deed where he bought this land four thousand four hundred and ten acres in 1885 for \$675. This was the beginning of The J. W. Langdale Company land. I also found another unusual instrument here, and this was called a trust agreement in which five landowners down there, neighbors, pooled their land together and designated John W. Langdale and another neighbor named F. R. Allen as trustees to manage this land together. It shows that they had a lot of confidence in him to just turn their lands over to him for management. It's a poor legal instrument, however. It doesn't say when it terminates, it doesn't say how they'll divide the profits or anything. But I was amazed to find that on the record, that was dated 1907.

HKS: I suppose that's what causes grandchildren to file lawsuits some day but, some kind of family agreement.

JWL: Yes.

HKS: Let's talk about your directorships, it kind of rounds out the story. What's this Southern Company. Is this a significant story? It's on your resume.

JWL: Southern Company owns Georgia Power Company, Alabama Power Company, Gulf Power Company, and Mississippi Power Company, and it's one of the largest electric public utilities in the country. I served on that board, let's see for about ten years I guess. I got a director's lawsuit right after I retired. That lawsuit has recently been settled so I'm relieved of an eight hundred million dollar lawsuit.

HKS: What was the basis of the suit?

JWL: I think these suits against directors, many of them, are picked up by a lawyer and it's a means of some plaintiffs lawyer's livelihood.

HKS: But somebody has to be injured in...

JWL: They alleged in general that Plant Vogtle, which was a nuclear power plant, was ill advised and that the directors should not have ever authorized that plant and that there were overruns and this type of thing, and because of the negligence of the directors this project was allowed to proceed. Of course we had liability insurance to certain limits. And those have since run their course and the lawyers make all the fees they can make and then they finally settled.

HKS: Was it a stockholder's suit?

JWL: This lawyer who owned about ten shares filed on behalf of all stockholders, you see.

HKS: Nuclear power, that's a tough one isn't it? A big scandal in the state of Washington ten or fifteen years ago where they went bankrupt. So Georgia Power is a part of that. You also served on the Georgia Power board.

JWL: Yes.

HKS: Is most of it nuclear or most of it still coal fire?

JWL: When I retired the majority of the power was coal fired. It's still far less than 50 percent nuclear.

HKS: I've read someplace that there are no more nuclear plants on the drawing boards since its too expensive. Is that true?

JWL: People have gotten gun shy I think. Probably for a long range future it's got to happen, you know, for energy, you've got to take some risks, I think.

HKS: The Citizens and Southern National Bank, you were a chairman of Valdosta Savings and Loan.

JWL: At the time, you see, I went on the C & S advisory board, there was not much conflict. A savings and loan institution was not a bank. But with the deregulations several years ago, essentially savings and loans were authorized to do about anything a bank can do and they were competing with each other. At the time I was serving on two boards, that was not exactly true. Savings and loans institutions were used primarily for savings, they didn't go into checking accounts, and to loan money primarily for home building, but that's all changed now.

HKS: Have many S & Ls in Georgia failed in this recent...

JWL: No, not many in Georgia.

HKS: Why is that?

JWL: Few failed during that period except in the west where there were more excesses experienced in Texas and in several others out west. Not many in other parts of the country engaged in these excesses.

HKS: The state chamber of commerce. What does a chamber of commerce really do on a day to day basis to attract business and make...

JWL: When I first went on that board, the state chamber of commerce was like most local chambers of commerce. They were organized for the purpose of helping businesses. And the state chamber of commerce, the main purpose of it was to further lobbying for business. Now since that time they have merged with the Business Council of Georgia, and changed their name about oh fifteen to twenty years ago. So that's what it is really, it's a group of businessmen in Georgia getting together to lobby for business.

HKS: But the chamber did go out and try to encourage Georgia Pacific to move to Georgia, say, or Union Camp.

JWL: They did have a program to help bring industry into Georgia. Now I don't know necessarily about that, that might have been a little controversial on a big move like that. That happened after I was inactive in that organization.

HKS: Every town has a chamber of commerce, and the image that I have is that they are helping to attract business, but I always wondered what they did.

JWL: I became active in that group shortly after I retired from the state Senate, because I was an active advocate for business interests, of course, while I was in the legislature.

I have probably been more active than any of the others in civic efforts, than Harley and Billy, because of the fact that my duties have been more administrative than operating. Maybe more toward public relations also and administrative, personnel, legal.

HKS: You could find time to go to Atlanta. It would have been difficult if you were watching daily operations.

JWL: Since retirement I have spent more time in a program at our church. We've got a program there, we call it our International Ministry. We have a lot of Spanish speaking people in this area, mostly migrant farm workers, and we have a program to try to reach these people. Of course our primary purpose is to further our religion. To teach them what we believe about Jesus Christ.

The way we get our foot in the door is by teaching them English as a second language. My wife and I are non paid leaders of that effort, and we have on the average about one hundred come into our church every Sunday afternoon. That program really keeps us tied down. Then we found that, after we got into it, we can't stop. We have to listen to their problems and counsel with them and try to help them in other areas too, so it's really time consuming. You may see a reference in some of this material, the background material on the family and so forth, as far as religion is concerned. Another question would be how did the name Wesley come into this. John Wesley, you know, was the famous Methodist leader.

HKS: Right, right.

JWL: The background of these Langdales in the generation prior to mine was hard shelled Baptist, or Primitive Baptist. You will not find too much reference in this material, I was going through all this material that my aunt Nan Langdale wrote my sister. The biggest thing that they looked forward to every year was Big Meeting at Boney Bluff church. Everybody called it Boney Bluff because they have a cemetery there where all these people in that area are buried, that's where my grandfather and my grandmother are buried. It's Bethel Baptist Church, but everybody refers to it as Boney Bluff. They went there once a year at Big Meeting, and it was a social gathering, dinner on the grounds, but my grandfather, John W. Langdale, I don't gather, was real active in the church, and he apparently didn't have strong beliefs as far as that denomination was concerned. I think my grandmother might have been more dedicated so far as that church is concerned.

My father did not become a Christian until World War II, I don't think he ever became a member of The Primitive Baptist church. When my father's family moved down to Jasper, Florida, in the early 1900s so that the children would have better schools to attend, the girls, my daddy's sisters, joined the Methodist church down there, I think more for social reasons. But although Daddy really emphasized the values of the Bible and particularly the Ten Commandments, and he emphasized you do right, and you live in such a way that your word

would be your bond, an expression that was used many times that people will recognize. The reason that Daddy taught us that way, not because of his religion, that he felt I'm going to teach you the Bible. It was because if you want to be successful this is the way you need to live. If you do this and you work hard, you're going to be successful. He would take us to Sunday School and drop us off, but he would not go.

Now my mother would go to Sunday School and church, and all during the time when we were growing up, Daddy would follow some of the same practices that I see noted in these letters that Aunt Nan said. There will be no work of any kind on Sunday, you will respect the Lord's day. You cannot go fishing on Sunday. And Daddy raised us the same way, although he was not a church member. And it was not until during World War II that he accepted Christ, became a Christian and joined the First Baptist Church here, so most all of us are Baptists in the Langdale family.

HKS: In talking to you and Harley the concept of work ethic, what we would call the Protestant work ethic, really is part of your ordinary conversation.

JWL: Right, this is just the way we were taught to work from can to can't, daylight to dark, and then if you don't you are just no good. The same way on incurring debts, on borrowing money. This is a part of our conservative background. We were always generating growth from within our business. Don't risk anybody else's money. This was simple. Nowadays...

HKS: Leveraging.

JWL: Leveraging, man, this was not even thought of back when he was coming along. When Daddy was practicing law he had a good commercial practice. He represented the creditor, the businessman. You didn't have the same forgiving attitude as now toward anybody who went bankrupt. He brought it on himself and he's just no good. This was the attitude in our generation when we came up. Now people are a lot more forgiving, the law is more forgiving, and business people and creditors accept this as part of the risk, and they forget about it when they take these losses.

HKS: One more thing I'd like to talk to you about is the Langdale Foundation, I suspect since you're the lawyer, you are probably...

JWL: I'm stuck with that.

HKS: But you saw a need for a foundation, how it's a good audit trail, to manage the family's, the company's charity?

JWL: Back in the mid-'50s, we were doing pretty good and income taxes were a serious consideration. We felt that it would be a good idea during those times when we were making money pretty good to form this foundation and to contribute to it annually. The internal revenue laws with respect to the foundation were not as strict. We accumulated most of that money, we were not required at that time, during the '50s, to pay out any amount, you see. So we accumulated and compounded some of that money during those years. I don't remember when it occurred, Congress passed a law setting forth a formula requiring us to pay out a certain percent of assets annually.

The first thing that we did that we saw the need for so far as activities in that foundation was a student loan program in the late '50s and early '60s. There was not as much money available then for students in the form of grants or loans, so we started a student loan program, and before I knew it I was spending a great deal of time operating this little loan program. I did it all myself. We never incurred any expenses, except, of course the company was absorbing the cost of secretarial duties and supplies and things of that type, but no salaries were ever paid to anyone.

HKS: What was the payback rate? It's almost scandalous how many people are not paying back these days.

JWL: We never lost but one loan. I learned a good bit in the practice of law about collections. And I learned a little bit about banking, the psychology from a banking officer's standpoint during this program. It was a learning experience for me. We required an endorsement, at least, one endorsement for that student, because most of them were minors.

HKS: Were these local students, or a student from Valdosta wanted to go anywhere in the country or only to local school?

JWL: The only requirement was that they be from our area, that they come from our area of operations and the several counties in which we operate, but they could go to any school. And we only lost \$500 of bad debts and loaned out, I don't know we probably had as much as \$50,000 outstanding at one time. We probably had as many as thirty loans outstanding at one time. But we collected every dime. We charged interest at that time usually anywhere from four to six percent.

HKS: Are there any ongoing programs of the foundation?

JWL: After a while, after more money became available for students, and we determined that there were so many government programs that started up in the late '60s, '70s, and this program was taking a lot of my time, so we decided to go in for grants. To gradually phase out our student loan program, which we did. So we're making grants. I believe the requirement is that five percent of your assets must be granted every year. So there's not any way of accumulating any new money on that basis because our portfolio is rather conservative so far as investments are concerned, and we have, it's built up to maybe six or seven hundred thousand dollars now.

HKS: There's a newspaper article in that pack of materials that I had that talks about this quarter of a million dollar gift for this center in North Valdosta. That's obviously an unusually large gift for a foundation of that size.

JWL: Yes. We got part of the money from the foundation and part from our businesses. But it took all of our foundation income for two years, most of it, and what we did, we adjusted our budget and these other charities that had been dependent, we said, "Look, we've just got to take most of your money out of the budget for two years." Which is what we did.

HKS: I see. I had assumed until you started explaining this to me that this was set up as a way to keep track of your family's personal and the companies' charitable contributions, but this obviously is not.

JWL: Our companies are still making some charitable contributions other than this, but they are not making as many as they were, probably as much in dollars as they would otherwise, if we didn't have this. This relieves the pressure to some extent. Particularly during tough times, when you don't need much of a charitable deduction from your business. It helps during those periods.

HKS: There's certainly a lot of changes in tax laws for foundations, and those of us in the nonprofit businesses are really concerned about the long run. There won't be a tax benefit for anyone to support these groups anymore. I'm not quite sure what the rationale is.

JWL: There's not much incentive.

I'm going to lift some of these things here, for example, a quote from Aunt Nan to my sister: "Mama was a most devout person, tall in stature, she and my dad knew nothing but work for a better life and education for their children. There wasn't enough hours in the day to stop, relax, except a little while after supper or on Sundays which were sacred to them. No work on Sunday. Only to pull 'the ox out of the ditch.' They would not allow us to go fishing. Dad would not allow the work horses or mules to be ridden on Sunday. My dad was of short build, dark eyes, beard. Isabel was the only black eyed in the family. Harley, Sadie and I looked more like my mother." Things like this, nobody in the family would know. She is the last living member of that generation, you see, my father's sister, she was the last one. Some of these things I felt should be recorded. All of these are handwritten and I'm just lifting some of these things of this type out of it.

HKS: Are you the family archivist as well as the family lawyer?

JWL: I must be, nobody else would take the time to do this but me.

HKS: Where is this material kept, is it here in this building or your home?

JWL: My sister from Albany mailed this to me.

HKS: One of the accounts talks about the "famous Dr. Noah Langdale." Famous for what?

JWL: My father had two older brothers. There was John J. and Noah and then dad. And Noah, Jr. is my father's brother's son. There is no question about it that the best scholars in our generation are in that family. Noah has an older sister named Marguerite, she would be the oldest one in my generation, Noah's oldest daughter was named Marguerite, she married a Vernon Pizer, who is an author, very intelligent man. He's written several books and has contributed to a number of magazines.

HKS: Is Noah a physician or a Ph.D. in something?

JWL: Marguerite graduated from Duke University. They tell me she was a topnotch student, you could probably check her record, Marguerite Langdale. Not Margaret but Marguerite. And Noah had three children, Marguerite, Jesse (Jesse died young), and Noah Jr. Noah graduated from Valdosta High School I believe in 1937. He was a large boy, played tackle in high school, got a scholarship to the University of Alabama, made Phi Beta Kappa at Alabama and did very well playing tackle on the football team. Then he went to Harvard, got his MBA at Harvard. He

never did get an earned doctorate, but he is a real brain. He got his law degree at Harvard, too. I believe. He set up his law office here.

But Noah never could start at the lower level, you know doing these things that a young lawyer has to do. He likes to do big things. So after a while the president of Valdosta State College says how about you coming out here and lecturing. Well now that was his forte, and it wasn't long before he got on the faculty at Valdosta State College.

The university system had an evening school in Atlanta that had about, twelve or fifteen hundred students that came in, after hours. An extension of the University of Georgia is what it was at that time. That has now turned into Georgia State University. When the president of this institution died, or retired, they asked Noah to come up there and be president. You see he was teaching business out here, and business law. He went to Atlanta to that school, and it has turned into Georgia State University which has more students, I guess or as many as the University of Georgia now. He retired from that, he never did get an earned doctorate, but he got several honorary doctorates.

HKS: I see.

JWL: But he developed a reputation as a speaker, he can speak on any subject. He has enough knowledge in his head that if you invited him tonight to speak to the Georgia Cattlemen's Association, for example, he'd reel off enough facts that you would think he was a real cattle man. He's just that adaptable. He's got the reputation, he has spoken and has earned a good bit of money with honorarium's speaking all over this country.

HKS: Is that branch of the family involved at all in the company as shareholder? Could they have been?

JWL: No, we bought his original shares. His father owned 16 percent of the J. W. Langdale Company. Daddy bought him out during World War II. He first operated a turpentine place down towards the original home place. Then he started operating a little sawmill up here and got into retail lumber and building materials, and he did very well financially. Then he bought a wholesale grocery business, and he did very well, but he got out of this business.

HKS: I was just curious. You were trying to raise capital within the family, you might have invited him to participate and he would have made a decision.

JWL: You see John J. is the only one outside of the Harley Langdale family still connected. John J. and his sister still own that 20 percent stock in The J. W. Langdale Company. And John J., in addition to managing The J. W. Langdale Company, was the forester in charge of lands for a number of years for the entire Langdale Company.

HKS: Harley wants to show me some of his pictures.

JWL: I went through this file that he had already sent you. There may be some more in the H. Langdale memorabilia file if you need more. Now we have a picture at my house of, taken when I guess Harley was about seven or eight years old, of the four children. Harley and me and Sister and Billy, on the front porch. I've got that picture at home if you want to show our generation. You'll have pictures of John W., the original John W. Langdale, and then Harley

and our mother and then there's pictures of us, I guess, of this generation.

HKS: Well that's what we're going to try to find out this week.

JWL: The oldest one in Daddy's generation surviving is the second sister, Nan, Nancy. She was born in 1897, and she wrote letters. My sister had maintained a correspondence with her and Sister asked her to set forth some of the facts of her growing up down there, which she did. And she wrote those letters during 1986 and the first part of 1987. I have just read through those letters and I have lifted some pages, sort of difficult reading. I don't know how much color you want...

HKS: At this stage I don't know either.

JWL: You don't know either. But I've lifted some things in here.

HKS: You're a better judge of what represents the family than I would, reading the whole letters myself.

JWL: I've got about eight pages out of maybe forty or fifty pages that she wrote, and I will just mark some of those places that I think might be of interest.

HKS: I've suggested to Johnny that the company or the foundation hire a student from Valdosta State, that Bill Gabard could probably recommend a good graduate student or a senior, to catalogue this material. All of the photographs that Harley has, these letters, so there's a master list and maybe get it all together some place so people will know what you have. It's labor intensive and would be a good job for a student and wouldn't cost that much.

JWL: Good idea. But I'll mark those copies and she's taking those pictures right now. I'll give you a copy of those few papers. I wrote down a chronology of some of the things, some that I had just pieced together in the last few years. Such as when my grandfather John W. Langdale built the first log cabin down there.

HKS: What date is this now?

JWL: 1884 is what they say. Now the first recorded deed, which John W. Langdale received was dated November 10, 1885. According to information I had this cabin was built in 1884. I can't reconcile that. He might have already made a deal for that property, you see. The birth of the oldest son was 1885. Birthdate of the second son, Noah, 1886. Daddy was born in 1888, birth of the girls, then he built the frame house which was still standing a few years ago. We saw that it was deteriorating and wouldn't be there very long, and people were beginning to carry off some of that heart pine material, so we salvaged some of that heart pine. I went down there and got some boards. And I built some furniture out of some of that heart pine material. And it is beautiful close-grained pine.

HKS: Oh I'm sure, you don't have that anymore.

JWL: Yes. And then in 1905 he bought a house in Jasper, Florida and moved his wife and girls down there so that they would have a better place to go to school. According to these letters my grandfather, John W. remained at the house down in Clinch County, and a man named John

Register and his wife moved in with him. John Register was his stiller at his turpentine still. Then about 1906 or 1907, after his family had moved to Jasper, John W. Langdale built a house at the present site of Council, Georgia, and then he built the turpentine quarters down there. About 1907, John W. Langdale entered into a sawmilling contract with a Mr. Council, Mr. Council built a sawmill down there, and then a railroad siding was built for the sawmill. They put a post office down there, and my uncle John, the oldest son of John W., became the postmaster. So that's how it got the name Council. And then you have the obituary of John W. in 1911, and then his widow, in 1912, Mrs. John W. Langdale and the girls moved to Valdosta and rented a house in Valdosta, 1912. That was the same year that my father graduated from Mercer Law School and moved to Brinson's boarding house at the corner of Central Avenue and Lee Streets, that's where he met my mother. My mother had come down from Lynchburg, Virginia and was trained as a milliner (a hat maker) who worked in a local department store. She was staying in the same boarding house as my dad.

HKS: At that time was Valdosta still the largest town in this part of the state, as it is now.

JWL: In this part, yes. Albany is the largest town in South Georgia. Albany has always been a little ahead of Valdosta as far as size is concerned.

HKS: But Valdosta was a logical place to move to if you wanted to get to a little larger community, moving up from Fargo or wherever?

Returning to Nan's family history, when she wrote of stills, was that moonshine?

JWL: Turpentine. I know she referred to turpentine stills throughout. He was in the turpentine business, and they had their own stills at each place. That's what we had before we built this central steam distillery right here, and what they called fire stills. That was exactly the same process for making moonshine liquor, exactly.

HKS: Sure.

JWL: You know they had the copper coils running around, just on a larger scale.

HKS: And more legal. [laughter]

JWL: But I was down there with uncle John when I was about twelve years old, fishing on Cypress Creek and I walked up on a still. An illegal whiskey still. A boy about fourteen met me with a rifle when I was walking down that creek, when I came into the clearing, and I saw what he was protecting. It was quite a shock.

HKS: But you weren't in any real danger? They didn't shoot first and ask questions later.

JWL: I wouldn't know. There was a fourteen year old boy guarding it or maybe fifteen, and you didn't know whether he'd be trigger happy or not. I told him I was fishing, he didn't need to worry about me. To show off, he took a swig of fresh run whiskey out of a five gallon demijohn. I declined his invitation to have a drink. This is an interesting thing. Nan says about the only time my dad took off from work was hunting season. Now Harley does not like to emphasize that anybody did too much on recreation, he likes to emphasize the work, and I'm sure that this is the way that John W. was. Now this didn't occur very frequently, but she said

he would fill his double saddlebags with all the keeping food my mom could prepare for him, plus a couple of old blankets and plenty of ground coffee, eggs and stuff, mount his special pony and head for Billy's Island, up there in the Okefenokee Swamp. After a couple or three days he comes home with a buck and a turkey or two on the back of his pony.

HKS: "Keeping food"--that means it doesn't need refrigeration? What does it mean?

JWL: Food that didn't need refrigeration, right, like they would have beef jerky or salt pork or maybe meal to cook with, or flour to make bread or pancakes with and bake them, those staples, the meal, the flour, salt pork, beef jerky.

HKS: I want to ask you a question you probably can't answer. At the hotel there's no pork on the menu. This surprises me, my vision is that pork is more common, more popular in the South than it is in other regions of the country.

JWL: Bacon for breakfast, no ham for breakfast? Or are you talking about the dinner menu, entree?

HKS: Dinner menu. And it said southern specials, catfish and so forth, all the things I expected except no pork.

JWL: People, even in the South have gotten away from pork in recent years, because you see people preaching health foods so much.

HKS: I understand that.

JWL: You're right, it used to be very common, and locally there are very few hogs being grown anymore, like they used to. They had an open range down in there in those days, and you had wild hogs just roaming the range and you had the cows that were roaming those thousands of acres and they would round them up every once in a while. But then and you had a lot of people that were producing pork on the farms in this section in the early to mid-1900s, but very little pork production around here now, they can't compete with the Midwest.

HKS: Obviously dietary habits have changed a lot. But did the screw worm effect cattle?

JWL: Yes, it did.

HKS: And deer.

JWL: And deer.

HKS: But the hogs survived the screw worm okay but you had some problems with ticks. One of the reasons that the pork became a traditional diet, I would assume, is you can raise hogs much easier than you can raise cattle.

JWL: That's right. And particularly what we called the flatwoods, where they had the open range. They could survive, they could survive on acorns and other fruits of the land. This is the story of the hunting trip into the swamp. And this was the...

HKS: What's the date of this letter?

JWL: 1986 and '87.

HKS: Remarkable.

JWL: This is a description up at the top of his matched horses. He was still staying down at the homeplace when they were living in Jasper, Florida. Now this was a pretty good distance. It's hard for me to imagine that. Here's Council [points to map], do you see that, right there. This is the railroad, they were on the Southern Railroad right here. This is now a state highway, 94, coming through Council. But the original homeplace was two miles from right here. This is all the Okefenokee Swamp, of course it doesn't show it. This is the part that the actual swamp took in part of our land coming out in here like this. We didn't have much land on that side of the railroad, most of our land was right in here. Some of it over in here. He had a turpentine still at Edith, he had a turpentine still here, and he had some quarters, turpentine quarters they called them where he housed the laborers. Now Jasper, here's Jasper, Florida right here. This scale on this map, this is a ruler that I used at the United States Naval Academy.

HKS: It looks like it served you well.

JWL: I never did learn how to use it very much. [laughter] I never did have much aptitude for that. That's thirty miles right there. Alright, if you run on a straight line. See he was driving a buggy and a buckboard as she calls it and a wagon from his homeplace to Jasper, Florida. That is...

HKS: Sure. It's an hour's drive to Waycross right now on the modern transportation, which is a little bit further, I realize.

JWL: But you see, this is where they went. They had a road right through here. This is generally the route. They had a bridge or a ford across, this is the Suwannee River, it comes out of the Okefenokee Swamp and goes into the Gulf of Mexico right here. Alright. The Cypress Creek came out of there, where I was fishing, came out of the swamp right here and ran into the Suwannee River right here, so they were on this side of Cypress Creek, this road because they had no bridge across there, and they would go right here and they had a bridge or ford, somehow down here close to the Florida line, right in here, it was in Georgia on this road. Then the main road in those days was parallel to the Suwannee River right down here and went this way to Jasper, so that's the way he. Alright, you add about 25 percent to that because of the winding roads, you see, so it had to be that far, it had to be forty miles from where he lived here to go to Jasper and he was riding those two horses.

HKS: Amazing.

JWL: That's the only transportation there is. This says he only went maybe only every two weekends, sometimes every weekend and sometimes every two weekends he would visit them, but he was down here running the business and sacrificing to provide this house up there for those children to go to school in Jasper. They're all buried down there now at the Primitive Baptist Church cemetery, it's on the other side of the river. She makes reference in there that they did have a bridge at one time, there's no bridge down there now at this point, there's a bridge at Fargo that crosses the Suwannee River on the main road, of course. She said if the

river was high it would be over this bridge. She said something about when her sister died and they tried to get the casket across the river that they had a problem there that it got wet down.

HKS: Things you don't even think about anymore.

JWL: Right.

HKS: How long has the Okefenokee been significant? At one point it's just a place, and you lived as close to it as you could, you got too wet or whatever. Then it started being set aside. Was this after World War II? The time that your family grew up there, lived there, the swamp wasn't significant in any way.

JWL: I don't have the date of that but it seems to me like it was sometime in the '30s.

HKS: Is it good agricultural land? Why did they select that area? What was the attraction to that right next to the Okefenokee. Does it make sense?

JWL: They were pioneers. They were spreading out all the time and the land was cheap. It was not good farm land. It was primarily timber land and timber did not have much value except for turpentine purposes in those days.

HKS: It's a good place to make turpentine.

JWL: That was an attraction.

HKS: That was a good enough reason.

JWL: We still own some of the swamp. On a couple of occasions the government has made overtures to buy us, but we never have come to a trade. We still own part of that swamp. I went fishing in there, in a vacation one summer early in my college career, went camping down there in the swamp on Billy's Island, and I caught one of the largest bass. We didn't have a scale, but we estimated that bass weighed twelve pounds. I have been in there several times, into the swamp and this Cypress Creek that came through our land was very much the same type of water that's in the swamp.

HKS: We went to that commercial place south of Waycross, outside of the park. We only had an hour or two and it's set up for tourists like us; you have an hour or two you can take an hour boat trip. That was very intriguing, I don't know how typical anything was that we saw.

JWL: Saw a lot of alligators.

HKS: We saw a few, and black water.

JWL: That water is black, and it's the same type water that we have on our property down there. You put it in a glass and it looks like dark tea, ice tea. The color is derived from tannic acid, they say, from the roots of the trees in that swamp.

HKS: Can you drink it? Does it bother your system to drink water like that?

JWL: I never did think so, and my daddy always told me that's pure water. I fished down there in that river on a number of occasions, and I would drink it and it never did hurt me.

HKS: What does it taste like?

JWL: It tastes. I couldn't tell much difference from any well water, it tasted very good. You know with the standards they have today, they say it's polluted. How it gets polluted I don't know, because there are no industries along from the swamp, along that Suwannee River.

HKS: What about agricultural run off, fertilizer?

JWL: And there's no farming along in that area, so I don't know where it comes from.

HKS: One more question. I'm assimilating discussions I've had with six people so far. You were so intimately involved in the organization of the company during the '40s and '50s, what was the time period of the greatest amount of land acquisition? You have over two hundred thousand acres now. Was it gradual over the years or was it a couple of times that you bought most of it? What was the reason of the timing of that? Just opportunity or was there some economic plan?

JWL: Opportunity, price of the land, and our financial situation at the time, ability to finance a purchase.

HKS: In other words, you always wanted to acquire more land, it was always on the thing to do list when it was the right time, the price was right, and you had some capital to invest.

JWL: People were trying to farm the land around here in this area, and most of it was not suitable for efficient farming use. If they abandoned the cultivated fields, it would not be long before it would be growing up from natural reproduction. Early on that was what was happening. So Daddy started accumulating land, mostly for turpentine purposes. It was better business if he had the money and it was available. He could see that it was better business to buy it in fee simple, if he could finance the purchase, than it was to lease it for a period of several years.

HKS: He bought land that had timber of turpentine-producing size already, he didn't buy cutover land.

JWL: Not in those years when Daddy started buying land, because he was interested in the pine trees for turpentine purposes. Then Harley came in in 1937, and the pulpwood industry was developing at that time, and became another market. A lot of the people who were trying to farm were having problems; as smaller tracts became available, Harley was instrumental in adding to the land holdings during this period. Early after he rejoined Daddy, and during World War II, he pieced together several nice tracts, Harley did during World War II. And in the years immediately after World War II when I came in we bought a good many tracts in the late '40s and in the '50s. One of the largest tracts that Harley was instrumental in purchasing had been used by the owner for turpentine purposes and he had failed, he was just about insolvent. So Daddy and Harley were able to buy that tract at a good price.

HKS: Were you buying cutover land or do you always buy land with standing trees on it?

JWL: After World War II we bought some, we started buying some cutover land. We could see the result of reforestation, and we started buying more land and as more timber was being cut for sawmill purposes, we bought more land, cutover lands at that time. Then we had our sights set on a longer range program at that time, with the reforestation in mind.

HKS: Did you have any acreage goal in a general sense, if you had two hundred thousand acres you'd be pretty well set.

JWL: We didn't have a specific goal.

HKS: And at some point after the '50s you slowed down because you had enough, or prices got too steep?

JWL: Prices got too high, we felt, and we slowed down and didn't have as many tracts available at the price we thought was fair.

HKS: I suppose those prices look pretty good now.

JWL: The prices that we did buy them for, yeah. We bought a good bit of land up from ten to twenty-five dollars an acre.

HKS: I was impressed yesterday going out with Harley and John J., watching the burn and the little show me trip, looking at some of the reforestation. The intimate knowledge, familiarity, Harley especially has with the land. And you've already answered the question, there was no plan. But obviously if you kept acquiring land you couldn't maintain that intimate familiarity with acre after acre, where all the roads go and how it was managed. It would change the nature of the organization. But that wasn't a conscious decision you are saying, it's the way it turned out.

JWL: That's right.

HKS: I'm sure when you read your transcript you will be reminded of other large issues and small issues and nuances and you can respond at that time.

JWL: Okay.

HKS: I really appreciate you going through this ordeal.

JWL: I've really enjoyed it.