

*SOUTH CAROLINA POLITICAL COLLECTIONS  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT*

Interview

*with*

Rembert Coney Dennis  
*(1915-1992)*

***Interviewer:***

Dale Rosengarten, for McKissick Museum

***Dates of Interview:***

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***Transcribed and edited by:***

Colleen Bradley

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## Introduction

Rembert Coney Dennis of Berkeley County served over four decades in the South Carolina Senate, 1943-1988. His father and grandfather before him served as Senators from Berkeley County, and when his older brother, E.J. Dennis III, died at a young age, Rembert resolved to take on the family tradition of public service in the legislature. He attended Furman University and won election to the state House of Representatives while still enrolled in law school at the University of South Carolina. After a second term in the House, Dennis decided to run for the Senate, and won easily.

The high regard Dennis enjoyed from his constituents is reflected in his repeated re-election to the Senate, often without opposition. In the tradition of his friend and mentor, Edgar Brown, Dennis was a consummate politician of the "old-school," who ruled as he had been taught, with a firm and occasionally benevolent hand. Though he called it a "responsibility," Dennis relished his power and guarded it jealously.

During the 1950s and 1960s, a period of racial turmoil and rapid industrialization in the state, Dennis acquired the seniority and built the power base in state and local politics that marked his career. He was not unique or even unusual in the power he held in his county, but the combination of his power in Berkeley County, his increasing seniority in the Senate, and his position as longtime Senate leader Edgar Brown's right hand man did set him apart from most of his fellow legislators. A powerful friend and a formidable enemy, Dennis ranked fifth in Senate seniority by 1960. He continued his rise to power throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and became Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee when Edgar Brown retired in 1972. Dennis reached the pinnacle of his career in 1984 when he became President *Pro Tempore* of the Senate. In 1988, ill-health forced him to retire from public life.

Dennis rendered able service to the causes of the poor and handicapped, conservation and wildlife management, the improvement of South Carolina's educational system, and the betterment of the state's financial affairs. He was the last of South Carolina's political giants, men from rural counties who attained tremendous power in the legislature. Changes in the structure of state government since 1973 make it unlikely that another Dennis or Brown will be seen again.

A fire at his Lewisfield Plantation home in the mid-eighties destroyed most of his personal papers. Those that remain are held by South Carolina Political Collections at the University of South Carolina. The single best source of information on Dennis' life and career is this thirty-hour oral history done at the request of then USC president James Holderman and conducted by historian Dale Rosengarten over twenty sessions in 1989 and 1990 at the Dennis home. Mrs. Dennis was present throughout most of the sessions and was helpful in recalling names and events. She also read the unedited transcripts and corrected a number of errors that resulted from a combination of poor tape quality and Dennis's health-related speech difficulties.

The length and great range of subject matter as well as the poor audio quality of the audio tapes led to the decision to transcribe and edit them, which was done by Colleen Bradley as part of her Applied History master's thesis project. A more complete overview of Dennis's life and career can be found in her thesis, along with an explanation of her editing methodology. *See:* Bradley, Colleen, *The Last Giant: Senator Rembert C. Dennis of Berkeley County*, Thesis, M.A., The University of South Carolina, 1995, held by Thomas Cooper Library at USC.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Let me begin Senator by asking you a little about your family background. I understand that the Remberts were originally Huguenot settlers and the Dennis' relative newcomers emigrating in the 1800s from New England. Would you tell me about both sides of your family?

**DENNIS:** I'm afraid my information is not in great depth but I'll tell you what I know of course. On the Rembert side my mother was named Ella Mae Rembert and that family was in the Sumter area. Matter of fact, there is a small town named Rembert in that area that the Rembert family in this state settled.

My mother's mother married a Coney, Harry Coney, from St. George and that's where the Coney's were from. As far as the Remberts are concerned, other than my great-grandmother, I know there was a George Rembert who was a professor at Wofford College. He was a musician and my information is that he was sort of eccentric. He would get up in the middle of the night and play the piano. The Rembert that I was named after was my mother's brother.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What was his full name?

**DENNIS:** His full name was Rembert Coney. He was a doctor that practiced in medicine--he was a house-to-house physician in the various areas of the Pee Dee. He was in Cheraw for a while and later in life he went with the Veterans Administration. At one time was in charge of the Veterans Hospital in Columbia and subsequently the Veterans Hospital in San Francisco. He had a number of children and they stayed on the West Coast and I think they have all passed away now.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you recall your Rembert grandparents?

**DENNIS:** No, no. My grandparents on the Rembert side passed away before I was born. The oldest one of the Rembert family was a great-aunt. My mother's aunt--and her name was Lizzie Rembert and she lived in Hendersonville, North Carolina. As a child I remember the family going up to visit her in the summertime, when the weather got hot down here. As a matter of fact, the home she had in Hendersonville she left to my mother in her will when she died. She was with us in Pinopolis when she died, by the way. She got where she couldn't take care of herself, so she came and lived with my mother. I am trying to think if there are any other Remberts.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The original Rembert who came to South Carolina, which I read in the genealogy that you recommended, settled in the Jamestown area. Is that not so?

**DENNIS:** That's not right information.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I remember they said he had lot number 21 in the original town of Jamestown. Did anybody hang on to that initial piece of property?

**DENNIS:** No. As far I know, my family never really had any legal or possessory rights to it. In the church in Charleston, in the church yard is a burial place of one of the Remberts. Does the book mention that?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Frankly, I can't quite recall. I mean, this was just a listing of family names.

**DENNIS:** Arthur Ravenel told me about it. He attends that Huguenot church, whatever the name of it is. That one of my ancestors was buried there in Charleston in that cemetery.

The Dennis side of the family. I have seen this information before about three generals in the Confederate Army. I only knew of one and that was my grandfather, Edward James Dennis, Sr., who, according to *Butler's Raiders*, which was one of the books about the Civil War and other information was from the family. He went in when he was 18 and was first made a captain and after considerable battlefield experience he contracted pneumonia and was sent home by General Lee. He was, home then was Hog Swamp, and I have heard my father tell about him having to leave Hog Swamp because the Federal Army was trying to take his life. About the time he was able to go back, he got orders from General Lee to stay in this area. The war had progressed to the point where they were having trouble in the Carolinas with local uprisings. Some of the Northerners coming down--I guess carpetbaggers. They were inciting the blacks; they were having trouble on the plantations. So the orders to General Dennis, he was made a general by then, was to have a band, sort of like Francis Marion had in the Revolutionary War, and keep down these uprisings. I remember the story about they were to have a dance at one of the plantation homes and some of the blacks said they were going to the dance. My grandfather's orders

were to prevent them from going in and the story as I got it was there was a black from Philadelphia riding a horse and leading a group that was going to the dance and my grandfather met them at the gate. He told his man, said "you leave this to me now; I know the horse he's riding. Just one shot and that horse will bolt and throw him off, so you don't have anything to worry about." The story was that it wasn't necessary for the horse to bolt and throw him off--my grandfather shot him and killed him there at the gate going into his plantation house. That's nothing to brag about, it's just something to tell you about how critical the times were then.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, actually the account in the book about Butler's Calvary recommended that your grandfather be, that they build a monument to him. I read that after you told me about it, so I know he was considered a great war hero. On both sides, were these plantation people? Before the war, of course, they ran plantations?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Where was the Rembert Plantation? Do you remember?

**DENNIS:** I never did know where the Rembert property was at all. The Dennis property was at McBeth, the Fairsprings Plantation was the name of it, because there were several springs out in the yard where plantation house was. In the mid-1930s we had the first Dennis reunion at Fairsprings. I remember being there at the plantation house for that reunion and it was a fairly large house and as was customary in those days, the kitchen was off from the main body of the house.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did not your grandfather marry into the Fairsprings property? I can't remember where, but I remember reading that he married Ms. Adelaide Markley who had grown up, I suppose, at Fairsprings.

**DENNIS:** Yes, that's correct.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So this was a property that he married into?

**DENNIS:** Right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The other thing that I read was that she was a Methodist and he a Baptist. Was that unusual in those days?

**DENNIS:** I would say its unusual, it was unprecedented and it didn't cause any--my mother and father were in the same situation. My mother was a Baptist and my father was a Methodist. The Methodist church in Pinopolis was just across the street from us and as children we would go to the Methodist church in the morning. The Baptist church was about a mile or so between Moncks Corner and Pinopolis; and in the afternoon, we would go to the Baptist church. But its true, I guess its just a coincidence that my grandfather and gram as we called her... He was a Baptist and he was buried at Mt. Olivet. She was a Methodist and she was buried at McBeth's at Rehobeth. I remember her well. She used to visit us often. I remember the Sunday she died, my father drove his automobile so fast between the doctor and where she was that it caught on fire; but it didn't burn up. But I remember him being at the house with a smoking automobile and I remember the funeral quite well at McBeth at Rehobeth Church. That's the first time I had seen my father cry.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you remember what year that was?

**DENNIS:** I can come pretty close to it. Must have been right close to 1920.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So you were a very small child, maybe five years old.

**DENNIS:** Five years old.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So your grandparents remained within the church that they were brought up [in] and were buried within that church rather than try to find a common ground to be buried in.

**DENNIS:** That's right, they stayed at different churches.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When your grandfather's generation were on the plantation, do you know what crops they were raising--what kind of operation they were running?

**DENNIS:** The crops in that day could have been cotton, corn, some tobacco. As a matter of fact, my father did some of the same kind of farming on the place he got after Fairsprings was gone. He purchased the Stony Landing property just outside Moncks Corner. That's where he farmed and that is now going to be the sight of the old Santee Canal Park. And that's where the Museum is going to be too, on that same site. That was property my father bought for a farm and farmed it. And he planted regular Southern crops of the time, oats and corn and cotton, tobacco--had the tobacco barns. It was given historic recognition because it was at that site, Stony Landing, that the first semi-submersible torpedo boat was constructed, the Little David. The place was not named after the Stoney family, its spelled S T O N Y, and Stoney is S T O N E Y.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Is it named after the characteristic of stones in the ground?

**DENNIS:** That's right. It was also the site of a brick plant. Limestone brick was made there and it was very prominent land in there. Matter of fact, the old Moncks Corner was out on a corner, not where the present site is. And the road ran directly from the landing to that corner where the old Moncks stores, Thomas Moncks, for whom the town was named, was a very prominent boat landing for commerce and was the starting point for the old Santee Canal which is real historical story in itself.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This is the early nineteenth century canal?

**DENNIS:** That's right. There were canals. The concept of it was to have a route for navigation and shipping from Columbia to Charleston. So they come down the Wateree, into the Congaree to the Santee and then from the Santee to the Cooper by way of the canal and on to the port of Charleston. Its a story within itself.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Are you too far up river here to grow rice?

**DENNIS:** Oh, right here at Lewisfield there are remains of rice mills on the other side of the road. Lewisfield's well known for being a rice growing plantation at one time and then indigo after that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You mentioned Hog Swamp, your grandfather's place and we have talked about Fairsprings--these were not rice plantations?

**DENNIS:** No, they were indigo plantations.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you remember Hog Swamp?

**DENNIS:** I don't remember the plantation, I was too young.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I read that your grandfather lost that plantation after the war. Could you tell that story?

**DENNIS:** Well, the story as I know it was that there was some defect in the title to the plantation and my grandfather was a civil engineer before he studied law. But as the result of the title defect, the family lost the plantation and then that's when he made the vow that "I'm going to study law, so that what's happened to my family won't happen to other families." So he read law and became a well-recognized attorney before his death, serving, of course, in the Senate as well as practicing law. I've heard stories of his practicing of law at the Mt. Pleasant site of the courthouse. Mt. Pleasant was in Berkeley County and the courthouse was there. My grandfather had some right notorious cases held from the Mt. Pleasant courthouse that I heard about. My father stepped into the law practice and got his law certificate the same way. He read law, he went to Clemson a couple of years and then he read law and was admitted to the bar by special act of legislation when he was 18 years old.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That's even younger than yourself.

**DENNIS:** Right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, you had quite an interesting educational experience as well. Being a law student when you entered the house.

**DENNIS:** When I entered the House, yes. As a matter of fact I was taking an examination and a matter came up on the house floor and I excused myself from the classroom about midway during the examination to go make a speech in the House and then went back and finished my examination. That was one unusual educational experience. Another was that I spent three years of my high school lifetime in Columbia as a page in the Senate. They didn't have the requirements in those days of attendance of so many days, so what I did was take the monthly test. I'd take the examination and miss the daily classroom recitation for about three months each year. You couldn't do that now, but I managed to do it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I was wondering how you worked out the logistics of being in high school and also being a page. Where did you live?

**DENNIS:** We lived in Pinopolis at the time and Columbia. I would go up sometimes with my father during his lifetime. I was there one year with him and two years after he was killed, and I would go up with him or other legislators for Senate sessions and come back on weekends sometimes. Sometimes I would stay up there. I boarded with a family that lived in Pinopolis at one time and moved to Columbia, the Skinner family. I boarded with them over in Shandon and road a street car back and forth to the State capitol.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What were your duties as a page?

**DENNIS:** To fix the papers for the Senators and carry messages for them. Same thing as the duties now, except its more extensive now with the research clerks and so forth. Well a page boy was to answer the clapping of the hands of the Senator.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were you paid for this? Was this a paying job?

**DENNIS:** Well, yes. As a matter of fact, there is something interesting in that connection. The Senators, the legislators in those days were paid a flat salary of 400 dollars and pages were paid on a per diem. And one year the legislators, the Senators, got \$400 for the year and the pages got \$410 total which was something unusual.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How many pages were there?

**DENNIS:** There were three Senate pages and now there are about 33.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were they typically high school students?

**DENNIS:** Either drop out of high school or manage to keep up their work. I really don't know what the other boys did, whether they made a grade each year or not. I was able to make a grade each year. I was there from 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Eleventh grade then was the highest we went. I was back home for the 11<sup>th</sup> grade and graduation. I'm not bragging, but to show you the difference in time, I couldn't have done it with the requirements of today, what I was able to do to finish school without attending the class. I just stress the point that anyone who is determined to get an education can get one if he'll apply himself. And then my college life was a scholarship proposition largely. I stood examination for an academic scholarship which wasn't hard. I had various working scholarships. I waited on tables, I swept the classroom floors, I did janitorial services. I kept attendance reports, I kept the bookstore and I did all those types of jobs in order to defray the expenses of my education.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Your parents were not well-to-do people.

**DENNIS:** My father was killed when I was fifteen. My mother was a school teacher with a small income and she was not able to help me except for very little.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When you were growing up did you have people to help in the house, housekeepers or retainers?

**DENNIS:** Domestic servants were regular in those days. We always had a cook and a wash woman. The wash woman would come in on Saturday for some things and we would send clothes to her house. She would wash them and we pick them up on Saturday. But the point is you had servants who would keep house, cook and take care of the clothes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you remember any in particular who stayed with the family a long time or who had a particular influence on your upbringing?

**DENNIS:** There was one, her name was Hannah Davis. She was just about like one member of my family. She helped my mother take care of the children and take care of all of the household chores. We had a washer woman, her name was Sennie Milligan. And she had a contagious laugh. You could hear her laughing all over the place. But they were devoted to the people they worked with. Pinopolis at that time was a sleepy little village. It had blossomed out as a result of the Santee-Cooper project. Taken over a lot of the land around it for the lakes of Santee-Cooper and the influx of people working for Santee-Cooper and allied businesses that were brought about by Santee-Cooper.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Could you describe the house you grew up in in Pinopolis?

**DENNIS:** I was born at the Stony Landing house and we started living in Pinopolis when I was about three or four years old. We would go to Pinopolis in the summer from Stony Landing but when I about three or four, we started permanently residing in Pinopolis, not going back to Stony Landing for the winter. The house in Pinopolis was not unlike this house. My father built the house that I remember, right after World War I. It was a two-story frame house with large rooms and high ceilings and we lost it by fire when I was at Furman University in 1934. My mother and I lived in a garage apartment after that home burned and you wouldn't believe it, but we lost that one by fire.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You have had some very bad luck with houses and fires.

**DENNIS:** When we had the big house my mother had boarders to help defray expenses and when we lived in this garage apartment she had to room with a school teacher. And they built too big a fire in a heater and that house burned.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When you were living in your first house in Pinopolis how many of you were there? How many kids and adults?

**DENNIS:** We had the full family then. My mother and father and seven children. I had three sisters and three brothers. The oldest was my brother E.J. He went to Furman University and graduated in the last senior law class that they had at Furman. And then he came home and practiced law with my father until my father died. And after his death until--he had an untimely death at the age of 24 with pneumonia. They didn't have no wonder drugs in those days. So he left us, and then my mother and my two sisters and my two brothers lived there and my mother taught school at Cross. My sisters taught school before they got married.

**ROSENGARTEN:** If I remember correctly, you were the second son?

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But there were three daughters in between.

**DENNIS:** I, because of the influence of my uncle, I guess, whom I was named after, and my mother's encouragement in that direction, I thought that I would be a doctor. I used to doctor the animals and pretend I was a doctor, but when my brother died I felt like that my responsibility was to uphold the tradition of the Dennis' in politics. So I started preparing for it. I mentioned the law school and I would lecture to the cows but before that I remember a boat trip to Europe one summer on a work-away--a dollar a day. That was the year I finished Furman which was 1936. As a result of that boat trip I was in communication with some of the congressional people who helped me get that job on the boat. One of them was Senator "Cotton" Ed Smith. The young people that went that I was associated with and those congressional people, I decided I would try to go to school in Washington. Because I didn't have the money to go to law school in South Carolina and no job to do it with. So I got a job working in the daytime and going to night school at Georgetown. I did that for a year and I was out of school for a year and then I came back to South Carolina. Ran for the legislature, entered the University of South Carolina Law School and completed my law work there. In Washington, I had the distinction of working technically for Joe Kennedy Sr., because I worked for the US Maritime Commission and Mr. Kennedy was the director of the Commission. I never saw him in the office building or had the pleasure of knowing him personally, but technically he was my boss. The Maritime Commission was in the Department of Commerce. I worked in the library there during the day and went to law school at night.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You were doing research for the commission? You said you worked in the library, what kind of job were you doing?

**DENNIS:** It was Maritime Books and of course that included Law Books. They had a legal department and that's where I got started learning something about law books, in that Library. They had a newspaper service for the members of the commission and the various department heads. I did some of the clipping and circulation of the maritime news but my primary duty was if I got a call for a certain book or periodical, to find it in the library and have it ready for the person who wanted it. The librarian--I was just an assistant--the librarian was a very fine lady from Roanoke, Virginia. I was her flunky.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you recall what the salary was in those days?

**DENNIS:** Yes. I started off at \$1440 a year annual salary and I got my raise to 16-something and then 18-something. But always under \$2000 a year.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And you lived in a boarding situation in Washington?

**DENNIS:** Yes. I had an apartment with other boys. The whole time I was there we changed several times, changed roommates and apartments but that was a way of living in an apartment. It was more like existing than it was living. We ate breakfast at the apartment and ate lunch at work and tried to have a dinner meal together. One time, the group that was at the apartment had a cook from South Carolina and she was fairly good and I made the mistake of one time taking some quail up there to be used and she said oh yes, she knew how to fix 'em. She fixed what was left of them, but she cut off the wings and the legs--some of the best part of it. She had just the breasts fixed for us. I felt like that was a very much violated bird.

**ROSENGARTEN:** (laughs) She was from South Carolina?

**DENNIS:** She was from South Carolina. She just didn't tell us the truth about knowing how to fix the quail.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When you were living in Washington and you needed to come home, how did you travel?

**DENNIS:** I caught rides with somebody coming.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In a car?

**DENNIS:** Yes, in a car or in the train. I rode on a train some. It was an all night ride. I'd be on the train in Moncks Corner and be in Washington the next morning about 7 or 8 o'clock.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I wanted to ask you something about the summer you spent in Europe. That was 1936. I read somewhere that you traveled to England and Germany?

**DENNIS:** Right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were you aware at that point of the political tensions building in Europe?

**DENNIS:** I was, particularly in Hamburg, Germany. The conversations that we had with people indicating that Hitler had things under control--people were terrified and they would talk to you in whispered conversation. I've had them say to me in a restaurant "if they," and of course they meant the Gestapo, "knew anything about what we talking about, they'd call for me tonight." They were terrified, is what I am saying. We knew we were on the brink of war.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were you aware of any particular persecution of the Jewish people at that point?

**DENNIS:** No, I don't think it had really gotten underway then, to any extent.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And then, you went from Germany to England, is that right?

**DENNIS:** We went to London first, and Liverpool and then we went across the... We were supposed to go to Le Havre, France, but Stour River to Leg Have, France, but because this ship I was on was a combination passenger ship and freighter, because of a freight cancellation we didn't go to La Have, but we went to Hamburg and Bremen, Germany.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you have contacts there, people, names, or people that you could look up?

**DENNIS:** We stayed together pretty well as ship's crew when we went ashore. The outstanding thing about Hamburg I guess was that it's the home of the Haggenbach Circuses. We went out to see the home of all the animals that they took around on tour. That was one interesting thing about it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So this was just a working vacation for you. You were working on the boat and just coming off?

**DENNIS:** That's right, we didn't stay out. Everywhere we went we were besieged by prostitutes and it was obviously a city of...

*[SIDE 1 ENDS, SIDE TWO BEGINS]*

**ROSENGARTEN:** That being a historian, I have a great interest in the past, in the distant past. I wanted to ask you if you knew anything further about the plantation that your grandfather ran and then lost. For example, how many slaves he might have owned or what the size of the plantation was, what the scale was?

**DENNIS:** I think the acreage was in the vicinity of 1,000 acres. The slaves, I never did know of but a very limited number of slaves. I think the slaves were more personal valets than they were farm hands. I know my grandfather, General Dennis had a black man, I guess they called him a slave, but he was more or less a personal valet. He was the one that saved his life when the Yankees were coming, so to speak. On an afternoon or evening he was in the room resting and he had to go out the window and flee from being captured. You know, the slaves took the name of their owners and there was a July Dennis that was supposed to have been a slave and one whose offspring was named Woodrow Dennis and he used to sweep the office building for the Dennis law office. He was slightly retarded and he used to answer the telephone before anybody got there -- "This is Dennis and Dennis, Woodrow Dennis speaking." I never knew a slave as a slave. My father had black people working for him, the same people for years and years and I knew them as employees - farm hands or woodcutters and I worked with them in the field and at the wood pile. Well, they were just black employees.

**ROSENGARTEN:** My understanding is that Hog Swamp Plantation, course it had not been in your family for a long time, it was flooded when they constructed Lake Moultrie. Did you have any feelings about that?

**DENNIS:** Well, I didn't have any real emotions about Hog Swamp because I didn't have ever--I never identified with it enough to be emotional about it. I had some emotions about Fairsprings, a little bit. We lost it to the Federal Land Bank before my father died. But still I, because my forbears lived there I had great emotions to it. My emotions were in connection with the Stony Landing property and the taking of the rice fields and swamp land. They left the house because it was on a hill. But there were feelings of great loss when I had to give up those rice fields.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So the Fairsprings Plantation was a loss of the early Depression years?

**DENNIS:** That's right, exactly. That's when my mother lost her mountain place and my father lost Fairsprings and almost lost Stony Landing.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Now, my understanding is that he had acquired Stony Landing in 1919, is that right?

**DENNIS:** I thought it was a little earlier than that. I thought it was around 1916.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That's what I meant by, you can't always tell whether the newspapers have got it straight or not.

**DENNIS:** Well, that's close.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Your grandfather, before he was...

**DENNIS:** Wait a minute now, I was born at Stony Landing, born 1915. It was 1910 that my father acquired the first portion of Stony Landing and he subsequently acquired the Fairlawn and the Coleman tracts and additional parts of it, but the original 611 acres of Stony Landing was 1910.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So maybe, the 1919 figure was when the total property was consolidated?

**DENNIS:** Right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Going back again to your grandfather's career, you said before he was a lawyer he was a civil engineer. Does that mean he was a surveyor?

**DENNIS:** That's right. There are many plats recorded in the RMC office [that] he did as a civil engineer. You brought up, he had a, members of that family and their political offices... During my time as a child, my father was a senator, my uncle William Dennis, Uncle Bill as we called him, was a County Supervisor and my Uncle Walter was County Sheriff. Later Uncle Walter went to the legislature within the House and my father was in the Senate. I rode up together with them from time to time. You asked about, I already explained that, holding office, I think it's a proposition of a family tradition. You're in a family that's in the political life or the government service and feel motivated that way. They were all successful with the electorate. My father didn't always win, he went through a period, you see by his biography. He went in four years and then out four years. It was great factionalism at that time. Now, Mr. Harvey of the Harvey faction would be elected one time and then my father would be elected.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What were the issues that they were divided on?

**DENNIS:** Well, one of the big issues was cattle range. Whether the stock could run at large or not. Let's see if I can try to think of another issue. During my father's political career the money situation was very tight. We had the Depression and my father's brother-in-law was cashier of one of the two local banks and a lot of politics involved in whether you got a loan or not. My father got blamed for people who applied for a loan and didn't get it from his brother-in-law and got very little credit whenever they did get it. That's the way those things worked, same thing was true in connection with the curse of Berkeley County at the time; that was the bootleg industry. My father had friends who wanted to be state constables and he got the governor to appoint them and they would break up the liquor stills and my father would get the blame for it. That was one of the big factors in his assassination. Bootleggers were involved.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Would you describe that event, the circumstances surrounding your father's assassination?

**DENNIS:** Well, I don't want to mention names. It was a political situation where certain people in the business world and the underworld were doing things that he wouldn't go along with. And a group of them decided, who were in prominent places in the community, decided the only way we were going to get our way id was to get rid of Ned Dennis. And that's what they did.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Where were you the day he was gunned down?

**DENNIS:** I was at home in Pinopolis and it was a Friday morning. Our next door neighbor was in Moncks Corner and had heard that it had happened and she immediately came to Pinopolis to tell us. I remember her, seeing her walking fast coming down the walkway to the house and one of my sisters going to the door and screaming and saying "Daddy's been shot." My brother, E.J. was practicing with him, they didn't ride together but they went about the same time, but E.J. was a little late that morning. He heard about it apparently on the way because he came back and got his pistol. I remember him coming and getting his pistol and going back out. By the time my mother and other smaller children got to Moncks Corner my father was on the porch of the Rigby Hotel and the crowd was mulling around and the ambulance finally got there to take him to Charleston. I didn't grasp it all but thinking back over it, those who knew, I rode down with one of my sister's friends who was a nurse, she said enough for me to know that there wasn't any chance. That even if he lived, he would be blind because his optic nerves had been severed by a shot. So for the next two days, it was a matter of being in the hospital. He had a tremendous constitution, he just pulled on his strength from 9:00 Friday morning until the next afternoon.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What exactly happened in Moncks Corner that morning?

**DENNIS:** There was a post office at the time. The post office then was about where the SCN Bank is. My father had gone to the post office for the mail and down in front of a store just below the post office towards the railroad. He saw a watermelon truck or wagon and he went there to talk to the farmer and probably to get a watermelon. He was going there, that's where he was headed when he was shot. The assassin was across the street hiding behind an automobile and he shot him while resting the gun on the radiator of the automobile.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did they catch the man?

**DENNIS:** Yes, the captured him and immediately took him to Columbia.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was this W.L. "Sporty" Thornley?

**DENNIS:** Yes, he was a disabled veteran. He had been gassed in the war and he wasn't mentally right. Later, gave a confession that said he was persuaded to do it by others. They furnished him the automobile and the gun and a half a pint of liquor to drink before he did it, and they would take care of him and his family.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But even today you wouldn't be willing to say who was behind it?

**DENNIS:** Well, I know who's behind it but I wouldn't want to rehash it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How do you account for Olin Johnston's parole of Thornley?

**DENNIS:** There was suspicion of a political involvement and political contribution but I wouldn't want to make any charges because there are children of those in office at that time who are prominent in South Carolina now and I wouldn't want, I just wouldn't want to bring it up again. It was pretty clear that it was a situation of illegal interference of the parole process.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The whole incident, you felt involved the struggle over the stills and the bootlegging.

**DENNIS:** Bootlegging and banking facilities. Bootlegging and the lending of money by the bank.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This kind of frontier justice, a situation where you solve your problems by hiring a killer and knocking off the opponent - was this a common or fairly expected occurrence in Moncks Corner in the 1930s?

**DENNIS:** The bootleggers had war with each other, they had a big shooting spree in Moncks Corner in which three men were killed and they had other ambush shootings. A man by the name of Sabe Cumbee was Charlotte Owen's son. As a result of some of the bootlegging disagreements my father was his attorney and therefore involved in that. Those that didn't like Cumbee, didn't like my father because my father was his lawyer.

**ROSENGARTEN:** He didn't like him?

**DENNIS:** He didn't like my father because he was Cumbee's lawyer.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Your mother was a one-time president of a women's Christian temperance union. How did she react to these bootleg battles that eventually claimed the life of her husband?

**DENNIS:** Well, mother was as great a Christian I think that ever lived. She detested alcohol in every form and particularly the illegal industry in it. She was a great church worker in the missionary society and she was big in the Women's Christian Temperance Union. All people are proud of their parents, but I would say that I do believe my mother was the nearest thing to a saint on earth. She had her difficulty; she had a wreck and broke her hip. She had that while I was in Washington in 1937, between here and Charleston. As a result of that she went through painful hospitalization and partial recovery. She had steel pins put in her hip. She never got fully ambulatory again. She had a stroke and got worse and she just gradually bedridden. They didn't have nursing homes then but we were able to keep her at home even if they had nursing homes. We had a nurse with her all the time the last several years of her life. She suffered considerably but she never lost faith. You would never find her table without a bible on it. I think she was loved and respected by everybody. Despite her poverty, she used to take care of children of other people. She took care of one cousin in the family and almost adopted but not legally adopted a child who was from a destitute family just to help her out.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In the early days of your parents' marriage do you think that her views on the temperance issue affected your father?

**DENNIS:** Oh yes. He paid a lot of attention to mother's views but my father was a victim of circumstances that he couldn't change. My father was a handsome man with a wonderful personality and he had a high temper. He had a strong heart. He was a victim of a frame-up to violate the federal law and was tried in federal court. The jury stayed out about five

minutes and acquitted him. The judge threatened [a different?] verdict. Just to give you a sample of the evidence, this deputy sheriff said he had paid him a bribe on a certain day at his office and they brought the journal from the Senate and showed that very day and hour that this fellow said he delivered him the bribe, my father was voting in the state Senate. So, it was obvious to the judge and everybody that it was a political frame-up. But the court didn't pay any attention to it, threw it out.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When was this?

**DENNIS:** This was, my father was still living, let's see it wasn't too long before his death.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you think it was the same group of people?

**DENNIS:** Some of them, yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So they were determined to break him down.

**DENNIS:** That's right. They were determined to bring him down or get rid of him.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Again, from the newspaper I read that in August of 1939 there was a picnic at Stony Landing for the Local WCTU Chapter and that you gave the address at the picnic and said that you believed in a close connection between Christianity and good government. Fifty years later would you say the same thing?

**DENNIS:** Unquestionably. I think that's one of the big faults with the government now is people haven't got the kind of morals and Christian viewpoint holding office. You got some thorough Christians in office but they are the exception other than the rule I'm afraid. I think that statement is just as true today as it was then.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In your growing up years, I am assuming that your family was completely teetotalers given your mother's point of view and all. Is this a position that you still maintain?  
Complete temperance?

**DENNIS:** I still think that alcohol and drugs are big curses in the world.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Does this mean with all your hunting experience you have never taken a drink?

**DENNIS:** No, it doesn't mean that. And that's a difficult matter for me to discuss because my church believes in total abstinence, my personal belief has been one of extreme moderation if any, extremely moderate. My advice has always been as a Sunday School teacher and otherwise, the best thing is abstinence. What I learned in trying to promote the causes of Christian Temperance Union as a teenager, I have always felt it to be true. The sins of the world and the tragedies that go with them are too many times alcohol related. The man who drove into me that night on the road, so I was told, had in his automobile some wrappings off a marijuana cigarette. I never was shown one, I don't know. All I know is that he hit me on the wrong side of the road and he was an uninsured motorist.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was he injured in the crash?

**DENNIS:** He was injured but not real seriously.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So he got off scot-free?

**DENNIS:** No charges made, no. Nobody saw it, just the physical evidence, the tires, the marks proved that he was over on my side of the road.

**ROSENGARTEN:** They could have done a blood analysis.

**DENNIS:** Yes, they could have.

**ROSENGARTEN:** One of the things I was kind of curious about - in 1945 I read that you and Senator O.T. Wallace of Charleston defended two men accused of manufacturing moonshine. Jeremiah Wright was convicted and Charles Dennis

was acquitted, although Judge Waring who presided on the case implied that both men were guilty. In Dennis' case he said the agents were just a little too sporting and flushed their covey too soon. Do you remember this trial and how did you happen to get involved on the other side of this issue?

**DENNIS:** Well, as an attorney it is my responsibility to represent defendants regardless of how I felt about the offense they were charged with. In these particular cases O.T. and I were roommates for seven years in Columbia in a hotel while we were in the Senate together. I was a young lawyer and I felt like Judge Waring had a reputation for being pretty tough and my information was that he had some regard for Senator Wallace. I asked Senator Wallace to help me, thinking he could help my clients. They were friends, they weren't money clients. I did a lot of free work. I never was paid a great deal for criminal practice at all. Well, in this particular case that you mentioned about the facts of them, flushing the covey too quick--the only thing they had on Charley Dennis was that he had the component parts of a still in his barn, copper and so forth, that could be used for a still. He hadn't set up yet, that's what the Judge was talking about. Probably was going to set up. Now, Jeremiah Wright was arrested because he was at a still in the woods when the agents came up. His statement to me was, and he never veered from it, was that he went there to get a drink, but he didn't have any interest in the still, any ownership. I don't know whether its true or not, but my responsibility was to give him his day in court.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was Charley Dennis related to you?

**DENNIS:** He was a second cousin.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you ever know any or represent any black moonshiners?

**DENNIS:** Yes. Must have been in state court, 'cause I don't remember having a black client in federal court on moonshine, but I have in state court. But very limited, I didn't have many of those kind of cases.

**ROSENGARTEN:** We had a neighbor several years ago in McClellanville, an old black man who is since deceased, and he had somewhere between 18 and 22 children and he said he put them through school on the proceeds of his still.

**DENNIS:** Well, that was done by a lot of white and black men in those days. A little political humor--I used to tell the story, a bootlegger from Bethera. Bethera and Berkeley County was considered the capital of the Hell Hole and the bootlegger activity. The story was that this fellow told his son when he got up to college age that he wasn't going to let him grow up and be uneducated like he was. He was going to send him to college and he did. After the boy had been there a while, he wrote his daddy a very strange letter. He wrote that those professors are so smart that the smart bird dog they had, Sport, maybe they could teach him to read, but he'd have to send Sport up there and send some money. The gullible father did and later on there was a proposition that he was reading fine, they could teach him to talk but they would have to have some more money. His father sent him the additional money. Vacation time came and the boy said now what am I going to do. But he figured it out when he got home. When his daddy said, "Son, where is Sport? I want to talk to him?" And he said, "Sport's dead. I killed him yesterday afternoon." The father said, "Did you lose your mind? What's happened to you? The boy said, "No, I don't think so." He said, "We were getting ready to come home and Sport said 'I can't wait to get home so I can tell your mother about that woman down at Davis' store that your Daddy's been fooling with for three or four years.'" The old man waited a little bit and then said "Are you sure that dog is dead?"

**ROSENGARTEN:** Are you feeling tired? Would you like to quit for the day?

**DENNIS:** What time is it?

**ROSENGARTEN:** It is five minutes after one.

**DENNIS:** I reckon I can go a little longer. Let's go on a little bit more.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Let me just ask you a couple more questions. I wanted to ask you a little bit more about your father's career both as a lawyer and as a legislator. I was interested that in the first four years he served in the house from 1900-1904, his father was in the Senate. I know that this was before your bust, but do you know of any, can you give me any information about your father's career?

**DENNIS:** I can't identify any special legislation that he sponsored. I know that he was well though of. He used to have his

friends from Columbia, including the governor and legislators and others down to hunt with him and he was active but he wasn't a legislator who introduced a lot of legislation, passed a lot of law. He first practiced law in St. George before he came to Berkeley County. In those days, the responsibilities of the county rested on the delegation in a large measure and as was during my father's time and for a large part of my time before home rule, considerable time was taken and school budgets and county supervisor's appropriation, sheriff's department and providing the funds for operation of county government. I know my father spent a lot of time in meetings in connection with county budget and I certainly did too. So what I am saying is he was more of a local legislative service than he was in a statewide matter.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did he go into legal practice with his father?

**DENNIS:** My grandfather passed away about the time that my father became a lawyer. I'm sure they did work together but I don't think they had a firm, no.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you mention just before, that your father got his first law office at 18.

**DENNIS:** He was admitted to the bar.

**ROSENGARTEN:** He was admitted to the bar at 18.

**DENNIS:** Yes, by special act of legislature.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Your father's murder was followed by two more family tragedies in quick succession. Would you describe how these events affected your life and your career choice?

**DENNIS:** The event's ...

**ROSENGARTEN:** After your father's death, am I correct, your brother died within a year and then the burning of your family's house?

**DENNIS:** That's what occurred. As that occurred it made me feel compelled to carry on the tradition of public service that the Dennis' had already established.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You never at any point thought about getting any revenge or justice for your father's murder?

**DENNIS:** I would have to say that I felt the way that he was treated reversed it. I needed to be successful to the point of calling those who were the perpetrators. To right a terrible wrong in any way that I could. But I guess the overriding thing with me was my mother's constant admonition, Love your enemies, revenge is mine sayeth the Lord. I think her influence kept me from rearing malice and in fact I befriended in many ways...

*[TAPE ONE ENDS, TAPE TWO BEGINS]*

**ROSENGARTEN:** Senator, I wanted to ask you a couple more questions about your family's origins, beginning with the Dennis'. Do you know when the Dennis family first came to South Carolina?

**DENNIS:** I don't really know.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you know where they came from? I read somewhere and I couldn't tell you where, that they came around 1800 from New England.

**DENNIS:** I have no reason to question that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you know where and when the Coneys originated?

**DENNIS:** I'm sorry, I don't know that either.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you know what the full names of your Coney grandparents were?

**DENNIS:** Harold was my grandfather and Mary Elizabeth was my grandmother but she died before I knew my grandfather. And his second wife was Adelaide.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Just from the sound of it, the name Coney sounds possibly Irish to me, is that a possibility?

**DENNIS:** Well, I think that is correct. My sister put together material for my induction into the French Huguenot Society and I need to get a copy of that for you, it has my family history in it. So I'll get that for you.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That would be wonderful. Which sister is this?

**DENNIS:** Maxine Coney is the one that died, a little over a year ago now.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Okay, that would be helpful. Can you tell me any more about your grandmother Adelaide H. Markley? For example, how long her family had been at Fairsprings? Anything about her personal characteristics.

**DENNIS:** Yes, but I don't know how long they had been at Fairsprings. She lived with her mother during my early childhood and just before she passed away she lived with her daughter in Moncks Corner, Miss Louise Altman whose husband was head of the local People's Bank. We talked a little bit about that bank situation. We called her Gram, and my father built a house in Pinopolis as I told you right after the war and I remember my grandmother being there with my mother in that house. She was the picture of a Southern elderly lady. She dressed in long dresses and had gray hair, very; she looked like the person that they used in advertisements for grandmothers. The typical grandmother, very concerned about her children and her grandchildren. The grandchildren all loved it when gram would come to see them. Had a very sweet disposition, used to tell stories to entertain the children.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was she about the same age as your grandfather?

**DENNIS:** I think she may have been a little bit older.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I read that E.J. Dennis was born in 1844? If she were a contemporary then she would also have lived through the war.

**DENNIS:** He lost several wives before he married her. He married a McCants. Her grave and tombstone is at Mount Olivet Church at Cross. That's not too far from the Hog Swamps area where he lived. I remember that Church of course, and as I recall, he married at least twice before he and my grandmother were married.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Mrs. Dennis, can we ask you a question?

**DENNIS:** Two things, see if you can find, I need to get a copy of the family history that Maxine compiled for our induction into the French Huguenot Society and I also now she is asking about, they raised the question how many wives did my paternal grandfather have.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Paternal grandfather. The one that had a wife that was sixteen?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I thought you told me he had three, but maybe I can find it.

**DENNIS:** I think it was three. He had a big .... of the world tombstone and several tombstones of his wives around.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I think I can find out for you.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I had asked about his wife Adelaide Markley, whether she was a contemporary and the senator said that she might even have been a little older than he was. So he went from very young...

**MRS. DENNIS:** Well, one was very young, I know that. That might have been his first wife.

**DENNIS:** She's talking about Adelaide Markley?

**ROSENGARTEN:** That was his last wife.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes it was. I think the girl who died so young, was really, I don't know whether she had any children.

**DENNIS:** They didn't, but the only question right now was the approximate age of my grandmother.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You had said she used to tell stories. Did you remember if she was telling, for example, Civil War stories?

**DENNIS:** No, she didn't talk about the war. Didn't talk about her husband and his experiences in the war that I recall. Of course, I was so small then. When she died I guess I was ten or twelve years old.

**MRS. DENNIS:** If we had that history, I don't know where it is, but I'm sure that we could get it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It would be useful but don't go to any trouble. I had been asking about the Coneys and where they came from and when the Dennis' arrived and that sort of thing. There really wasn't any information in what I've read about it.

**MRS. DENNIS:** There is a book somewhere that I have that I think might have some of that, let me look.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Okay. Hog Swamp.

**DENNIS:** It was between in Pinopolis and Cross. Its now under water, inundated with Lake Moultrie but that's where it was, between Pinopolis and Cross. I understand it was the home of General Dennis and his...

**ROSENGARTEN:** Now, this William James Dennis and Sarah Ann McCants, according to this account, they were E.J. Dennis' parents--your great grandparents. Was that his childhood home?

**DENNIS:** Yes, that was General Dennis' home. My great-grandfather, he had some connection with the First Baptist, St. John Baptist Church, between Pinopolis and Moncks Corner. I don't think he was buried there but he was a deacon of the church according to the records, I remember. Great-grandparents, William James. Hog Swamp was, I understand it was his home.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So this might have been, possibly would have been the place that the Dennis' first settled. If you take it back, your grandfather was born in 1844; his father was probably towards the beginning of the century.

**DENNIS:** What you say is very true.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You say your grandmother didn't talk about her husband's civil war experiences. How did you learn about them? Was this part of your family's oral history?

**DENNIS:** The smattering of information that I got was from talking to older members of the family. Some of the children of my great-uncles, the general's brothers, some of their children talk about it. The Albert Dennis family and the, "Rock" Dennis, or Charles Dennis, that was William, Charles and Albert, those three brothers.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What was the third name?

**DENNIS:** Charles. Called him "Rock." It was from their children that I heard about the stories that came back from the war and some of the things that happened in this area when General Dennis was head of a band of scouts to keep down uprisings in the area. That was his assignment during the latter days of the war.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The written account which you recommended, *Butler and His Cavalry*, talked about the incident which you related last week and described the "big mulatto" whom your grandfather shot as having come from Boston, Massachusetts. Last week you said Philadelphia--do you have confidence in that account? Do you think that's an

accurate...

**DENNIS:** I think it was. I got that information from a fellow member of the Board of Trustees of the Medical University who was a student of history. He was a dentist from Columbia and I'll tell you his name in a minute. He told me what he'd read about my grandfather and said I got some excerpts from history that I want to send you. He sent me an excerpt from Butler's Raiders. That's where I got that from. McCauley, Dr. McCauley.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So you have no reason to think that there is any inaccuracy. That this guy might have come from Boston.

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It made sense to me because I know that there were more colored troops from Massachusetts than probably any other state. There was a few regiments from New York but the famous ones were from New York and Massachusetts.

**DENNIS:** I remember words from the book; "the gentleman from Philadelphia" was the one they shot.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You mentioned a story last week that you didn't really go into any details about. Can you tell me any more about the incident when your grandfather's valet saved his life?

**DENNIS:** I heard it was that he was recuperating from pneumonia and it was about time for him to rejoin the troops in Virginia and he was resting one afternoon. The valet came running to the house from the roadway and said the Yankees are coming and my grandfather went out a back window and got his horse and left. That's the story the way I got it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Another thing you mentioned last week that intrigued me, you said that your grandfather had been involved in a number of notorious cases in the Mt. Pleasant area.

**DENNIS:** Well, that was really emotional cases that caused him to get into a strong disputation with lawyers on the other side. The lawyer called him a liar and my grandfather knocked him down in the courtroom. That was a story I heard.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you recall what the case was about?

**DENNIS:** No, but it had political connotations but I don't know what the case was about. People who were telling it to me, told me to watch my temper. They said your granddaddy and your daddy had high tempers. Then one of them told me about one time in the courtroom in Mt. Pleasant, there was a lawyer by the name of Edwards called your grandfather a liar and he knocked him down across the desk and turned to the judge and apologized to the court. He said, "Your honor I don't believe you would have taken that either." That was the way the story was told to me.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you have any specific examples of your father's high temper which you recall?

**DENNIS:** He had gotten in just a few altercations himself. I wouldn't want to record the names of the other party. He and Mr. Stoney had a (Mr. Tom Stoney from Charleston) had a disagreement in the governor's office at one time and daddy said some challenging words to him and they were to meet outside. The version of daddy's friends was that he was out there and Stoney didn't show up. Stoney said he went out there but he didn't see him. But it was the outburst of the tempers at the governor's office that I was alluding to.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were these days past the days when fights were settled by duels? Do you recall any incidents of duelling?

**DENNIS:** They didn't have any duels. My father was anti-dueling. Anti-dueling was part of the 1895 constitution. You mentioned something that triggered my memory to how did it get out of the constitution. I don't know if I told you, I introduced a joint resolution to submit it to the voters in referendum to take the anti-dueling provision out of the constitution because it had gotten to the point where it evoked laughter at the various events. When officials were sworn in, the governor, and others, it interrupted the dignity of the occasion in my judgment, so I thought it should come out. I thought it was an anachronism and the legislature agreed with me.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I remember when I was living in Massachusetts, there was a statute still on the books that men were not allowed to carry firearms to church on Sunday.

**DENNIS:** Is that right?

**ROSENGARTEN:** It's the same kind of thing; no one was presently carrying firearms to church.

**DENNIS:** It just went against my grain to be there in a solemn gathering, swearing in the governor or supreme court justice or even a member of the legislature and the person being sworn in is being told to say "I will first solemnly swear that I have not since the first day of January in the year 1882 engaged in a duel as principal or second or otherwise, and I will not during the term of office of a job by election engage in a duel as principal or second or otherwise." And everybody snickering around. I thought it destroyed the solemnity of the occasion.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, times do change. Things have to keep up with the times. As a child you were exposed to both the Methodist and the Baptist faiths as you described it. What do you see as the main differences between the two religions in belief and ritual?

**DENNIS:** Well the big difference is in the matter of grace and falling from grace. The Baptists belief is the security of a believer or once saved, always saved. The Methodists' belief, as I understand it, is that you can fall from grace. You can be saved today and lost tomorrow. That's the big difference. It used to be expressed by our local Baptist minister who was once an interim pastor in our church at Moncks Corner. He said the only difference really is that the Baptist, some afraid they haven't been saved, and the Methodists are afraid that they have been saved but they are going to fall from grace. That's the biggest difference between the two as I understand it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How and when did you make the decision to join the Baptist church?

**DENNIS:** Well, I was at a revival meeting at the Masonic Temple which was being used for the revival. A Very popular Methodist preacher by the name of Donna(?) was the minister. I went to the services this particular night with my father and I felt called to go up when the invitation was given and I remember quite distinctly the minister asking me to which church did I want to join. I looked at my father, and I thought about my mother. For some reason I wasn't old enough to weigh the differences in the beliefs of the two denominations, but I had been going to the Methodist church some because it was across the street from us in Pinopolis, and I had been going to the Baptist church. And I just felt a preference, or perhaps I felt a leading toward the Baptist and I said Baptist.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Is the Baptist church stricter in terms of its requirements for behavior? For example you mentioned last week that they require complete temperance.

**DENNIS:** I think the Baptist doctrines as expressed in the covenant of the church are more strict than the Methodist. On that particular point there is a clause in the Baptist church covenant that you commit not only to refrain from the use of intoxicating beverages, but that you won't sell it. Looking at what's happening to the world in alcohol and drugs, I don't think it's a bad covenant really, if it could be accepted and followed.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I remember reading at some point you saying in the General Assembly that although you believed that complete temperance would be the best for all, that, given the experiences of the prohibition era, it wasn't something that you would be willing to legislate on. Is that what you...?

**DENNIS:** That's what I said and feel. I feel you cannot legislate morals; you cannot control the consumption of alcohol by legislation--its got to be done by an individual's choice.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Would you make a distinction in that case between alcohol and other drugs, drugs that we do consider illegal?

**DENNIS:** Well, there's a distinction but there is also an interwoven connection. One leads to the other. The danger of alcohol, I've often heard expressed, is not the consumption of it itself; it's what it leads you to do. It impairs your judgment and causes you to do things you wouldn't ordinarily do, and it sets a bad example. You may be strong enough to handle it and control it but some individuals who heard your views will say well, it's not hurting him, why would it hurt me; I'll try it too. It's the example of it and what it leads a person to do. Not the drinking within itself, per say, is a sin or a wrong, it's

what follows it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The incident that you just described about joining the Baptist Church--do you remember how old you were at that point?

**DENNIS:** Yes, I was twelve. I was just at what they call that age of... There's a special word for it -- accountability. The age when you recognize what's right and what's wrong.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What school did your mother teach at in Cross?

**DENNIS:** She taught at the Cross Elementary School.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was she teaching a particular grade level or was it a one room school?

**DENNIS:** Third grade, as I recall.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And that was true most of your growing up years, she was an elementary school teacher?

**DENNIS:** I was in my college years, she was teaching when I was in college and she was teaching before I finished high school too. It was my growing up years. For ten years.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Where had she been educated?

**DENNIS:** Mother wasn't a college graduate. It wasn't required in those days. Taking special courses and I know she went to summer school almost every year at Furman University in Greenville. She had some college teaching and training but did not have a degree.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You mentioned two family servants whom you particularly remember. Hannah Davis and Sennie Mulligan, can you tell me any more about them? How old they were they worked for your family, what they looked like, where they lived, whether you were acquainted with their families, their children?

**DENNIS:** We called Hannah Anna for short. They must have been up in the late sixties or early seventies when they worked for us. They had friends who had children, some of whom cooked. One was a washwoman, and one was a nurse really. Only thing I can say about them is they were very dedicated and concerned, as concerned about the children as parents could be and you loved them just like they were a member of the family. The fact that they were black did not make a particle of difference.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you remember them being large women? Tall? Heavy-set?

**DENNIS:** Sennie, particularly, taller than the children. She must have been over six feet and Hannah was an ordinary build, 5½ foot or 5" 10" person, about ordinary height. Neither one of them were obese, they were sort of thin, oh, just ordinary, except Sennie was tall.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did they wear the traditional head wrap when they were working?

**DENNIS:** Sometimes they did, but not all the time. They wore aprons but nothing on their head. They dressed liked they wanted to, didn't have anything prescribed for them except the apron when they were waiting on the tables or holding children.

**ROSENGARTEN:** There is a great deal of attention paid today among folklorists and historians about African, what they call African carryovers. The characteristics that persisted through the slavery period. Things like smoking a pipe and head wraps are now considered part of that.

**DENNIS:** Both of them smoked a pipe.

**ROSENGARTEN:** They did. A corn cob pipe?

**DENNIS:** Corn cob pipe. And they might have dipped snuff, I didn't know what that was at the time but I heard them talking about it. If you didn't treat and talk nice to one of the children they were looking after, you'd hear something from them.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you remember whether you attended their funerals?

**DENNIS:** I wasn't aware when Sennie died. Died in Bonneau, and I was in Columbia or somewhere else at the time and I did not go. Hannah, I was too small to remember that. I'm sure older members of my family went. I've been to several funerals of black employees in my adulthood. Had two men, one worked for me, was with me for a number of years by the name of George Birch. I remember they called on me to say something and I said something and the same thing for the second one. It's my feeling that dedicated servants like that, you should attend their funeral.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you recall any particular customs that were different, what you would call different, between the black community and the white community?

**DENNIS:** Not any customs, so to speak. Their living style, because of the economics. The blacks lived, tried to live lives just like the whites did as far as they were financially able to.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I say last year or the year before, a wonderful ETV production of Heyward's story Half-Pint Flask. The story is all about the grave goods in a black cemetery, this flask that was placed on the grave and the consequences if you move anything--the plat-eye comes and gets you and all these superstitions--but again, things that folklorists now are trying to connect back with African tribal customs. Congo tribal customs and what-not.

**DENNIS:** I remember going to one of the Negro church services, visiting some black I knew and I had been invited as a public official and I have gone and spoken to them on occasions when they have what they call Better Racial Relations Sunday. I've always been tremendously impressed with their singing. Sometimes some of the preachers in there, their preaching, most of the black preachers I've heard were, what do you call them, in the white church call them blood and thunder preaching. Brimstone and hellfire. Some of them were really eloquent. The singing always impressed me as coming from the very depths of their souls, not just singing to be heard. They felt what they were singing. They had a group that sang spirituals at Dock Street Theater; I went down and heard them at least twice. They were right good.

**ROSENGARTEN:** There is also a group of white people who do...

**DENNIS:** Well, that's what this was, a group of white people singing spirituals.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I have never heard them, but I have heard of them. I am going to jump around a little bit more here. These are just certain details that I was trying to fill in from your last set of responses. You said you graduated Salutatorian; do you remember who the Valedictorian was?

**DENNIS:** Yes, he was my next door neighbor and close friend. We had the same honor when we graduated from the seventh grade. J.C. Hare, a Charleston attorney. He was Valedictorian on both occasions. Practicing law ...[with]...Senator Legare. In school we were always neck and neck. I remember his aunt, who was our seventh grade teacher and a real good one. She had a hard choice to make between us, she was being very careful that the kinship didn't enter into it and I'm sure she was because she was that type person. We had a math test and he made a good grade and I didn't do so well and she said that settled it, that vote was a tie so to speak. I thought I did right well in keeping up with him when I missed those months in school in Columbia.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I'll say. Was your first year as a page in Columbia you father's last year in the Senate?

**DENNIS:** That's right, 1930.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So you were there while he was...

**DENNIS:** One year, his last year.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were the other pages whom you served with from political families, families with political backgrounds?

**DENNIS:** There were a few from families of very close friends of the Senators.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was there a sense that you were being kind of groomed for a political career? I mean, were most of the other pages interested in politics as a profession?

**DENNIS:** That was the height of the Depression. I think the primary motivation at that time was to get the dollars because I gave most of my money to the family, so they could buy clothes and it seemed to me, I don't know, I wouldn't claim any great credit for it. Some of my money went into tuition for other members of my family. A hundred dollars in those days was a lot of money. But I just say that the economical need was a big factor, I was not thinking that early about going into politics.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Talking about the town of Pinopolis, you had mentioned that it was a much smaller, sleepier town before the dam was built.

**DENNIS:** Yes, it was a village really, unincorporated, it was a village.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you know when it was founded and what the initial purposes of the town were?

**DENNIS:** It was established when a number of the plantation residents built summer homes there to get away from the mosquitoes and malaria. A little higher elevation and you didn't have as many of the mosquitoes as you did on the plantations in lower areas. As a matter of fact, it wouldn't be out of the water today if it wasn't for the fact that it was created because of that factor. Built 98 feet above sea level. The lake took everything down to above seventy-five feet, so that is the reason Pinopolis survived. When the plantation people looked for a place to build, they looked for high ground and picked the highest ground they could find and among the pines too, as a health-inducing factor. And they built the houses high up off the ground as a health-inducing factor.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Is it a nineteenth century town or earlier than that?

**DENNIS:** Yes, I don't think there was any in the 1700s there.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This, of course, was true of McClellanville too. Founded for the same reason.

**DENNIS:** Pinopolis is the same type village as McClellanville. Except McClellanville had salt water fishing and Pinopolis was a recreation area with fox hunting on horseback and the people who lived there commuted to work to Moncks Corner or to the plantations for the farming.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did any of your forbearers have houses in Pinopolis before your father built it. Were the Markleys or the Dennis' or the McCants or the Coneys or any of those people, Pinopolis people?

**DENNIS:** No, none of my people. My father was the only one out of the Dennis family who had a place there.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You described how the fire in the garage apartment that you lived in started.

**DENNIS:** Excuse me one second. My father's family had their places at another village named McBeth. That's what my grandfather called home, McBeth, and that's near where Fairsprings was. That's still out of the water too. Showing you that it was a high place in elevation.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I was going to ask you if you knew how the fire in your Pinopolis house started and what kind of fire fighting efforts were available at that time?

**DENNIS:** The only thing available was the bucket brigade. No fire fighting equipment at all. The house next door, the Hare house, J.C. Hare house I mentioned earlier, it burned down several years before my father's and mother's house burned and I remember the night it burned. Sparks were flying and people went up on our house then with buckets of water on the little shingle roof to keep the fire from igniting there. But on the Sunday afternoon that it caught fire and

burned, it seemed to have started up in the attic. The attic was a storeroom. They think that some... I it may have been combustion or a mouse started it or electrical wire started it. You know they used to think that mice started a lot of fires. There were a lot of theories about it but nobody ever knew how it really started. But the community of course, descended on it and got as much of the furniture and household articles that they could, but I understand that by the time it was discovered, a few buckets of water could be thrown and that was it. There wasn't any real effort to put it out, it was too far gone.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were you in the house at the time?

**DENNIS:** I was at Furman University at the time.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Oh, I see. I didn't realize it was that late. So, when you moved or your mother moved to the garage apartment, how many members of the family moved with her?

**DENNIS:** I was the only one. My sisters were married then and my brother Markley was in the Navy and Doctor Dennis was away at medical school or interning. He was still in medical study, so I was the only one there with mother. We lived next door in a WPA cabin and in a tent during the period between the fire and when the house was rebuilt. Or when the house was built, the other house was completely destroyed by fire. We spent some nights in the parsonage before we moved over into the little cabin and the tent. I say tent, it was a board foundation with a tent covering and small frame. WPA cabin they called it because they were used by the workmen around the lake during the clearing of the land for Santee-Cooper's basin. But it was quite an experience. I used to wake up at night and my mother would be crying about the situation and that's when I determined somehow to build the house back. We sold some of the property that my father left in order to get the money to build it. That was a rough time.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Your mother really went through some difficult years then.

**DENNIS:** Yes. See my father got killed in 1930 and my older brother E.J. died in 1932, and the house burned in 1933. The garage apartment burned right after I was elected to the house; that was in 1938. My mother had a wreck two or three years before she died, broke her hip and she was barely able to get around for several years and then she was bedridden for several years.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did she stay in Pinopolis?

**DENNIS:** Yes, she stayed in the house at Pinopolis. We rented out most of the house and she stayed in an apartment downstairs. We had to have somebody with her; we had to have a nurse with her round the clock, a practical nurse.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What are your earliest recollections as a child?

**DENNIS:** Where I have very limited recollections of being at the Stony Landing house where I was born. I remember pulling in [riding] in a buggy there and going up and down the hill in not much more than a medicine cabinet. The medicine was kept under, where the basin was sitting in the , what do you call them, under the washstand. The medicine was kept up on the shelf and underneath was the medicine cabinet. I remember most of my recollections involve the farm situation. I remember the two-horse wagon and hauling wood, hauling hay and hauling oats; threshing oats, because that was the hardest work I ever engaged in. Back in those days the thresher would separate the chaff from the oats, that's how they got the grain out, blowing around and settling on you. A lot of it was really uncomfortable. But I would say my recollection was various experiences in connection with the farm, the horses and the cows and with hunting with my father. I'd go hunting with him.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Deer hunting?

**DENNIS:** Deer hunting, yes. One of my most pleasant memories was fox hunting in Pinopolis. After my father's death I had a pony and then a horse and I used to ride with my uncle and cousins and fox hunted in that area and that was a great recreational enjoyment of the time. On moonlight nights we would hunt, and then on Saturday mornings was the real time for the fox hunting.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What kind of dogs did you use for that?

**DENNIS:** Mostly Walker dogs. My uncle and Dr. Fishburne and others in the Pinopolis area had dogs that I... In my experience later on were trying to get good dogs, I remembered how good the dogs were in those days, they had the best kind of dogs.

**ROSENGARTEN:** There is a woman who just moved to McClellanville who is breeding Jack Russell Terriers. She claims that it's the best dog for one particular part of the fox hunting. I can't recall exactly, to stir the fox up, or get it going I think.

**DENNIS:** I didn't have any experience with that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** She's from Camden.

**DENNIS:** That's a real dog, fine dog. The dogs in those days were the black and white Walkers and Trig, black and tan and the July Walker was a white dog. We had gray foxes here. But a lot of dogs they would get would be red and ....., red foxes which run for a much longer time. Our fox hunter used to time the catch. You .... catch a fox within an hour. But I don't remember the terrier type dog.

**ROSENGARTEN:** At the end of our last interview, you were describing how you befriended one of your father's enemies. You got through about half the story and the tape ran out, so I was going to ask you if you would be willing to just tell that story again so that we get the whole thing on tape.

**DENNIS:** I'm real hesitant about it because really there were several of them. I guess I'll just have to say I befriended them more by my not doing things against them that I could have done, rather than actually doing something tremendous for them. But I tried to adopt for my policy in politics, be steadfast to your friends and convert your enemies, if you can. I got jobs for people that I knew weren't very much support politically to my father but they were very friendly to me and expressed to me their real sorrow of having been against him. In a situation like that, I certainly went along with them and helped them.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You believed in burying the sword, in other words?

**DENNIS:** Yes ma'am.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I'm going to jump back now again. This is something from my original set of questions that I didn't get around to and I don't know if it is something that you are familiar with or not but in my reading--this was in a general history of Berkeley County--I noticed something which struck me as curious. General Dennis served in the South Carolina House of Representatives between 1880 and 1882 from old Charleston County and then again from 1884 to 1886 from the newly formed Berkeley County. During the time he skipped, 1882-83, five Negro men represented Berkeley County in the general assembly. Apparently the tides of redemption of the local white Democrats taking back political power were ebbing and flowing at this time. Things were going back and forth. Can you explain at all what was going on in Berkeley County, Charleston County at that time?

**DENNIS:** Course, I only know what I read about it or just remember what I heard about it. The only comment that I can make really was that it was a time of great factionalism in politics, and the group that was successful was the group that got together its legislative candidates and courthouse candidates. That was the day of the county courthouse politics. Those officials in the courthouse helped everybody get elected or helped defeat everybody who ran for office. He worked as a clerk at the courthouse. That was true in Charleston and Berkeley. Charleston went into the Broad Street crowd, that's when the boys at Broad Street were, some of them were in the political power. Berkeley was the same way, the county supervisor's office was the office that performed services that people could see and recognize; roads and those things that benefited people directly and he was a power broker. My election was against the courthouse crowd so to speak.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you know if your grandfather was involved at all in the disempowering of the reconstruction government in eliminating the black franchise and the scallywag or carpetbagger rule?

**DENNIS:** I think he was very close to Wade Hampton, and I'm sure he was involved in the Constitutional Convention and the other governmental movements of the time, but I don't know of any strong role he played in the restoration of government in this state after the run of the scalawags and carpetbaggers.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What was going on with the redrawing of County lines at that point? I wasn't aware that Charleston and Berkeley County were adjusted in this period. It must have been 1884 or something like that.

**DENNIS:** Yes, '82 or '84. I don't think that the electorate end of it had a lot to do with it; I think it was a matter of economics. Berkeley, I'm sure, wanted to get to the ocean through Mt. Pleasant. And that was the logic behind moving in that direction and it was natural that Charleston would want to take it back because of the Charleston peninsula and the Mt. Pleasant area being closely connected economically.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So, at one point, Berkeley got its way, got the lines redrawn to its advantage and then Charleston came back, took it back.

**DENNIS:** During my term of office as a member of the House there were annexation efforts on the floor of the Charleston boundary areas of Berkeley, the Hanahan area was called Yeamans Hall, Yeamans Park at that time and they had a hard-fought election to take that part of Berkeley County which is now the Hanahan city area. Well, the vote came out in favor of Berkeley retaining it. The main problem of that was because the water supply for Charleston was in that area. The Commissioner of Public Works idea, water supply through Goose Creek and Berkeley County, and the Edisto water was brought over there and funneled through it, too. Its been said that their water supply came from the waterworks system at Hanahan or Yeamans Park in Berkeley County and they wanted to annex that area to Charleston County. It was quite a battle over it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I assume you were on the other side.

**DENNIS:** Well, I was just starting in politics. Naturally I was for Berkeley retaining it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Going back again to your growing up years, would you describe just for the record your brothers and sisters, what order they were born in and any particular qualities that you remember about them as children?

**DENNIS:** Well, my older brother and sister were grown people when I was just getting into my teens. I looked up to them, oh, for guidance, and each in their own way was a big help to me. We were a very close knit family. My sisters were school teachers and one of them was a trained nurse and they were all very devoted to each other.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The oldest child, am I right, was your brother Edward James?

**DENNIS:** Yes, that's right. E.J. we called him. Then Maxine was the second, and then Beatrice. She's still living, she lives in Greenville. Her husband was president of Furman University when he died or he retired just shortly before he died. She's still living in Greenville, Bea we called her. And then my sister Adelaide named after my grandmother but somehow she got the name Dick, we called her Dick. She married a Dr. Lacey who was a family physician and county health doctor at one time. And then I came along and then my brother Markley, my brother Billy, he was named William Albert. After my older brother's death my family changed his name to E.J. because of the family name.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Is he still living?

**DENNIS:** He's still living. He's at Richland Memorial Hospital. He's a specialist in obstetrics and gynecology. My brother Markley practices law at Moncks Corner with his son Markley, Jr.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Weren't you in practice with your brother Markley?

**DENNIS:** Yes, we practiced together for years.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And who was the third member of the firm? Bishop, was it? Was it Dennis, Dennis and Bishop?

**DENNIS:** Yes. After I got out of active practice, when I became chairman of the finance committee, it took so much of my time in Columbia with the Budget and Control Board and other things, I went into a special arrangement with the partnership. My brother and I didn't have the strict partnership anymore. We took in associates and I was a special counsel. I participated in some matters and some matters I didn't. But he had Bishop, George Bishop was with us when I was there and after I left, George later set up himself, and then Markley had Watson and Tiencken and one more [Creech], I'll tell you. They practiced together and then they decided to go on their own. Then Markley's son came and set up the

partnership with his father then. Natalie, who is the county family court judge?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Creech, Wayne Creech.

**DENNIS:** Wayne Creech.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So two of you, you and your brother became attorneys, one is a physician, three sisters were school teachers.

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So all of you were college, went through college and beyond actually.

**DENNIS:** Right, all of us.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you all go to Furman?

**DENNIS:** No, my two sisters, Beatrice and Maxine went to Asbury College, Asbury, Kentucky. Bea went to Greensboro Women's College for one year and then she went to Halsbury, too. And my sister Maxine went to Cougar one year, between. Dick went to Furman. All the boys went to Furman.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That must have been an incredible struggle for your mother as a widow.

**DENNIS:** It was incredible. She taught school and then she managed a school bookstore.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Would you say that your parents had a philosophy of child rearing? Or any principles that they went by in terms of bringing up yourself and your brothers and sisters?

**DENNIS:** My mother was extremely religious. She tried to bring us all up as professing Christians and regular church and Sunday school attendance. My father was a church man. He wasn't quite as active as my mamma. He also was a great believer in following Jesus Christ and what he said to do. They both instilled in us the highest Christian principle that could have been advocated, I might say if it took was another thing, but they did their best.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Apart from your mother, whom I can tell from everything you've said was a profound influence on your character and your life, can you name any other family members or friends or even colleagues who you would said had a strong influence on you?

**DENNIS:** When I got into the political arena, I would say that, I'll mention this to you before I think, Senator Brown from Barnwell as Chairman of the Finance Committee, and he was a close friend of my father, He had influence on me and Senator Jefferies, who headed Santee-Cooper, I had tremendous number of dealings with him and I would say that he certainly influenced me. In the legal profession, the biggest influence on me was Gedney Howe Sr. from Charleston. That's all I can think of right now.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You've told me a little bit about ...

**DENNIS:** I left out one. Judge Frank Eatman from Kingstree. He was in my father's old law office here for a while after my father died and he went over to Kingstree. Course, he and I stayed close in communication and friendship and in the practice of law and he had a great deal of influence on me. Frank Eatman.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When you were growing up were you conscience of emulating your older brother, was he a model for you?

**DENNIS:** Well, he didn't practice law long enough before he died. My father was really the one that I tried to emulate both politically and legally.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When you were a small child attending school in Pinopolis, was this a grade school? A one-room school house? Could you describe it?

**DENNIS:** A big frame building that had a high school at one time but when I went it was just a grammar school. Each teacher had several grades to teach. But I had some good teachers there. It was the days of, you hear so much about the pot bellied stove, and it was either too cold or too hot. But I had good teachers and they had almost impossible jobs teaching. So many grades and so many pupils. I went there for five grades and at the sixth grade I moved to Moncks Corner Elementary School and went sixth and seventh there. You graduated from grammar school then just like you do from the eleventh grade. You had a regular graduation. Seventh grade going from grammar school to high school and then I went to four years, back then there wasn't but 11 grades. I finished my four grades at Berkeley High School.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did a number of students drop out at seventh grade? Was that a point where kids stopped going to school?

**DENNIS:** A good many of them did drop out at seventh grade and didn't go on to high school because of the economic pressures.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What were your best subjects or your favorite subjects in grammar school and then in high school?

**DENNIS:** History and literature. I made my best grade at Furman in history. My toughest subject was mathematics and the languages. When I was twelve years old I had the flu and it infected and affected my ears and I have had difficulty in hearing since I was twelve years old. I have had two operations. I went out to Shea Clinic, Dr. John Shea in Memphis and had an operation first on one ear and later on the other. What it does to you, the calcium builds up in your ear and blocks your hearing some. So I had the operations on one ear, they took it out and two years later went back and had it done on the other ear. But both my age and never fully recovering still leaves me as you have noticed I have to get you to repeat because of a hearing problem.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But not so severe that you need to wear aids?

**DENNIS:** I have used hearing aids, never satisfactory.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That's what my father says, he will never wear his.

**DENNIS:** Right. It's most difficult to handle the telephone and it's either too loud or not loud enough most of the time. But I have been able to follow along in the court room and in the General Assembly. I pay very strict attention but I would have to be sure that I concentrated on a speaker and I couldn't be distracted at all. I had to strain to hear.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you feel that this handicapped you in high school?

**DENNIS:** It made it difficult. I think that's the reason I had a hard time in languages in college French. I took French for three years and I could read it but I had some difficulty speaking it and I think my hearing deficiency caused that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, I have trouble speaking it too and I don't have a hearing deficiency, but I know what you mean. You have to have a good ear for languages. I might get one more question, it seems like our 90 minutes really went very fast today. When you were a high school student, these were the early Depression years. Were you aware of the social, economic and political issues of that period? Was this something that was dealt with in high school?

**DENNIS:** Well, we had civics class and we had it some in school but it was very much in the conversation of the young people of the time. Maybe not so much national politics but more on state politics. We kept up with who was running for governor and that sort of thing.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did Hoover become a dirty word down here like it did in other parts of the country?

**DENNIS:** I remember the saying about...

**[TAPE TWO ENDS, TAPE THREE BEGINS]**

**ROSENGARTEN:** Senator, before I get to this new series of questions I wanted to finish up a little bit more about your early years in education. We talked a little about your first memories at Stony Landing, and I forgot [when you] left for Pinopolis--your parents moved to Pinopolis?

**DENNIS:** I think I was three years old. Three or four.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Why did they decide to move?

**DENNIS:** Commuting back and forth had gotten to be a problem as more children came along. So, I think that was the main reason.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In other words, they had both houses; they had the house at Stony Landing and one in Pinopolis?

**DENNIS:** Right. Lived in Pinopolis in the summer and in the winter months at Stony Landing.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did it have anything to do with schooling, with being close to schools for the children.

**DENNIS:** Well, I would say that's in it too. The more children and school problems are entwined.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When you moved to Pinopolis did you still return to Stony Landing at times and was it still part of your life growing up?

**DENNIS:** Yes, the family used it for recreational purposes as much as possible. There was a good swimming place there, and ride the horses and that sort of thing. It was still the family recreational place and each of us and all of us went there just as often as we could.

**ROSENGARTEN:** We were talking at the end of the last interview about which subjects in school you were particularly interested in. You started to describe your difficulty with hearing and how that affected your scholastic career. Would you talk a little bit more about that? We haven't been able to quite recall the name of the operation.

**DENNIS:** Well, it was a handicap in school because it put you under a strain to follow everything. I did best in those subjects that I could get more from the books than from classroom instruction.

**ROSENGARTEN:** At what point did you have this operation to correct the problem?

**DENNIS:** It was after I was in the Legislature and the Senate. As a matter of fact, those operations were not undertaken until the fifties.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Would you describe again what it entailed? I believe you called it a stapedectomy?

**DENNIS:** That's right. It involves a local anesthetic with a needle in the ear and the operation by a little saw on the instrument that was stuck down in the ear to cut out the calcium and in the process of cutting out the calcium it cut out the stirrup bone. That was replaced with an artificial stapes or stirrup bone and it worked very well. Got the blockage out and still continue the mechanics of the ear, the reception and transmission of sound. Dr. Shea and his father before him became very famous because of that operation. Shea Clinic in Memphis has grown by leaps and bounds and people from all over the world come there.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you have to have this on both ears?

**DENNIS:** First on one and then later on the other. The first one had gotten a little bad again and I was, had already made a contact to go back for a third operation when I had the wreck.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So that dropped on the list of priorities.

**DENNIS:** Yes, made it impossible then. It was difficult for me to have the second one because in the meantime I'd had the heart surgery and they were skeptical about doing it. They had a cardiologist that examined me before be present when I had the second one done.

**ROSENGARTEN:** We were talking a little about what Berkeley High School was like while you were a student there? And I think at the moment the tape ran out you were telling me the story of some of the bad things they said about Herbert Hoover in those days. Would you repeat some of that?

**DENNIS:** Well, some of them you can't repeat but they were just poverty-stricken type remarks. Well, this fellow Hoover talks about a chicken in every pot; you couldn't even get a pot to put a chicken in, things like that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I saw one of these public service announcements on TV last night about Herbert Hoover and what a great fisherman he was.

**DENNIS:** He was a victim of the times. The cycles in which prosperity and depression run just caught him at the bottom of the ladder in the depression phase of it and those were very tough days. I remember them as a child.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was that more or less your analysis at the time, did you see, you were what 15 in 1930, did you understand at that point that this was not really anything Hoover created or could control?

**DENNIS:** I think so. Although I was in an area that was vastly predominantly democratic, thinking people understood and my high school teachers understood that it was a temporary cycle situation that we were in and not the fault of the president of the United States.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was there feeling at that time against Wall Street, against whatever, you know, the New York bankers?

**DENNIS:** There was a feeling in the South, I think, that we were neglected by the financial interests and the political interests and that the Civil War, we had made a mistake with the Civil War and it was going to live with us for a while, and it did. We didn't start recovering in the South from the ravages of the Civil War really until in the, government wise, economically, in South Carolina, we didn't have nearly enough money to do what we should have been doing, and government appropriations until the fifties when Byrnes was governor and put on the sales tax. It was just, the whole South was a fiscally impoverished area and it took that long to even recover to any extent from the ravages of the war.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I read in one article a quote from you saying that the sales tax was the fairest tax ever invented.

**DENNIS:** Well, I thought so and I still think its the principal of taxing purchasing power, I thought it was sound. If you had plenty of purchasing power, you paid more tax. If you didn't, then you didn't pay as much. It was always desirable from the inception of it to have certain exemptions and the exemptions that we were not financially able to instill were food stuffs. But we did develop a series of exemptions and several hundred million of them are on the books now, some of them have outgrown their merit, but the repeal of them has been attempted regularly by the legislature with no headway because once they are in place its hard to get them out. But I don't think there's any question but that some of the exemptions, some sales tax today were meritorious in the fifties and are not in order now. Because of it, the greater the taxes increase and is going to increase some more too.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What kind of exemptions are you thinking about?

**DENNIS:** Well, there are so many now. Newsprint is one of them.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So you are talking about exemptions on very specific items.

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I understand, not across the board.

**DENNIS:** But you try to repeal that exemption and you know what you run into, an avalanche from the newspapers.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, going back to Berkeley High School, when you were a student there would you describe what kind of a school it was, what kind of building, how old, who your teachers were, who was the principal, this sort of thing?

**DENNIS:** Well, let me just select a little bit of it. Both elementary and high school at Berkeley in Moncks Corner. According to my recollection we were provided as fine an instructional course as could be had at the time. The teachers were excellent. I particularly remember an outstanding sixth grade teacher and an outstanding seventh grade teacher and several in high school. The superintendent of the school, which is now a principal of a school, you have a superintendent of an area. The fellow I remember the most and served the most while was there was from McClellanville, W. M. Bonner. He was a very fine teacher himself. I had math under him. Math was a difficult subject but he was a good teacher and a good administrator, as proven by the fact that he served as superintendent for the area after we had consolidation of schools, and his son served after him. They came from North Carolina to join the teaching staff in Berkeley County and later became superintendent of education of the county.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This is Walter...

**DENNIS:** No this is Henry.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Okay, Henry is the son.

**DENNIS:** Walter is a doctor. He is a therapist, I believe, physical therapy. [an internist]

**ROSENGARTEN:** It is Doctor Walter who is building a house now in McClellanville.

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** His father's name was Walter, W.M., and he had a son named Walter and a son named Henry.

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was it unusual for a man to be a teacher? I had sort of imagined in my mind that most of the teachers would be women.

**DENNIS:** They were beginning to increase in those days. I had several in high school, most of them were ladies, but I had several male teachers. I had a football coach who was also a teacher. But the specific answer to your question is Berkeley High School and Elementary School rated high for the day of education in South Carolina, that day and time.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were they in the same building that Berkeley High occupies today?

**DENNIS:** No, the buildings today are all entirely different except the remains of the Berkeley Elementary/High School campus of that day and time are there today as the Berkeley Elementary School. The Elementary School took over the High School Building.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When were they built?

**DENNIS:** The new schools were built in the fifties, fifties and sixties. They have been constantly building. The one that ... built, the one that I attended was built in 1929 when my father was in the Senate. The old Berkeley High School was built in 1929.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Prior to that what kind of a building were they using?

**DENNIS:** Oh, the little brick buildings. Both the elementary and high school were brick buildings. Had a brick auditorium in between the two and then they kept adding on, and adding on until the consolidation and elimination of... Integration came along, and then it mushroomed out to a new area. Now on the Berkeley High School campus you have the new high school and you have a middle school. The elementary school is still at the old site partly and then partly on an old all-black elementary school. Now the all-black High School is now an elementary school.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When you were in high school and traveling to Columbia as a page in the Senate, do you have any particular memories, for example, of eating out in a restaurant with your father or where you would stay when you were there? I know you only overlapped one year before he was killed.

**DENNIS:** I remember the trips to Columbia. On Monday afternoon, the Senate met Monday night in those days, start the week on Monday night. I remember the trips to Columbia with my father and my uncle, who was in the house. My father's brother Walter Dennis was in the house. And I used to ride with them to Columbia.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What was his name?

**DENNIS:** Walter. There were three brothers in my father's immediate family, E.J., my father or Ed, and Walter, and William. William was supervisor at one time and then my uncle who was in the House later was sheriff. So, those three brothers occupied the positions of Senator, Member of the House and Sheriff and Senator, at various times.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Where would the Senators eat lunch or whatever, when they took a break from the proceedings?

**DENNIS:** My father used to eat regularly at the cafe that is still there, the Capitol Cafe. The proprietor was a gentleman who, course he and his wife became good friends of my father, and that friendship continued on down with me. Let me recall the name now. A very fine Greek gentleman and the lady, she still, up until a couple of years ago, used to send me some of the Greek cooked dainties.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What did you say you called them?

**DENNIS:** What did we call them, Poppa and Momma.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I don't believe that they were in there at all when I went, Rembert.

**DENNIS:** Poppa died before I went to the Senate and he was back there when my father was Senator.

**MRS. DENNIS:** She was not there when I went. I think maybe she was there for breakfast. We would eat over there a lot of times at night.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This was a short distance from...

**DENNIS:** Right, on Main Street. A few steps away from the Capitol steps.

**MRS. DENNIS:** The first block, in fact. I'll see if I can think of it, but I...

**ROSENGARTEN:** When I listen to this again, I'll make a note to ask you later about it. I just have the image in my mind of what a kind a heady experience for a high school age boy to be hobnobbing with the Senators and really feel that you were in a position of power.

**DENNIS:** I just sat quietly by and listened. I remember the filibusters they had. On one particular occasion I remember the Senator from Florence, Harry Smith, filibustered and when it was over he was exhausted and then he went to the Capitol Cafe and they gave him some raw eggs to eat. I remember what an awful looking sight it was, but it seemed to have done him some good.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That was supposed to be quick energy?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When it came time for you to go to College, how did you choose Furman University?

**DENNIS:** Well, my older brother had gone there and I had heard good stories about Furman and I took a scholarship test and won a scholarship to Furman. So, on the basis of the scholarship and previous experience of my older brother, that largely influenced me. And it was a Baptist institution too.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That's what I was going to ask you about. I've read a little bit about some of your activities in college, the student council, the young Democrats, some athletic activities. What would you say are some of your high points of your college years?

**DENNIS:** We had a student legislature as a part of our government class, but the outstanding thing at Furman with me was I guess in my activities, was being President of the Student Council which was the disciplinary body for the students. I served for two terms which was the first time they had ever had a President serve more than one term. And that's understandable, you had to discipline students for infractions and it didn't make you very popular on occasions. I remember, for example, there were some allegations of cheating on examinations and the student council on my incoming year--my first term when I served--had to recommend a shipping of several of the star football players, who were All-State players and we had to recommend their suspension for a year. That was a bad experience for a young kid to go through.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This was an elected position? The students elected a President.

**DENNIS:** Each class elected a representative to the Council and then the Council elected its own president.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was Furman co-educational at this time?

**DENNIS:** It was, but they were all, had the classes on the men's campus and they brought the coeds over by shuttle bus. As a matter of fact, my sister went to GWC, Greenville Women's College which became a part of Furman. But it was at the time I was there, co-educational with the instruction being on the men's campus.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Apart from your student council activities, what kinds of party affiliation did you have at this point?

**DENNIS:** Well, I belonged to several of the campus clubs, I belonged to a Greek fraternity--Sigma Alpha Epsilon--and the fraternity activities were right extensive. My freshman year I was able to make the first team, the freshman football team. I only went one more year, I was not big enough to make the varsity team and I didn't continue. I participated in track and we had a strong intramural program and I participated in sports through the intramural program, it was a campus program.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You were a runner in track?

**DENNIS:** I was a pole vaulter and a runner. I wasn't the highest jumper but I made the team and I won some points in the various meets. Back in those days you had a bamboo pole and you had a box or a hole that you put it in and then swing yourself or pull yourself over the bar. Now they have these poles that bend so much now, what is that? Maybe mine was the cane and these are the bamboo. But our pole didn't bend, you just had to depend on speed and springing and pulling.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So the pole was stiff?

**DENNIS:** Yes. You had to try to pull your feet much higher than your head to get over the height. I could jump better than twelve feet which was fairly good for the time. Now they go fourteen, sixteen feet easy with these new poles that they use.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you remember any particular hazing activities when you were pledging for the fraternity?

**DENNIS:** Well, they had what you call the Hell Week. They push us through hazing activities. Nothing really serious, but let me just pick out one of the events which was supposed to terrify you. They rode you around in an automobile and then took you to a spot that they said was the river, and what you had to do was jump in the river. I thought to myself, well these people are not going to let me drown, I'll be all right, but wasn't not very pleasant to think about. When you jumped you just landed on the ground a little further over and they squirted you with a hose. The cold water hit you about the time you were supposed to be hitting the water. But that was a right shocking experience but nothing serious. The hazing, the real hazing or paddling you and making you do things came from the upper classmen and particularly the football players. They would like to take freshmen down to their special hall after lunch on Sunday and give them a paddling. But it wasn't awful to you. They didn't do anything that would really hurt you, like hanging you out a window or some of the things I have heard that other places do.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you remember when the tables were turned and you were an upperclassman? Do you remember inflicting some of this on other kids?

**DENNIS:** Yes. I participated in some hazing myself, then, on the giving end. But I was limited in that regard as President of the student council. After I became the President. I became President at the end of my sophomore year. Elected for my junior year but taking over at the end of my sophomore year. I wasn't supposed to be a big participant in hazing activities.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I was looking at the memoir that the University did with Sol Blatt and the hazing activities at the University had a tremendous impact on him. I think because he was Jewish and he was very nervous about persecution.

**DENNIS:** Well, it certainly didn't hurt his personality.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you remember particularly any professors who had an intellectual or political impact on you at this time?

**DENNIS:** I think my history professor did. He was a very excellent teacher and that was a course I liked and excelled a little bit in. His name was Dr. Kilpatrick and he was very friendly with the students, offered advice to them on various things and he encouraged me along. Knowing my political family background, he encouraged me along political lines to a degree, not to a great extent. My English professor, one of them was a very humorous fellow and he used to talk about the politics in Berkeley, referring to the bootlegging activities. He used to tell the class that he had one student from Berkeley who used to bring corn liquor back to the campus for the students. Said he would come around the corner up there and his suitcase would be dragging the pavement with bootleg whiskey for some of his friends. I don't know whether it was true or not but he used to tell it in class, kidding me--that's where I was from. But that's another subject that I liked and I did fairly well in, particularly with theme writing.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You enjoyed writing?

**DENNIS:** I enjoyed writing and at that time could write a short story and themes on various subjects which involved some creative thinking. It was good preparation for being a politician and a public speaker, so you could develop the addresses you were going to make. I always prepared my own speeches until my later years in the Senate when I was so busy I just couldn't do it all and I had some help from some of the staff personnel for speech writing. I think all public figures now pretty well have considerable help with it from the President on down.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That's one of the jobs that my husband has had off and on. He writes speeches but so far no state officials.

**DENNIS:** I know ones who helped me, they do research and they give very excellent quotations for me to intersperse the speech with.

**ROSENGARTEN:** One speech that I remember, I don't think I have it in these papers, it was the speech that you gave to the graduating class at Berkeley High--this was in later years--about the five ships and I was wondering if that something you had written?

**DENNIS:** I wrote that myself. I heard about somebody who had given one similar to that, but I developed that myself. I gave it to the Berkeley High School and I gave it at Macedonia. I gave it several times at different schools. I attempted in talking to school graduates to develop, as high as was reasonable, a moral tone to it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Probably will take me a few minutes, I'll find it so we can get a better transcript, because I thought that was really a very clever turn of phrase.

**DENNIS:** Natalie and I were reading from a commentary on religion this morning as a part of our breakfast blessing. There was a good quotation in that on the real necessity for education to have a high moral tone but expressed it in, if you have an education that's geared to Christianity then you have a generation of educated persons of high moral character rather than the educated being clever devils. Christian on the one hand or clever devil on the other.

**ROSENGARTEN:** A couple of factual points that I just wanted to pick up. Two sessions ago you were describing your work for the maritime commission librarian from Roanoke, do you recall her name?

**DENNIS:** Mrs. Wright.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And the name of the cook who violated the quail, who prepared that quail? Do you remember?

**DENNIS:** Her name was Albertha. I didn't even know her last name.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was she a black woman?

**DENNIS:** Yes. She was in the janitorial services in Washington and someone in Senator Smith's office knew about her culinary ability and referred us to her and she to us; that's the way we got her to cook for us.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So you weren't responsible for finding her lodging?

**DENNIS:** I didn't find, David McLeod found her. There were five of us rooming in an apartment and one of the other men found her.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And she lived somewhere else in Washington?

**DENNIS:** Yes, she lived in the low-cost housing area in the vicinity of the capitol. When I first, that apartment was in the capitol area and we later moved out further. Of course, I got new roommates from time to time but I kept the same roommates for a long time. I was only up there two years. I have often said I didn't live in Washington, I existed. The life of going to school, studying, working and looking forward to Saturday when you played a little golf, it was a right hectic life. You worked from 9-5 and then supposedly, well you go to school from 7-9 and supposed to study from then till midnight at least. Sometimes you did and sometimes you didn't, but it was a right regular schedule.

***[TAPE THREE ENDS, TAPE FOUR BEGINS]***

**ROSENGARTEN:** What people told me about a computer when I first started learning how, it was a very dumb machine. It would just do what you told it to. Sometimes I don't tell it to do the right thing.

**DENNIS:** Their son, by the way, that's the name, Siokas. Their son took over the cafe and was operating it for a number of years while I was in the Senate and then he died.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This is a Greek family, S I O K A S.

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were there many Greeks in the restaurant business in Columbia?

**DENNIS:** Yes, that's been rather historical in America. Matter of fact, my cardiologist is a Greek doctor. Gazies, and the Lt. Governor is a Greek and they had a function for Dr. Gazies in Charleston not long ago and the Lt. Governor was there and Dr. Gazies' crack was that he had been my friend a long time, we were one of the few Greeks we had met that didn't open up a restaurant.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Yes, I noticed that in Charleston there tends to be a quite a few Greek restaurants. Back to Washington for a minute, apart from this very rigorous schedule you were keeping, working and going to school at night, how did you find the city? How did you enjoy it?

**DENNIS:** A mad scramble. I think Washington was great at the time and still is from what I hear. The high cost of living--salaries, even higher paid salaries, are hardly enough to meet the cost of living in Washington. Prices are high and historically have been high. Certainly, my experience was that I lived from payday to payday and plenty of nightclubbing available but you didn't have much money when you have to pay your tuition and your apartment rent and pay for food. You don't have much left to spend on going to nightclubs or for anything else. Managed enough to play golf to exercise. It was a wild city, the social activities were on every hand and the various states organized at the clubs for their natives who were in Washington to belong to like the South Carolina club, dances--they had regular dances--so that those from the same state could get together. A busy city, everybody trying to work hard and at the same time not let it interfere with their pleasures.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you regard Washington as a Northern city or a Southern city?

**DENNIS:** I considered it neither Northern or Southern or Eastern or Western, but a conglomeration. A city of cliques.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Who was in the Congress from South Carolina at that point?

**DENNIS:** Congressman from Charleston was McMillan at that point. The Congressman that I knew better was McMillan from Florence but anytime I had to visit congressional offices, it was Senator Cotton Ed Smith's office that I spent my time in. It was his attaches that I knew more and associated with more.

**ROSENGARTEN:** He was a man of your father's generation?

**DENNIS:** Yes, that's right. But I knew him through one of the friends that I roomed with. I roomed with him at Furman University one year. He was David McLeod, later became mayor of Florence and the attorney general's brother. He and I were close personal friends. He died of cancer about two years ago. But Senator Smith was a particular friend of his family and it was through him that we, that I got my job really and that I took that boat trip under his staff arrangement. That was a dollar-a-day, work-your-way trip to Europe and back.

**ROSENGARTEN:** They paid you or you paid them?

**DENNIS:** Aha. I would have paid them, I guess but they paid me a dollar a day as a utility boy, shelling beans and peas and peeling potatoes, that was my job. I was down in the hole of the ship peeling those, shelling beans and peas by the basket full and peeling potatoes by the can full.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Another job that you held during this period which has particular interest for me, I read somewhere that you worked in a CCC camp. Was this a summer in your college years?

**DENNIS:** Yes, it was the summer after my freshman year and I was going to get the money, I needed new money too but it wasn't high paying but it was something. And I wanted to get myself in good physical condition, so I worked out in the sun all day long, practically everyday with nothing on but a cut-off pair of denims--overalls without the straps, whatever you call them.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Blue jeans.

**DENNIS:** Yes. I got, my skin thickened several times. I could stay out in the hot sun from morning time until three o'clock in the afternoon without any problem. What we were doing was cutting fire lanes and building roadways. The tools we used back then, we didn't have bulldozers then, we used axes and crosscut saws and shovels. The way you got a stump up was to dig around it down several feet so we could get the crosscut saw in there and saw it off and throw it out. Didn't have a bulldozer to push it out. What I'm saying is that it was vigorous manual labor in the hot sun, but it didn't hurt me. I could tackle and play in football when I got back in Greenville without it hurting me at all. I could throw some mighty big ones.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Where was the camp?

**DENNIS:** The camp was at Pinopolis. At the end of Pinopolis. It was before Santee-Cooper. It was fortunate for me that it wasn't far from my residence. I could go home some on weekends. But you lived in a camp just like military life. You woke up to reveille and you cut out the lights with taps. You slept on a cot and you had regular army muster--you had canteen, your utensils that you ate with, they looked just like the regular army, and the cooking was that way. They cooked in big cans and you went by and they slopped it out to you. You had to sleep under screen net because of the mosquitoes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did they build a structure there like the one at Awendaw? Sort of a barn-like structure or was it in tents?

**DENNIS:** You lived in tents. You had one structure like at Awendaw. I think the one there probably came from the WPA days when they had work camps around. They had one of those at Pinopolis on the end of the Peninsula and that was used as a mess hall and dance hall. You had dances there on Friday nights on occasion but that was the mess hall. You took your turn at KP, just like the army--washing the pans and preparing the food, just like on the ship--peeling potatoes, shilling beans and so forth. But it was a good experience.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Would you describe yourself in those days as a New Dealer?

**DENNIS:** I thought the Roosevelt programs were the salvation of America and I still think so. Perhaps, on occasion, he and the Congress went a little far. I would be a New Dealer because I was part of the Depression era that was sort of revived by the New Deal. I was a great admirer of President Roosevelt. When I was working in Washington, of course, he was at the heights of his career.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you ever see him?

**DENNIS:** Not personally. I saw him ride by to go to the inauguration and he had several of them. I remember when I was in Washington, I'd go up from South Carolina with groups that would go, but when I would see him would be down Pennsylvania Avenue and on his visits to the Congress. I would go and see him there. He used to live near the Capitol for a long time and I would walk Pennsylvania Avenue to the Department of Commerce where the Library was that I worked. If you had a parade or anything involving the President, they let the government employees out to go stand on the Avenue to see it. But Joe Kennedy didn't know I was in the world. Even though I was technical, I was his employee. I was just a country boy.

**ROSENGARTEN:** A country boy, but you knew a Senator.

**DENNIS:** Yes, that's right. A country boy that had a United States Senator who looked out for his constituents.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Why did you decide to come home and attend the University of South Carolina?

**DENNIS:** It was tied in with my political situation. I decided in Washington that it was time for me to run for the House. I wrote the people that I knew within the county. I had one fellow to bring me the other day a letter that I had written him in 1937. James Barry from St. Stephens. And I wrote for opinions about whether I'd have a chance of succeeding in a race for the House. I got some favorable response, so I decided to come home to run and at the same time to matriculate at the University of South Carolina Law School. When I went to Georgetown University I didn't go with the intention of staying there for the full time because I understood then as I do now that if you are going to practice law in the state it is better to go to the state university. So that was a factor, along with the politics of it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was it unusual for a law student to be elected to the General Assembly?

**DENNIS:** It was very unusual but it did happen. I know there were several not with me. I don't think there were any other student legislators there when I was there but I know at least two or three instances where others had done it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How did you handle the work load?

**DENNIS:** Well, the studying time had to be, had to have the first priority. The work load in the Legislature, well, I remember the House at that time was about what you could make it. I didn't have to go--I attended the sessions but I didn't go to all the committee meetings. I handled it by doing the best I could with the priorities. Number one, study; number two, legislative duties; and by not having any spare time for other things, I could use the time for both, to do what I was supposed to do with both. I'm saying I don't think I neglected my studies greatly or neglected my legislative duties greatly.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Sounds like you might have neglected your social life.

**DENNIS:** I didn't forget it altogether but I neglected it some.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How did your professors regard you? I mean did it give you a kind of special status in class, here you were a legislator?

**DENNIS:** Not at all. None of them ever mentioned it except one who was the type of professor that had a lot of rapport with his students. Dr. Carrie(sp?) used to mention it at that time, "You ought to know that, you're a member of the legislature." They sure didn't give you any special treatment. At least I couldn't detect any.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You described the other week your election to the General Assembly as against the courthouse crowd, what did you mean by that?

**DENNIS:** I meant that there was strong factionalism in the county. There was a faction that was in opposition to my

father, this was a faction that had all the county officers at the time I was elected to the House, so I had the various county officials with their strong connections with the constituencies all in opposition to me.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How do you account for your landslide victory in the Democratic primary in 1939? I read that you received 90% of the vote cast.

**DENNIS:** I had gained some popularity by some of the issues that came up involving statewide matters and as it related to Santee-Cooper and the fight I made for the landowners in connection was the eminent domain act or the Santee-Cooper condemnation act. And also there were some issues such as a magistrate issuing warrants and being penalized because he had issued warrants against what the courthouse crowd wanted. Or put it this way, trying to help those who fell in disfavor with the courthouse crowd. I had gained some popularity between the first and second race and I was trying not to be vain. I had developed a pretty good campaign style. I insisted on having campaign meetings and I got the crowd to be pleased at my speeches. On the other hand, those that I was running against weren't real campaigners.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Who did you run against in your first election?

**DENNIS:** My first election I ran against an incumbent and he was a good speaker. He was an attorney and he stayed there a good while, Mr. Marion Winter. But the other incumbent didn't run, so I ran against a newcomer who was trying to get his place along with me. I managed to win that one. Then the one that I got all the votes, most all the votes, against the same incumbent Mr. Winter, and again against newcomers to the race. They had two house members. You voted for two. They picked the candidate to run against me and as the campaign went on they found out that the incumbent Winter was going to lose and I was going to win along with the new man, so they withdrew him. They still left one in; I was still elected with opposition. One or two candidates withdrew and I defeated the other one.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So in all of these elections, we are talking about the primary election which was at that time really...so, what you are saying is that the party, the Democratic Party decided it wanted its incumbent to stay in the legislature so they withdrew one of their...

**DENNIS:** That's right. That's a faction of the party, it wasn't the party itself. As a matter of fact, I was at the courthouse when this candidate the other faction was getting to run, the courthouse faction was getting to run and I didn't see it myself but I was told at the courthouse that one of the office holders was seen giving the money to the candidate to file for office. So I knew they had put him up to it to beat me.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I just looked back at my notes from the news accounts of this election that we are talking about, the 1938 election. You were 23 years old at the time and not only did you top the newcomer but you won more votes than Winter in that election.

**DENNIS:** Yes. Mr. Winter was a good man, a good lawyer, but he was not a real good politician.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you think that either your father's reputation as a Senator or maybe just the story of him dying in office and that whole thing, do you think that your name...

**DENNIS:** It definitely was an asset for me. My father's service and reputation was an asset for me. I don't think anybody can be elected because of what a relative did, but he can certainly be helped a great deal. But he's got to show that he can handle the job. Course it's a two-edged sword, I lost some support because of those who were opposed to my father but I gained some because of some of his friends.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I would imagine, I mean you at that time when your father was assassinated you were aware of the political implications of what had happened. Other people probably were too. So in a sense he would have somewhat of a martyr status, here is a man who died for his beliefs or his actions, and your election would kind of be a little bit of a retribution.

**DENNIS:** Yes. Some of that was present. Also, some of that hate and some of the malice was still there. I received threats. I was told that I just wasn't in the house race but in the Senate race. The Democratic Party didn't want to have any public campaign speaking and so the executive committee ruled it out. I wouldn't abide by that ...anything to keep me from having it, so I sponsored campaign meetings and invited all the candidates who were running with me on my ticket so to speak. And, those who were running with the courthouse ticket did not come. I was told at the Macedonia meeting by an

elderly gentleman who was friend of my father before me and a friend to me, said I don't want to scare you but I just want to put you on your guard or your notice, somebody told me that they better get word to you if you go in that auditorium this afternoon to speak, you won't come out alive. So I told Mr. Fridell I'm sorry that there was still that sort of malice around but I appreciated him telling me, but I was going in and I hope I would come out. I saw one of the hoodlums, I'd call him, a friend of the courthouse crowd at the fence of the school grounds, and I told one of my friends when we went in to keep your eye on so-and-so; I've just received a threat. It scared him to death; I don't think I got any protection out of that. It was amusing to me afterwards, his reaction. "I haven't got anything, what can I do?"

**ROSENGARTEN:** So what happened?

**DENNIS:** Nothing happened. I went in and I had remarks brought to me like 'the only way we could get rid of his daddy was to kill him, looks like we will have to do the same thing to him' I had that sort of thing from time to time.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What were they so afraid of, what was threatening about your candidacy?

**DENNIS:** Spending the money as they wanted to spend it. It centered around the supervisor's office. For example, I introduced a bill, that's one of the things that helped me between the first election and the second one, I introduced a bill to require the supervisor to publish monthly a statement of all money spent. Names of the party, all disbursements from the supervisor's office. It passed, even though my colleagues on the other side... It had such popular appeal they wouldn't oppose it and it passed. But that was the type of thing that they didn't like about me.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You were in favor of a kind of accountability, that's what I'm hearing. You were in favor of accountability of a public office.

**DENNIS:** Exactly, more accountability. Both in school matters and in general county business. I also passed a bill which went on thru to require the county superintendent of education to put on the school claims specifically what the purpose was, not just the money, but the purpose of the claim. That wasn't popular with some of them. I didn't want John Doe receiving a claim for a hundred dollars and the claim didn't show what it was for. Again, the accountability proposition.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What you're suggesting is that at that time some of these funds probably went into people's pockets.

**DENNIS:** That was the suspicion of my constituency and I was reacting to that. No personal feeling on my part but that's what those who supported me were under the impression and I was trying to serve them.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Who was the electorate at this point? We are talking about 1938. Who were the voting population?

**DENNIS:** Well, it was a matter of, as you mentioned earlier, the Democratic Party was the sole party with any strengths and who was nominated, was elected. Those who simply signed the club roll, they had a book for you to raise to the vote and that was carried around and placed in different places and the electorate was those Democrats who chose to sign the book. Just like those who register now in the general election. The electorate was the people, excluding blacks. Blacks didn't vote then.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What about women?

**DENNIS:** Women voted then.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I read in the history of the Senate which Mrs. Dennis gave me that South Carolina never passed in the State constitution the women's suffrage amendment. It fell under it when it was passed federally but it never included it in its state constitution.

**DENNIS:** That's right, but they voted just as early as they did in other states under the federal amendment. Matter of fact there was a lady senator when I was a page in 1933 or 4. Mrs. Ellis from Jasper County.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Is that so? She was elected to the Senate? I read somewhere that your mother finished out your father's term?

**DENNIS:** Well, she ran for it but was defeated. The man I defeated defeated her. My older brother E.J. was not old

enough to run, he wasn't 25. So my mother ran and she was defeated because she was a woman I would say. So many people say it, "I just can't bring myself to vote for a lady for office, I think, I don't think they should be in public office."

**ROSENGARTEN:** It took a lot of courage on her part.

**DENNIS:** Yes, she had that. She'd get up and make a good speech, too. Course she had some help in preparation from some of my father's friends but she could make a good fighting speech.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was she seriously interested in a political career at that time?

**DENNIS:** No, she just wanted to fill the gap if she had been elected. Course, my older brother could have run at the end of the term, but unfortunately he died with pneumonia. So, she didn't get elected and he died the next year. Not the next year, but he died in--that was in 1930--he died in 1932. Two years later.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In those first terms, your first term in the House say, which legislators took you under their wing?

**DENNIS:** In the House, Speaker Blatt was one of them. Friends that I had developed through college associations. I had friends at the Citadel, Tom Pope was one of them, that was very helpful to me and then I also cultivated some of my own. The ones who were incumbents who, how do you say took me under their wings, would be people like Brown and Jeffries in the Senate and Blatt and Pope and others in the House.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you tell me that Senator Brown had been a friend of your father's?

**DENNIS:** Yes, he had. He had been down to Stony Landing hunting with him on many occasions.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was he, did I read that he was a friend of FDR's?

**DENNIS:** Well, yes, he was.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did he go to Washington at all during those years?

**DENNIS:** Well, you know he ran for the United States Senate at the time that, to fill the vacancy of Senator Maybank and that was when Thurmond beat him with a write in. As a matter of fact, I nominated Senator Brown before the State Executive Committee. We were told by the lawyers that if the Democratic Party didn't have a candidate by midnight that night, we wouldn't have a candidate. So Senator Brown asked me to nominate him and I did. The mistake that was made, if he had just gone ahead and run in the primary, anyhow, even though it wouldn't have been official he would have gotten rid of the charge of bypassing the voters and that's what beat him--the write in. Because he was accused of being nominated in a smoke-filled room and the people didn't have a chance to vote on it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But he didn't serve under Roosevelt? He wasn't involved in Roosevelt's administration?

**DENNIS:** Only as a state legislator. He was an executive committeeman, very close to the--well known in the ranks of the national Democratic Party but he didn't have any official position in the Roosevelt administration.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I also read that Olin Johnston was a very strong New Dealer.

**DENNIS:** Yes, Olin Johnston was a strong New Dealer and a strong politician. His strengths came from the textile workers. He worked in a textile mill as a youth and he was a friend of the worker.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did he know Roosevelt personally?

**DENNIS:** Olin? Yes, he did. Senator Byrnes [*Note: Byrnes was never a Senator*] on the other hand did not get along with the Roosevelts very well. I'm talking about Jimmy now, those who came after the President. I've been to Democratic Conventions; I've seen Senator Byrnes and Jimmy Roosevelt for example, talking to each other with Senator Byrnes very much displeased. He fell out with the Roosevelt Administration.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This is Jim Byrnes, later Governor?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, FDR was a hard act to follow.

**DENNIS:** I was at the Philadelphia Convention and a strong effort was made to nominate Byrnes and he would have been nom...

**[TAPE THREE ENDS, TAPE FOUR BEGINS]**

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, just to get back to where we were, can you tell me a little more about that Philadelphia Convention and the effort to nominate Byrnes?

**DENNIS:** Well, I think I told you about the galleries being packed with the government workers, AFL-CIO labor union and the effort definitely was to stop Byrnes. They were afraid of Byrnes, I think more because he was a Southerner than anything else. Because of his conservatism. I'm thinking of the right convention, now? No, you're talking about Philadelphia now, that's when Truman was nominated. The one I was thinking about was... When it was they .... stop Byrnes and he didn't want... They thought that whoever was elected vice president would probably be president because Mr. Roosevelt was in bad shape at the time. He spoke to the convention by telephone, he didn't appear. The Southern delegates decided to support Thurmond. That's correct, wasn't it?

**ROSENGARTEN:** You know, I don't know if I've read about this convention. This sort of came up tangentially but I will check on it, this would be what, about 1944? Roosevelt's last election?

**DENNIS:** That's right. Thurmond was governor at the time and he decided on the way back to South Carolina that he would run with what they call the Dixiecrat, candidates from Dixiecrat. They had a later convention and nominated him and he ran. Got a fairly respectable vote--wasn't all, just a very small percentage.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So he was running in the primary for vice president?

**DENNIS:** Thurmond was running for vice president. See, those kind of things, since my accident, I've gotten a little bit confused on.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, it's confusing even if you've got the notes in front of you because you've been to a lot of conventions. I'm trying to see if I've got that in this notebook or in my other one. I left my other one in the car. Okay, I have in 1948, Thurmond was the party's presidential choice but that doesn't mean it wasn't true four years before. In 1948 the South Carolina Democrats nominated Thurmond at the state's biennial convention. Let me see if I have it back to 1944. '44 is in my other notebook, so I will have to go back and look at that. But no matter, because we will get up to that, the 1948 election was a very important election. We had really just been talking about your early years in the legislature and the various politicians who influenced you or took you under their wing. Your maiden speech in the House, I read this in the *Berkeley Democrat*, involved an amendment to eliminate the fee-simple provision for land condemned for this Santee-Cooper project. I'm interested in what your concern was here and how you differed from Senator Jeffries on this issue, but also in general what your involvement with the Santee-Cooper project was.

**DENNIS:** Well, this proposed legislation provided a special condemnation law for Santee-Cooper. The rumors were circulated that Santee-Cooper may not ever be built; that the land may be taken but the federal government may not continue to furnish the money and the project might fail and therefore, land could be lost but no project. So the landowners appealed to the legislators from the area to try to safeguard the situation in the event that the project did fall through after condemnation and the lands were taken. So the fight on the House floor was over an amendment to provide that if Santee-Cooper did fail, or if the land was taken and not used for the purposes for which they were condemned, then the landowners would have a right to get their property back at cost, at a price taken into consideration what they were paid for it, less or plus any changes. That was unacceptable to Santee-Cooper and Senator Jeffries' vigorously opposed it in the Senate and Representative Winter supported the bill in the House, but on the proposition of the amendment he did not support my amendment and that was where he and I had a big floor fight.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Had you been involved in bringing Santee-Cooper to the area or was that before you came into politics?

**DENNIS:** That was my first involvement in Santee-Cooper. I had nothing to do with the planning of it. They passed the enabling act in 1934 and that was before I went to the legislature.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was it something you felt, just in general, was a good plan, assuming it worked?

**DENNIS:** I felt like it was a feasible plan but there was wide- spread opposition to it from the landowners. I had close friends among the plantation people and they were bitterly opposed to it. It was not trying to stop the project that my role was, but to try to make it as palatable or taken as possible. We did insert some provisions that the landowners were fairly well satisfied with and they proved usable in later days.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How did the government manage to get the land against the opposition of the landowners initially?

**DENNIS:** Well, Santee-Cooper was a quasi- state agency and they would have the condemnation powers of the state, but this was a special law that would expedite the taking of the property. That was one feature of it that would allow them to put it in court or to appraise what the value of the property was and go ahead and take the land before it was funded to determine how much the landowner would be paid. We had some proposed changes in connection with that; let the landowner have at least a percentage of it at the time it was taken.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Isn't this a similar procedure to what was going on in the national forests at this time?

**DENNIS:** Well, the national forest acquisition of land was by voluntary purchase rather than condemnation. They purchased the whole of it at a very low price per acre because of the economics of the time--the Depression. Some of it sold for fifty cents an acre. The acquisition was not a matter of homes and farmland but of woodland that the market was low on. The big fight on the Santee acquisition was the taking of historical ancestral homes. You can well imagine how the families would be upset.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I'm just surprised that they weren't able to stop it or at least throw a major wrench into the process. I mean these people presumably had power in the state, and friends like yourself.

**DENNIS:** Well, they did but they were at the disadvantage of a project that they couldn't say was not a good project. And one piece of it that was a political, made in the political game was the number of jobs that was going to be created. I would say that played a big part in the election of Mayor Maybank of Charleston as Governor. The project with all the employees that were going to be put on the payroll; I don't say that it elected him Governor but it played a part in it. Mr. Maybank was a very able man, electable on his record as Mayor of Charleston, but he certainly was helped by his support of the Santee-Cooper project. The political strengths of the state at the time was behind the project and in support of it and there wasn't any possible way to stop it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The purpose was mainly for rural electrification? Is that, for power?

**DENNIS:** Well, that was mainly right. Rural electrification. That was the main thrust of the project, the navigation feature of it was a part of it but it never did amount to a great deal. The lakes were there, the recreation was a by-product that amounted to more than the navigation and to a very fine economic support that was as much as the electrical part of it. See, they started out with just the hydro-electric power. They'd rather have hydro-electric power because you can't store electricity but you can store the water and have the production of electricity at peak demand times and of course you can produce it cheaper after you have the water there; by water, then by coal, or later on by atomic energy. It was a very economical way to produce electrical power and electrical power was greatly needed. Primarily, as was indicated, for the rural electrification program which was getting under way at the time. That made the project have strengths all over the state in anticipation of getting rural electrification.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So it was really a question of a few large landowners being sacrificed or having to sacrifice their interests to...

**DENNIS:** That was really the only strong opposition and it wasn't broad, it was just sentimental opposition, was largely what it was.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Sentimental opposition is often the most tenacious, though.

**DENNIS:** Very emotional and sets the stage for dramatics. I remember they had the headline in the paper that I had made my maiden speech on the Santee-Cooper. Actually, I think I told you that I was in law school and I was taking a final examination and I took the first part of the examination or about half of it and I went over to the House and made my speech in connection with the support of the amendment and then I went back and finished my examination. I may have filled the last of it with a lot of electrical quips.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, shortly after this issue came up in the election of the Democratic primary of 1939, you won 90% of the vote cast. How do you account for this landslide?

**DENNIS:** Well, I had had a very active two years and my opposition started out with a candidate who withdrew and then that still left three of us running for two places and Mr. Winter and I were elected. I was told that the candidate withdrew because it looked like he was going to get more support than Mr. Winter was going to get. So my political, the group opposing pulled that candidate out because they would rather have Mr. Winter there, he had had experience, he was a lawyer and Mr. Winter was a good man. We just happened to be on opposite political sides. He was a brother-in-law of a Senator. That's one reason we weren't on the same political team.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Which Senator?

**DENNIS:** Senator Murray whom I defeated. He and Winter were brothers-in-law.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This is a question that's maybe a little more philosophical or historical than the ones we have been talking about. I read, again I believe it was the *Berkeley Democrat*, in the Democratic Convention, the state convention of 1942, the Honorable M. J. Mott gave a speech, he was a very elderly man at that time, and he had been involved with the events of 1876 and the red shirts and the so-called redemption of the state government. So in 1942, he gave a speech recounting the events of 1876. How significant do you feel the Civil War and its aftermath has been in state politics? I don't know if you were at that particular convention or heard the speech but...

**DENNIS:** I was at that convention and I remember Mr. Mott very well. I remember his speech. As I remember it, he came to the convention in his buggy and he had a flowing beard like was the custom of men at the time and had a good booming voice. He made a good speech. Course, the people were still very much emotionally disturbed by the events of the war and the uncertainties of the changes that were beginning to take place. The war had a significant effect. It caused our people to be, sometimes, prejudicial to the black race because of the mores that had developed when the blacks were not allowed to participate politically and now they were going to be and the white people just wouldn't readily accept it. That's why you had the, Hampton and the Red Shirts, and why you had unpleasantness and rule-making so as to try to prevent the blacks from voting. The thought being that they wouldn't support the whites because of the great friction that had existed between the races at the time of the aftermath of the war. The whites were impoverished and incensed over the war and looking for a way to try to restore the economy and they felt like the blacks were hampering in that effort. So, the feeling between the two races at that time was not good to say the least. The political end of it flowed into the government and social phases of life too. Integration, I mean, separation of the races, was sought by the whites of the South in numerous and vigorous ways. The general court order passed, eating in public places was on a strictly segregated basis, schools were operated for a long time on the so-called separate - equal basis, or doctrine, finally knocked out by the court in 1954, but then the question must be asked was it really equal in a separate or dual capacity and I would have to say that it was not until economics of the state government made it possible, after the sales tax in 1954. All I'm saying is, in other words, it wasn't a choice of the whites only to have inferior [conditions] in black schools; the money wasn't there to do it. The white schools you couldn't have called them superior very much in many instances. Education was at a low ebb. School teachers were paid in scrip for a few years and the school facilities went from bad to worse. Those were rough days for education in the South. School bus transportation was a nightmare for office-holders who felt and knew that there should be transportation for blacks as well as whites. I must say that we did have the first one in Berkeley County by private support, that is purchase of old school buses and contributions by some of the wealthier white people to help provide some semblance of transportation, but we really didn't have equal transportation for both until the fifties when we got the sales tax money.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When Mr. Mott made this speech in 1942, do you think what he was reacting to was the beginning stirrings of whatever, a movement toward integration, or do you think he was reacting to something at that time in recalling the days of 1876?

**DENNIS:** I think he was speaking from his heart, and what he was saying was really the philosophy of the whites of the era. They felt like that they had begun to know that slavery was wrong, but they didn't feel like the South was treated right by the federal government. I think the philosophy of the white man who had slaves or participated in the slavery process... That the time was rapidly approaching when slavery would be out of the question but it should be voluntarily given up. Course, I'm just speculating on what was said by people like Mott and others.

**ROSENGARTEN:** To me it's one of the most unique things about the South, that history is so important. I mean for an event of eighty years ago to be of such importance at this moment is unusual. In most communities, what happened eighty years ago is ancient history, it's just not of any relevance except for maybe some historical interest. But in the history of the conflict between the North and the South, this has continued to live on.

**DENNIS:** Yes, that's out of a terrible war and the families who lost loved ones and lost their homes and lost the practice of slavery. Although I say again that they knew that couldn't be lasting, and many of them didn't look on it as being an evil. There were instances of horrible abuse of human rights in slavery but there are also many instances of employer/employee relations that were ideal and loved by both employer and employee. Slavery, per se, was not the evil thing, it was the abuses. Some beautiful things about the days of Southern plantation life when the slaves labored in the field; but they were also participants in a social life in a way. The gathering at the old plantations with the singing by the black people was a special sort of relationship that they understood each other in so many instances; and 'course you had exceptions to it, as were shown in the "Roots" documentation.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You certainly can't say that we have made a lot of progress in terms of race relations. That's also to me very striking, and maybe becoming more so, I don't know.

**DENNIS:** During my time, I've seen tremendous improvement in race relations. An illustration - in the religious life they have gone from, in many instances, from blacks not just participating in religious services, but some ministers being called to churches. Some black ministers. I remember in my early years as an office holder, the white people and the black people working to improve race relations through the religious medium. We would have at some of the black churches a "better race relations" Sunday and they would have white speakers and I often spoke at the black churches on these occasions to try to build up the usual understanding of what the problem was and what should be done to alleviate it. Don't want to depend on the bayonet and the federal government to do it all. Do it through joint agreement in the religious and the secular world. A lot of progress was made before it became necessary, Congress thought, to pass the civil rights act. And there again, the law became itself a perpetrator of unequal rights in the name of civil rights when the Johnson administration, and I think principally the late President Johnson, picked out certain states to have rather oppressive actions under so-called civil rights put into effect. In other words, going back too far the other way.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But wouldn't you say that this period we are discussing, say, just before the early years of the Second World War, most white Southerners were fully committed to segregation, to separate facilities and all?

**DENNIS:** They felt that way, most of them. You just felt it should be that way. They felt that the whites and the blacks were different and that it wasn't intended in creation that they be social equals. Many of them feel that way still. I remember conversations with a black medical man, Dr. Evans of the Moncks Corner area, his youngest granddaughter was by here the other day. I was asked by her and her friend to try to help in a position she was trying to get at the new Santee Canal State Park. In conversations with him, his education, experience, training give him a viewpoint to the effect that--I'll tell you just what he said, not necessarily quotable but he said, "White people don't like to be closely associated with Negroes because they don't smell good." He said, "We were made that way. You can use all the soap in the world and you can't get the scent off of a black under certain circumstances." He was for black rights but he understood. He didn't insist on social mingling completely. But he stood up for his race, he supported the cases that sought voting rights and there was something that they should have had. They should have had it without exploitation by the whites. That was the difficult thing, being uneducated, they were subject to exploitation just like the poor whites of the time. That caused some of the reluctance in giving them full voting rights, but there was no justification for not letting them vote. In the various things in you and your questions, you have referred to the various devices used by the white politicians to impair, if not prevent, the voting of blacks. But all those things were being corrected. All those impediments were being corrected by voluntary action before the courts got into it and perhaps tried to move things too fast in certain places at certain times. They were voluntarily admitted to primaries in this state after threats by the court--they weren't court ordered to do it. Federal Judge Waring was given credit for getting the blacks to vote but it was being handled by the Democratic Party on the state level at the time and was being done if his order had not been handed down. Because the reorganization had come to the party that it was no longer reasonable or just to prevent the blacks from participating in the primary system. The primaries were

tantamount to the election and I was present in the court for part of the argument in the case before Judge Waring and the chairman of the state Democratic party testified as to what their party was going to do and not going to do to try to indicate that Judge Waring didn't have to issue a mandatory order because if they were going to do it anyhow there wasn't any real objection to the order.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When was this? I know who you are talking about.

**DENNIS:** Yes, that would have been in the early forties.

**ROSENGARTEN:** He was kind of an infamous character in Charleston, Judge Waring.

**DENNIS:** He fell out of grace with the people, Waring did, not so much on the political end of it and his court orders but on his personal life after suddenly telling his wife after 35 years that he was in love with somebody else and she would have to go. That was the real thing the people of Charleston couldn't take.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The 'somebody else' was a Northern woman, is that right?

**DENNIS:** That's right. That just added to the business of it but for a man in his position, or a man anyhow without public exposure at least of any rhyme or reason just suddenly tell his faithful companion of many years, somebody else is ordained for me in heaven and not you. That was the thing that sunk him socially. He got real bitter then when Charleston society ostracized him and delighted in handing down rulings that he thought to be offensive to a certain element of society.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you know him personally?

**DENNIS:** I knew him as a Judge and as a lawyer I appeared before him several times to plea for defendants in cases, prohibition cases or violation of the prohibition law. It was the distillery, called bootlegging.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What do you think...? I don't know how to say this. What do you think made a man like Waring develop a point of view so in opposition to his social group, and I assume the rest of his family where he was coming from? I mean, he became a tremendous renegade.

*[SIDE ONE ENDS, SIDE TWO BEGINS]*

**ROSENGARTEN:** How a person whose life is basically going in one direction will suddenly become such a renegade?

**DENNIS:** We spoke of Senator Maybank, Mayor Maybank and his race for governor. Judge Waring was his attorney and an appeal to state committee in Mayor Maybank's race for governor against Mr. Manning and it had a contest over allegations of irregularity in Charleston balloting and it went from the county committee to the state committee and Watie Waring was Mr. Maybank's attorney in a democratic forum. But then when he rendered his decisions and apparently--I'm talking about a federal judge and I've got to be careful what I say--apparently the general public got the impression that he delighted in certain decisions and they called it retaliatory. Well, perhaps he was influenced by society turning against him because of his personal life or for whatever reason, unconsciously influenced or deliberately writing an opinion that he didn't think was the law but finding some satisfaction in doing it when it didn't please those who didn't find him pleasing, that's what I am trying to say.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But long before that, I mean he must have had, at some point in his life, had a complete turnaround to become such a strong civil rights advocate in an era when it just wasn't fashionable, it wasn't even acceptable.

**DENNIS:** Well, speculation would have it that he was shamed by the new wife.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So his change of heart came after the remarriage? Before that he was not a crusader?

**DENNIS:** That's right. He became a crusader after his second marriage. She used to go to court to listen to him. He would indicate his pleasure at her presence which was his business but it didn't look too good to the lawyers.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So the woman was behind it all? (laughs)

**DENNIS:** That's what the suspicion was.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I'm going to backtrack again a little bit because to me it's very interesting but I wanted to fill in a little bit more about your career. After two terms in the House how did you come to the decision to run for the Senate?

**DENNIS:** Well, actually I was thinking about running the whole time I was serving in the House because I had a burning desire to fill the seat that my father had lost by assassination and my mother had lost because it was too early for women to be accepted for higher office then. Although it was occasionally done, she couldn't make it; she didn't make it. Because of my father's death and my mother's defeat, I had a burning desire to be the Senator. The man I defeated, we later became strong personal friends.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Who was that?

**DENNIS:** Senator Murray.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In that election, apparently Winter chose to stay in the lower chamber. Do you know at that point in his career what his reasoning was?

**DENNIS:** Why he ran for the Senate?

**ROSENGARTEN:** No, at that point he stayed in the House. It struck me that you, as the junior member of the delegation after two terms in the House, ran for the Senate; whereas Winter, who was older than you and had been in politics longer, stayed in the House for a while.

**DENNIS:** Well, see his brother-in-law was a Senator. Murray was his brother-in-law and he wouldn't run against his brother-in-law.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I see, of course.

**DENNIS:** He ran against me when I ran for re-election in '46.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Right, I think I've some questions about that election. It was a very interesting campaign. Senator Dennis, in our very first conversation last February, you talked to me about what you saw as your dilemma at the outbreak of World War II and I wanted to get that in the record.

**DENNIS:** Well, it was my feeling that I was going to be severely criticized for running for political office when I was of the age that I was expected to be in military service. I came to the decision, considering all of the events previous to that date in the political area, that I would let the people decide whether the political situation was such that they needed help to the extent of me running the risk of being accused of being unpatriotic. I decided I would run and abide by the results and publicly stated that it was their decision and I would be a volunteer for service if I didn't win that particular election. I was accused of being unpatriotic but it came from those who didn't have anything to brag about to show that they were, as was usually the case, show that they were strong patriots either. I don't know about mentioning individuals but Mr. Winter himself was not physically able to be a service man. He claimed that he was a Veteran of the first war because he had been in a training camp for a short time in the western state. He allowed his name to be used in the accusations against me not being patriotic. But I had two brothers in the service, two out of three of us were in the service, and as I say, had large numbers of my family had become .... too. One of the candidates had printed the names of those my family in the service and others running for office at the time. But I think the issue boils down to the fact that I felt like what had happened and the situation that existed was dangerous for me really, as going in service. I was a lawyer; there was all sorts of things they could have put me into in the service that I wouldn't have necessarily been in the front lines. I am not a fearful man, I didn't fear war but I felt like I had a personal war to carry on and that I had already been working on, preparing myself for and I was going to let the ultimate decision be the general public's. That's the way it went.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So in your campaign speeches you laid this out? In your speeches did you say to the public, either elect me or not, whatever you choose and I will...

**DENNIS:** That's right. I said that in my political statements. My opposition wouldn't meet me on the public stump--I was thinking about the Murray campaign--Winter did meet me. He personally never did bring it up on the stump. But we had a

rough campaign on issues, and I guess we got into personalities too.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In your scrap books there are several tickets and whatever, memorabilia from Democratic National Conventions and State Conventions. What was the most memorable convention you can recall?

**DENNIS:** Chicago Fire Convention. That was when fire broke out on the floor of the convention and I was one of the ones who used my coat to try to put out the blaze. Senator Morrison from Georgetown County and I both did. Senator Byrnes was the Chairman of the South Carolina delegation and he made a statement after the fire was put out by the fireman. "I just want you to know that I did not put out that fire, that I did not set that fire." It was a memorable convention because the so-called young Turks tried to take over from the older democrats and I remember when Speaker Rayburn was elected permanent chairman after the so-called young Turks, Soapy Williams and others--well, he ran for president later, Humphreys, Hubert Humphreys and Williams were two leaders of the so-called Young Turks. Tried to unseat all the nominations made by the older Democrats. I remember when Speaker Rayburn was made permanent chairman, Maybank who was sitting in front of me, Byrnes who was in the row next, leaned over to Byrnes and said "Jimmy, we got the first team in now, got the first team back in." Maybank and Byrnes were two very colorful people. I was privileged and benefited by being able to be in their presence, watch their activities at those conventions and of course, being associated with them when they both were governor. When I was elected to the House, Maybank was governor and later on Byrnes came in.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Going back for a minute to the convention of 1944, the newspaper accounts described the South's virulent opposition to Truman and in one account they quoted you as saying his nomination, Truman's nomination, actually was a victory over the big city bosses and Sidney Hillman's political action committee who backed Wallace--that's Henry Wallace, not George. What was at stake in this, at this convention?

**DENNIS:** The success of the Roosevelts wasn't it?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Truman was being opposed by the South and yet their was this other, obviously, this labor force looming in the horizon that you apparently saw as even a more dangerous alternative or whatever.

**DENNIS:** They really didn't want a Southerner, and Byrnes was prominently mentioned. The South Carolina Delegation, when they went there, thought he was going to be nominated. Roosevelt sent his famous message that you've already covered. If we had any question, clear it with Sydney, and that turned the convention against Byrnes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Why had people identified Truman so strongly as being a civil rights advocate as opposed to Roosevelt, for example?

**DENNIS:** I never did consider him that way. But I seem to be not recollecting too clearly about how Thurmond figured into the situation with it. Was it that convention after that?

**ROSENGARTEN:** 1948 was when Thurmond was nominated but there is no question that the South Carolina Democrats were trying to defeat Truman.

**DENNIS:** They had a group of them to go on the television which was a little bit new at the time, sing the song "Let's send Harry back to the farm."

**ROSENGARTEN:** Truman, certainly as a President, he earned a reputation for being a civil rights president, an early civil rights president, but as vice president, I am just not aware of what he had done up until that point to earn him this reputation.

**DENNIS:** Oh, I don't think he deserved being called over enthusiastic about civil rights.

**DENNIS:** Before the full convention, the contest was over the vice- president. Wasn't any president controversy, President Roosevelt was going to be re-nominated but who was going to be his running mate, Wallace or Byrnes, wasn't that right?

**ROSENGARTEN:** That's exactly what...those were the people who were competing with Truman. What I did was take notes one day from the *Berkeley Democrat* and this was in July 1944, and it said that the South Carolina delegation to the national convention in Chicago was disappointed when Truman was nominated above James F. Byrnes of Spartanburg, and

claimed he had been double-crossed by the element represented by Sydney Hillman and those representing the Negro element in the North and East. This was from the newspaper in 1944. Then it said, they quoted you saying "that Truman's nomination actually was a victory to the delegates opposed to the big city bosses and Hillman's group who had backed Wallace." Obviously you all were pushing for Byrnes and Truman got it.

**DENNIS:** All right, that's straight. In 1948 Truman was the candidate for president and South Carolina was supporting Thurmond. They, of course, opposed Truman in favor of Thurmond.

**ROSENGARTEN:** If I'm not mistaken, that was the election that was later called the Dixiecrat Revolt. All right, moving along now in the '40s, in the Senate primary race in 1946 Marion Winter chose to run against you and you apparently won twice as many votes as he won in that campaign. Would you describe the campaign?

**DENNIS:** It was what you would call a total slugging campaign. We had several campaign meetings and one would be his attack against me and the next one would be my reply to that attack and then my counterattack against him. It was a rough campaign, no holds barred. I attacked him for what I thought was mistakes of his record and he attacked me and got personal to the extent--my mother was working for the county as a keeper of the county school book depository and his sister was working for the county and the draft board. He said something about my mother working for the county and I, of course, resented it and I replied that I wonder how long his sister had been working for the county. Of course, that brought a vigorous response from the crowd. It was that sort of personal thing, it was a rough campaign. That's all I would like to say about it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The relationship between you and Winter at this point had become adversarial, but a year before in March of 1945, again this is from a newspaper report, you and Representative Marion F. Winter coincidentally presided for an hour and a half in the two chambers of the General Assembly in place of Edgar Brown and Sol Blatt. According to the news reports, you and Winter could see each other across the lobby. Would you describe this event and what it signified in terms of the notorious rivalry between the Hell Hole Ring and the Barnwell Ring?

**DENNIS:** I don't think it signified anything in connection with that rivalry. But I think it was handwriting on the wall that Winter was presiding to groom himself for campaign for the Senate. I guess maybe that I was glad to preside on account of showing somebody already represented Berkeley County over there. It would have been that angle of it because the Hell Hole Ring, Winter wasn't a part of Hell Hole Ring. That was McNair as Governor and Bates as Mayor of Columbia and Rivers as Congressman, all from the eastern section of Berkeley County. They, together with me were the Hell Hole Ring that was jokingly being described as a rival to the Barnwell Ring. Winter wasn't a part of it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You and Winter again locked horns in naming candidates for the Highway Commissioner. Can you tell me about the Highway Commission and why it was such a hot spot?

**DENNIS:** Well, it was considered then and considered now that a Highway Commissioner can do a lot for the county in connection with roads. But that was a particularly strong confrontation because the nominee that Mr. Winter was supporting was his brother-in-law Mr. Murray whom I had defeated for the Senate. I naturally was opposed to that. I know Mr. Murray and I were not personally antagonistic; I just didn't think the man I had defeated should be the Highway Commissioner. The position rotated between the counties of a circuit. Our circuit, the ninth circuit, just having two counties, it was a proposition of having one term Berkeley and one term Charleston and this was Berkeley's term. Charleston had had it a long time, we had not tried to put anybody in, so this was a particularly important one because we were claiming the position and it was important to the County to have it and to have somebody who would work with the delegation. So, that's what the fight was all about.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But historically the Highway Commission seems to have been this, snake pit. I don't know if we got it on tape but maybe you would like to describe again the story of Olin Johnston's barricade, I don't know how you would describe it, of the Highway Commission.

**DENNIS:** Well, the Highway Commission position is important to a county, has been more so at times than others and the times its been so important is when there has been discretionary monies that a commissioner could get for roads in a certain area. It was that discretionary money that our delegation was concerned about. .... that we have somebody that the delegation would have a voice in where the monies would be spent, which roads. In those days they had a program of farm-to-market roads trying to help the rural areas. The delegation by legislative act had input into it, but it was not considered a constitutional statute because you can't appropriate and spend the money, as the courts have decided. What

I'm trying to make clear is the legislative delegation regarded jealously what it considered to be its responsibility to the people as to where the roads were going to be improved and the Highway Commissioner cooperating with them was most important.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was this the same issue at stake when Olin Johnston had his big fracas with the Highway Commission?

**DENNIS:** When who had it?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Governor, when Olin Johnston was governor. I can't recall the details exactly but wasn't there a situation where he actually called out troops and barricaded?

**DENNIS:** No, that had something to do with license fees. The Johnston/Ben Sawyer misunderstanding over license fees. That was before this, that wasn't a part of this situation.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What did Johnson do exactly in that instance?

**DENNIS:** I wasn't in the legislature at the time, but my recollection of it from what I read, he sent the National Guard over there to put Sawyer out of office if he put that fee on. I think they settled it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I am going to jump back to my earlier set of questions because I wanted to bring in a little bit of what was going on in your personal life. I'm not sure when this happened but I read that you met your wife as the consequence of a wager? One of the newspapers reported that you met Mrs. Dennis as the consequence of a wager. Could you relate the circumstances, and when this was?

**DENNIS:** Well, Representative Mark Mitchum was a member of the delegation and he thought that Natalie who worked on the desk in the House was an attractive lady and he and his wife had been trying to get me to get married for a long time. Telling me it was time for me to get married, so he just said, bet you can't -- no money put up -- but I bet you can't get a date with that lady on the desk. I proceeded to see if I could and was able to and that's when we started going together.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When was this?

**DENNIS:** That was in 1943. Towards the latter part of the session in 1943.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And how soon after that were you married?

**DENNIS:** Let's see, we got married in October 1944. Must have been the session in '44. We didn't go together a year before we got married, so .... change that. I recollect it would be the session of 1944. We went together during that session and in the summer months afterwards and decided to get married in October.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Would you describe Mrs. Dennis' family background?

**DENNIS:** Yes, her father was a farmer in McCormick County and her mother was from the Dorn family of Greenwood. She had a brother in the Senate and a cousin was in the House, so she had Columbia and political interests through her side of the family. Caused her to like politicians which I was glad of. Her aunt who was the widow of her mother's brother who was a Senator and got killed in a wreck in Georgia was a great promoter of mine. I used to go see her when I'd go see Natalie.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When did you first make the acquaintance of Mrs. Dennis' parents, Henrietta Dorn and Luke Nathaniel Brown?

**DENNIS:** Right. In the early summer of 1944. Just several months before we were married. I went over with her and we spent the weekend and they approved so it wasn't a long courtship.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was there any tension because you were from the lowcountry and she was an upcountry family?

**DENNIS:** Used to be a lot of kidding about it but nothing serious. They used to kid me about Hell Hole Swamp. Going to

bring Natalie down to Hell Hole Swamp. Just good-natured banter, no real feeling of difference between the sections of the state.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were you married in McCormick?

**DENNIS:** Right. In the Methodist Church in McCormick, next door to her Aunt's house. I stayed at her Aunt's house. I didn't stay there either. I got ready for the wedding there, so I just had to go next door.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What kind of job was she holding in the Assembly?

**DENNIS:** She was an assistant to the Clerk of the House. She had worked for the Highway Department and they needed somebody in the House to do clerical work. Natalie took a test and they approved her and she had the job on the desk as assistant to the clerk. She took down Mr. Blatt's speeches sometimes in shorthand.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And after your marriage did she continue working?

**DENNIS:** No. No, she resigned before we got married. She never has worked in a political position. I didn't do her like they do in Washington, put her on a payroll whether she worked or not. Like they allegedly do.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Allegedly, right. It's a great temptation to start talking to you about what's going on in Washington.

**DENNIS:** Yes, the speaker of the House is in trouble about that wife employment now.

**ROSENGARTEN:** He's in a lot of trouble.

**DENNIS:** He sure is. He can't weather the storm. His image has been tarnished too much for him to continue.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But he has maintained such a righteous attitude throughout.

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In this same period I read about one court case that you and your brother Markley and the Honorable Frank Eatman of Kingstree represented the plaintiff that I thought was an interesting case. The case was that a Negro, the plaintiff was a Negro who was suing for damages when his car was hit by a train. And your opposition in court was Winter again and G.L.B. Rivers and A. Baron Holmes III from Charleston. Do you remember this case? It had a fairly exceptionable outcome in terms of the size of the reward.

**DENNIS:** Yes, it was a crossing accident. The verdict wouldn't be considered a high one now, but it was the highest verdict up until that time in this county for a black person. Williams was a black individual who got killed at the crossing and the amount of money was considered high; that is a good verdict. But it was customary for Mr. Winter to be on one side and me to be on the other. Almost every term of court we had some sort of accident case or tort case to court where he would represent one side and I would represent the other. Most of the time I was the plaintiff's attorney and he was the defendant's attorney and he would be associated by the corporate attorney's in Charleston like Hagley, Rivers & Young in this case.

**ROSENGARTEN:** They were representing the railroad, I guess.

**DENNIS:** The railroad, that's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you remember what the verdict was?

**DENNIS:** Twenty-five thousand, I believe.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That's what the newspapers said, \$25,000 for the death and \$500 for the car.

**DENNIS:** I was in a railroad crossing case associated with the Meyer firm [Meyer, Goldberg and Hollings] in Charleston, who is Senator Hollings' uncle, J. D. E. Meyer. As a matter of fact, Fritz practiced law with him. When I was a senior in

law school, I was associated by Mr. Meyer in the trial of a case where a white lady, school teacher, who got killed by a train in Jamestown on the Seaboard Railroad. The case ended in a miss-trial which was... Which ended in a victory because it resulted in a favorable settlement afterwards. The fact that the other side didn't win the case and we got a good settlement, or Meyer got a good settlement. I couldn't get much out of it because the lawyer for the, one of the attorneys for the defense, when I got up to speak to the jury, asked the Judge "is Mr. Dennis a member of the bar?" Meyer got up to explain that I was a senior in law school and not a member of the bar but I was a friend of the family of the deceased and was serving without fee which was the truth. They gave me a present later but I didn't have any fee arrangement. So that was another unusual thing for me to argue a case to a jury before I was finished law school.

*[TAPE FOUR ENDS, TAPE FIVE BEGINS]*

**ROSENGARTEN:** We had just gotten up to the world war and your campaign and your decision to go into politics despite the political issue of whether you would go into the service or not, and I just wanted to ask you generally what you felt were the main legislative issues during the war. In what ways the war impacted on your years in the Legislature.

**DENNIS:** Not a great deal of difference in the impact on others I would say. I was most careful to say it to the body and to the ones who would talk to, what my situation was. And you remember that it was a situation of, that I resolved into framing a question for the people to decide. I'm willing to go to Legislature; I'm willing to go to the war. Whichever you want me to do. It was pitched on that theme. My opposition tried to make it a point that at my age I should be in the war rather than on a political stump. I took the position that that was for the people to say and I was willing to do either one. We had some things to happen that I thought needed straightening out. There was gonna be a pretty good war to do that, and I would either fight that one or go to the other one. That was sort of the campaign theory.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You also mention that two of your brothers were in the service.

**DENNIS:** Yes. One in the Army and one in the Navy.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were they serving in the European theater?

**DENNIS:** They were in the Pacific theater. Markley, the one I practiced law with, was in the island area. I'm trying to think of the island.

**ROSENGARTEN:** He was the one in the navy?

**DENNIS:** Yes. Markley.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And which...what's the other brother?

**DENNIS:** That'd be Dr. Dennis. He was with the medical detachment.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When you say that there were issues of things to straighten out at home in those years, what specifically were you thinking of?

**DENNIS:** I'm thinking of the local government situation that my father had left. My older brother died, so it was my responsibility I thought to take up where daddy left off in representation. There'd been fierce battles between the two political factions -- strong factionalism in the county. [Father Pope?] led one and the other was not led by a legislator, it was led by a county officer. After my father's death, various events that took place in the local politics, dictated to me that I needed to make an effort to serve, to try to correct some of the things that people said needed correcting. So it was a right rough campaign.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was there rationing during the war or any direct impact of wartime shortages in South Carolina?

**DENNIS:** You mean, would there be a concentration of wartime personnel at different places in the state?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Yes, or the one example I remember my parents telling me was since butter was scarce, they used to get little packets of Oleo margarine with the yellow... You know, that kind of change in life because of the wartime shortages.

**DENNIS:** Well I wasn't familiar with that phase of it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you have any direct contact with Franklin Delano Roosevelt?

**DENNIS:** I couldn't say direct, no.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was he, would you describe him as a popular leader in South Carolina?

**DENNIS:** Very popular, most of the time. Because he went through three campaigns.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This, my next series of questions, Senator really are jumping after the war but if, you know, things come up during, you know, which remind you of things that happened during the war, we can, we can go back. One of the things I noticed in reading the newspaper accounts is that you were very active in the inception of the chambers of commerce in Moncks' Corner and St. Stephen immediately after the war. Could you describe the goals and the constituency of these organizations and their beginning immediately after the Second World War?

**DENNIS:** Well, to... People were upset, things were out of place so to speak, and the whole community was very... In the idea of leadership, all community work would be carried on orderly. To be enthusiastic and productive. Civic organizations were very prominent in that phase of it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were the chambers primarily local businessmen?

**DENNIS:** They were local businessmen, and they were... They were primarily to try to lead to business recovery.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This also seemed to me a period when the government was beginning again to make improvements in roads and local services. I mean it makes sense that after all the wartime effort there would finally be funds and interest in trying to catch up...

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** ...in some of these areas. For example, it was at this time that the highway commission acquired the Cooper River Bridge. Was that, a movement that you supported?

**DENNIS:** Very much so. The need of the time was for stimulation in business, and government and business developed in South Carolina, ways and means of working together to stimulate the economics and the progress of the state.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Would you describe your efforts to place the Berkeley County road system within the state highway system?

**DENNIS:** It ... indifference or negligence as you may call it. The county had not insisted on its position with the state highway department for several terms. That is to say each district, each highway district was almost a county. This county here. Berkeley and Charleston made up the highway district. The commissioner from this district was either from Berkeley or Charleston. And Berkeley had yielded its position to Charleston for several terms. There was a big fight waged. A determined effort made to have Berkeley County represented on the highway commission. And it was successful. Very important as so.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The last time we talked, we talked a lot about Rep. Winter and your campaign against him in the Senate race. I was struck over and over again with the number of times that you and he kind of locked horns. Right after the war, you represented the Moncks' Corner Chamber of Commerce and he represented the Home Telephone Company in legal proceedings. I presume this was leading up to the installation of telephone service in Moncks' Corner. Could you describe that situation?

**DENNIS:** Well, it was a public effort for improvement of service. The service was owned by Home Telephone Company. They were doing a good job, but it wasn't expanding enough. The town and county was starting to grow and they wanted better public services including telephone. So that's what brought it about. All the political undercurrent there was to ones representing the chamber of commerce and the private telephone company.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The chamber was suing the telephone company in order to make them expand services, is that...

**DENNIS:** Well, they were petitioning the Public Service Commission to require them to perform better services, or expand the services.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What, what were your recollections at the beginning of the telephone service in this area? I remember you mentioned briefly a little run-in you had with the local operator in Moncks Corner. That was rather amusing.

**DENNIS:** Well, there was a person to handle business. You called Central, and you talked to one of the operators of the system and they would give you the number. So every now and then the politics of the moment would well up in one or the other. Some sarcastic word was said maybe. But it was a situation that had reached a point where improvement needed to be made and the telephone company didn't disagree with that. Just a question of how fast and what direction you were gonna go. At the time that the petition was brought to the Public Service Commission, there was about to be a change of ownership. The chairman and business people, so I don't think that was a propitious time to make a thrust for improvement. They had some hearings in Columbia that would .... a little bit of excitement. But we just, the chamber was trying to get away from the old system, which they felt right at that time, had outlived its usefulness. So you'd ring and "Hello, this is Central." "Could you give me somebody?" Dial phones were then becoming available and Monck's Corner wanted to update its system and Berkeley County did.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you remember when phones were first installed in your home?

**DENNIS:** Well, in our home in Pinopolis we had a phone on the wall in the hall that you stood up and you twisted the crank and talked to the operator and got your number given to you. It stayed that way until after the war. That's when the dial telephone came into existence in this county, right after the war.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What was that exchange that you had, I think the woman's name was Eleanor Briscoe? I think this was last spring you told me this very funny story.

**DENNIS:** That was a politically inspired exchange. She was on the other side of politics from me, and I always felt that she gave me a little bit of sarcasm on the telephone. So I, the time I told you about, was responding to her very verbally.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What other modern innovations were you pushing for in this period? Some example might be sewage, paved roads, the use of DDT which was considered a very important health measure, and rural electrification are just a few of the ones that I pulled out of the newspaper.

**DENNIS:** Well, over topics of the day, get better roads, get rural electrification, and... [telephone rings] ...and improvement in transportation. The Public Service Commission headed up communications and transportation, public transportation. It was very, desirable organization to have on your side in a community that was trying to develop. An election for membership was a hard fought election. It was politically oriented considerably. Because the legislature elected the members and made the appropriations and so forth.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And what did the Public Service Commission oversee? What was their area?

**DENNIS:** Public transportation and communications. They had buses and taxi cabs, other public transportation services, and telephones, public communications. It was a regulatory body.

**ROSENGARTEN:** One of the campaign advertisements that I read, I don't remember what year it was, that your campaign issued talked about fighting for DDT spraying county wide. Was this a brand new health measure? What were they trying to do with that?

**DENNIS:** The mosquito problem. [The] malaria problem, particularly in the low country, had always been a source of trouble to the people and DDT spraying was limited. The public began to demand some expansion of the program under the health department. And so that was one of the big political issues of the day, of the day was to get the program moving. Expanding, give the people better relief from the bites of the mosquitoes and the malaria.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were you aware of mosquitoes as a problem your whole life, or do you feel it became worse at some point?

**DENNIS:** It probably was worse, became worse, during Santee-Cooper construction. When the puddles of water were here and there during construction. It was just coincidental that Santee-Cooper's vast program involving the two lakes' formation, the two lakes' and construction of the transmission lines... [telephone rings] ...all involved excavation that was connected with mosquitoes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You know, someone said to me recently, or I heard on the news broadcast that the same thing was happening with the highway construction with the Mark Clark [I526] and the Isle of Palms connector. It's just a temporary situation, but the construction itself is creating standing water that's breeding mosquitoes in places like North Charleston has gone crazy.

**DENNIS:** I'm sure that's true.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Uh huh. That's interesting.

**DENNIS:** That's the sort of thing the average Santee-Cooper construction.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I really hadn't thought about that, but I'm sure that's true with all the ditch digging and everything.

**DENNIS:** Right. Disturbing the natural elements.

**ROSENGARTEN:** To go back a little bit to your personal life at this time. Your first son, Rembert, Jr. was born shortly after WWII. Where were you living at that time?

**DENNIS:** We were living at our home place in Pinopolis. My father had passed away and my older brother had. Several of the children were living there that had married. One of my sisters and my brother-in-law and me. I moved to a new home, a different one. Not a new one. I had moved to the old plantation home, Stony Landing, and left the house for my mother and my brother-in-law and my sister.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Is that shortly after you son was born?

**DENNIS:** Rembert was born while I was living at the Pinopolis house. But we moved within...a year...no, two years after he was born.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you recall any special events the day of his birth? Was he born in a hospital?

**DENNIS:** He was born in the Berkeley County Hospital on a Saturday morning. Saturday was my hunting day, and after stopping at one friend's house on the way to the hospital, the fellow who handled the dogs, I went on to the hospital. Then when I could leave the hospital, I went down to the hunt. Not to hunt, but just to see the people.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Who were you hunting with in those days?

**DENNIS:** People who were friends of my father. Older people. I would say they were older people some of them had been game wardens. Some of them had been officers of one nature or another. Or just plantation owners. They hunted as friends but they were older than my generation, most of them.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Is this the period when you became acquainted with Bernard Baruch?

**DENNIS:** That was the period alright. My acquaintance with Mr. Baruch was developed not directly but indirectly. He was a friend of the owner of Cainho plantation. I'll tell you his name in a second.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I think I may have it in my first notebook as I remember. Go ahead and tell the incident and we'll fill it in. I'll fill the name in.

**DENNIS:** Alright.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did it have to do with turkeys? Were you hunting turkeys at that point?

**DENNIS:** What?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did that incident with Baruch have to do with hunting turkeys? I'll have to go back and look at my notes.

**DENNIS:** I got to connect that up. He was a friend of the owner. I just can't think of his...Natalie!

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes.

**DENNIS:** What's the name of Baruch's, of a...

**MRS. DENNIS:** What's the name of Baruch's what?

**DENNIS:** The plantation at Cainhoy.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Well was that Baruch's at Cainhoy?

**DENNIS:** No.

**MRS. DENNIS:** No, you mean the man who owned it? Oh Lord. From New York. Goodness.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I think I may have it written down.

**MRS. DENNIS:** We can't think of his name. But we'll think of it by next time.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Okay.

**DENNIS:** I was on the subject about my direct connection with Baruch. And I thought it came from the Cainhoy plantation.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes. I don't remember how it came. It wasn't through Byrnes?

**DENNIS:** Byrnes was who I made the contact with.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes.

**DENNIS:** What was I trying to get from Mr. Baruch?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Let's see what it was. I remember when he called. It wasn't a hunting thing; it didn't have to do with hunting.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That's what I had thought. That's what I had remembered. It had something to do with turkeys or ..

**MRS. DENNIS:** Might have. Let's think about that. She can put it in.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I'll go back and look at my notebook too, because I remember, this was way back last February that we talked about it.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Did you happen to see anything in your scrapbook about that?

**ROSENGARTEN:** No, but I'll double-check. I wasn't sure what the period was. It was just after the war or in the fifties. But I've got several of those scrapbooks to go that I haven't looked through yet.

**MRS. DENNIS:** It seems to me that it was just after the war.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That's what I was guessing. That's why it came up now.

**DENNIS:** It was.

**MRS. DENNIS:** You'll think of it. Don't fret.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Yes. I'm gonna double check it too because I'll probably be able to get some more details from my notebook.

**DENNIS:** Alright.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How did you come to know Gedney Howe, Sr.? That was another name that came up in connection with several newspaper articles.

**DENNIS:** Gedney was circuit solicitor. Of course he was the prosecutor and I was the defending attorney in a lot of cases. I knew him that way, but then I also knew him very well personally. He wasn't a hunter but as his boys were growing up he came and hunted some. But we visited each other at the beach, and we were just close personal friends.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you remember any cases when you opposed his son in court?

**DENNIS:** I opposed his son?

**ROSENGARTEN:** I think the particular case that I read about involved a man named Luther Dingle. Versus the family of a man who was killed by an automobile. John Buster Cooper.

**DENNIS:** That's one problem I have you know. My memory's not like it used to be.

**ROSENGARTEN:** These are little scraps that I picked up from the newspapers. I've got an aid here. But I had met. I've met Gedney Howe, Jr. I've never met Sr. And he's recently bought a house in McClellanville, so that's interesting.

**DENNIS:** Yes. I did read about that. He's very much like his father. He's a very brilliant fellow. A well-prepared lawyer and a good public-spirited person. His father was the same way. He and I were closely connected politically. We had a campaign, he was running for solicitor, I was running for reelection to the Senate, and the Charleston political machine was not behind Gedney. They were supporting a civil lawyer who shouldn't have been running. I'll tell you the name in just a minute here. Bailey. Frank Bailey.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Bailey. He ran against Howe.

**DENNIS:** Yes. He was a splendid lawyer and a tremendous practice, but it was mostly civil. And it was the Solicitors' office. Prosecution of criminals. So Gedney had a lot of fun out of him. Gedney was a great debater.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Why was the Democratic Party supporting Bailey?

**DENNIS:** Well, they ran in a Democratic primary that's were the opposition was. The Republican Party at that time really had their candidates in the general election. If you got nominated in a primary, you were, that was tantamount to an election.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But why did the committee support Bailey over Howe?

**DENNIS:** Personal connection among lawyers.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It's what I think they call in Alabama friendship business. Some of the legal issues that were coming up at the time, again this is right after the Second World War, 1947. You proposed a longer minimum prison term before parole. At that point, life-termers were eligible for parole in seven years and you proposed to extend it to ten years. Did you succeed in this effort?

**DENNIS:** I think I did. My best recollection for the moment is that I did.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This of course has become a hot political issue again. Another case that you were involved in. You represented the plaintiffs in a suit against Santee-Cooper for the return of the plantation, Wampee. Do you recall this case?

**DENNIS:** Very vividly. That was a case which caused me some problems because I had some friends who had asked me about representing them in connection the loss of their lands to Santee-Cooper. Told them about the Cain family who owned Wampee before Santee-Cooper got it. What part of it did you mention?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Excuse me?

**DENNIS:** The case you mentioned was what?

**ROSENGARTEN:** That the plaintiffs, I guess, I think they were the descendants of the owner of Wampee, were suing Santee-Cooper for return of the plantation.

**DENNIS:** That was the case I was talking about. Case went to the Supreme Court. And we, Gedney Howe .... I was associated with this warrant .... in Darlington in the case. It started off with Charleston attorney Bailey representing the Cains. They hired me to help them get Wampee back, the portion that was not used by Santee-Cooper for what they considered to be Authority purposes. They wanted to get back the old Wampee house and some of the land. I just started, I was just out of law school then. That was in the forties, wasn't it? Early forties.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It was forty-seven I think. Well, sometime around then.

**DENNIS:** I suggested that they get Mr. Gibbes. Natalie!

**ROSENGARTEN:** I think I hear her still on the phone. It was in 1948.

**DENNIS:** Do you have the names of the lawyers involved?

**ROSENGARTEN:** No. I didn't write that. It might have been in the article, and I can go back to it. I have here that Wampee had been condemned for the hydro-project and this is like the headline, "Now used for entertainment of South Carolina officials and guests," and that you represented the plaintiffs, the children of Mrs. Elizabeth Ravenel Cain, C A I N. That was all I had written down. So Wampee was kind of a reception hall, an entertainment...

**DENNIS:** That's right. That was the point of the case, that wasn't one of the purposes for which they could condemn land, and it should go back to the Cains under the recapture clause. .... back like it used to.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you recall whether they were successful?

**DENNIS:** Won in the lower court, and won in the Supreme Court, but what happened was the Charleston lawyer associated with me died during the appeal so I had to get somebody else. I got Mr. Samuel Want from...

**ROSENGARTEN:** Samuel?

**DENNIS:** Want, from Darlington. He was a real reputable, successful lawyer. I got him to substitute for...

**ROSENGARTEN:** The fellow who had died. I know a Billy Want. I wonder if that's his son? He's a lawyer.

**DENNIS:** This was a law partner of Bailey's. I'll get that for you in just a second.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That's of no importance to me. Another thing that really, kind of, I was curious about, again in the post-war period, there was an article about rolling stores. These out-of-state competitors of local people, and an effort to license these out-of-state people. Do you recall that effort in the legislature?

**DENNIS:** Yes I do. I was very much involved in it. We had some rolling stores in the county that the merchants objected to very vehemently. I think we eliminated them really.

**ROSENGARTEN:** These are like truck, people who come in trucks and sell from the back of their trucks?

**DENNIS:** That's right. They competed with the local merchants, particularly out in the countryside. Only thing we could require them to do was to make the law stricter for them to license and operate.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What kinds of economic adjustments had to be made in the years following the war? For example, the War Assets Administration disposal center, the post-war unemployment, when the soldiers returned, and at the beginning of kind of black assertiveness, when the black veterans returned from the war. Do you recall any of these as issues that you dealt with at the legislature?

**DENNIS:** What was the last one about the blacks?

*[SIDE ONE ENDS, SIDE TWO BEGINS]*

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, now we can fill in some of the blanks about the names. Tell me again the name of Frank Bailey's partner who was involved with you in that case.

**DENNIS:** John I. Cosgrove.

**ROSENGARTEN:** He's the one who passed away during the appeal?

**DENNIS:** Passed away during the early stages of the case, and I got the family to employ Mr. Samuel Want in his place. We won the case in the civil court, went to the Supreme Court and we got the verdict of the Supreme Court.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That's the state Supreme Court?

**DENNIS:** Yes. What it actually was, the court agreed with the Cains that they were entitled to more money. That's what they wanted; either their place back or the value of the part taken that wasn't paid for. Settled it for, the amount's not important, it was thirty thousand dollars, what the settlement was for. Let them keep the place.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So Santee-Cooper retained, they kept Wampee?

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And the Cains were compensated?

**DENNIS:** Right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Okay. The other incident that we had started to talk about was when Baruch called you concerning a turkey season. Would you recount that story?

**DENNIS:** He called me at my house for Mr. Harry Guggenheim, who owned Cainhoy plantation. They changed the turkey season so that they had just a gobbling season in the spring. Didn't have a fall season, and Mr. Guggenheim used to come down and bring, have his guests come down during the Christmas, so it just knocked him out the box. I agreed with Mr. Guggenheim that we would, Mr. Baruch we'd see what we could do about it. Talked to the Wildlife people, and then we prepared legislation... All right son. [aside to Dennis' son] ...to give the landowners an option, he could annually take an option between the regular season in the fall, or forego that and just take the spring season. Well, Guggenheim, people wanted the fall season, to take them through Christmas. The popular thing was the spring season when the gobblers were gobbling, so it worked out that way, having the two seasons. Ever since then it's been that way. It's the law now. Every year Mr., Charleston lawyer, Mr. Richardson, has to fix the papers for the plantation to request their fall season rather than the spring season.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What was the minimum acreage that you needed?

**DENNIS:** I believe they used a thousand acres.

**ROSENGARTEN:** E.J. said ten thousand, is that...

**DENNIS:** Ten thousand?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Is it ten thousand?

**DENNIS:** It would have to be ten thousand. A thousand acres is, ten thousand is right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So the, Cainhoy was a plantation of that size?

**DENNIS:** About eighteen thousand.

**ROSENGARTEN:** E.J. called him Mr. Harry; was that his name?

**DENNIS:** Harry Guggenheim.

**ROSENGARTEN:** There were two other stories in connection with Guggenheim that we were just talking about. The one involving Bill Moyers, the other one involving the power company. Do you want to tell those for the tape?

**DENNIS:** The power company had to get from Mt. Holly really, and to go on to Mt. Pleasant. Santee-Cooper had its line down almost to Cainhoy, but the big Guggenheim acreage was just west of the Cainhoy river where .... would have to get to, to cross to get to Isle of Palms. The Guggenheim position was that his place was primarily for wild turkeys, and he considered the power company transmission lines ruined his, just about destroyed his project. So he, in getting the lawyers lined up, Mr. Guggenheim had to, Smythe's firm in Charleston, and other lawyers in... Let me get straight on this now. This is where we had a real contest in who we were going to represent.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That was Henry Smythe?

**DENNIS:** Henry Smythe.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was it Smythe who suggested to Mr. Guggenheim that you would be the right person to get in Berkeley County?

**DENNIS:** Yes. But, I was representing the power company at the time, on a retainer. So I had to go to represent the power company in the case. We only had one hearing, and we reached a compromise. The Guggenheim estate agreed to a line to come through, but to move it from where they had engineered it, so it wouldn't go directly through his best timberland and his turkey land. So, the compromise that we worked out was to bring it out as near the highway as possible. That's what was done. It was brought out in sight of the highway, and was near the right of way of the highway.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I think the remark that E.J. was so tickled by was when Guggenheim realized he couldn't hire you because you were representing the power company. What was it that he said? If we can't get him, let's buy the power company?

**DENNIS:** Yes. Guggenheim told Smythe, they say Dennis is the man for me to have in that area, because he represents the county in the legislature and the Senate. Said, hire Dennis. Smythe told him that they couldn't hire me because I was hired by the other side. He said, well, buy the other side, buy the power company. It was worked out in the compromise.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This was, people like Guggenheim and Baruch both, am I correct, were basically Northern millionaires and multi-millionaires who had come down and bought large areas of the South.

**DENNIS:** That's right. Mr. Baruch had large activities in Williamsburg County.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was he also a turkey hunter? Was this legislation that you all had passed was of interest to him?

**DENNIS:** Yes, that's right. Mostly quail, but then some turkey hunting, too.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Now what about this incident with Bill Moyers? I didn't quite catch all of that.

**DENNIS:** Bill Moyers was pretty well entrusted with handling preparation for Mr. Baruch's will and setting up his estate. Philosophies of the two men were quite different. Mr. Guggenheim was what you would have called at that time a real conservative. Bill Moyers was a liberal. In the conversation at the luncheon at Cainhoy plantation there weren't but four of us at the table, Mr. Baruch, and Bill Moyers, and a lady who was a secretary, and myself. The first time I ever used a finger bowl. They didn't think I knew what it was, but I did. I'd been told we'd have one, too. So I think they looked for me to try to wash my hands or something, I don't know what. I could see the lady looking at me very closely when I put my fingers in there and then took the napkin to wipe them off. But getting to what was the really interesting part of it was the dialogue between Mr. Guggenheim and Bill Moyers. Mr. Guggenheim was at the head of the table, Bill Moyers was on his right, I was on his left, and the lady was at the other end of the small table, in the big plantation house. What were we to decide at that meeting, did I tell you?

**ROSENGARTEN:** No, you didn't say anything about the business of the meeting. You just said that Moyers had gotten too liberal.

**DENNIS:** That's right. That's what happened. The outstanding feature of it was Mr. Guggenheim lost his patience at that meeting with Bill Moyers, and told me afterwards he was going to make a change, that Bill was too liberal for him. It wasn't long after that I heard he had made a change. But there was an interesting aspect too, in connection with that situation, because I went to Washington to meet Bill Moyers to talk about Mr. Guggenheim's situation, and Santee-Cooper's situation. Santee-Cooper had the right of way for the line, the power line. We were at the hotel in Washington and I had an opportunity in a private room to answer questions and discuss fully the Guggenheim private situation, and the public problems he was going to have with the communications situation. I think probably we laid the groundwork there for the settlement. The settlement involved a considerable reduction in the amount of money. I didn't make a lot of money out of it. If it had gone to court, I'd have made a lot more. But it settled a very volatile issue. I was reconciled with Mr. Guggenheim, and did a lot of hunting on his property afterwards, so I had some indirect benefits.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What was your impression of Moyers?

**DENNIS:** I liked him very much. He was very capable, but he just had a different philosophy of government than we have down here.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In what way?

**DENNIS:** Private rights were not nearly as important as people represented them to be. The important thing was progress for the benefit of all people. Private rights were incidental.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How would you describe yourself in this period? As a conservative or a liberal?

**DENNIS:** I was a conservative, but not an ultra-conservative. I recognized that conservatism in many instances was going to have to give ground to liberalism, which was the trend of the country at the time, from the standpoint of the people elected President and the high offices.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It strikes me that not only was it a trend of the time, but several of the things that you were trying to accomplish in the state of South Carolina, in terms of local improvements, public services, this kind of thing, those also were kind of on the liberal agenda. They were...

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** ...increased government role in people's daily lives.

**DENNIS:** That's right. There was some inconsistency involved when I was confronted with situations involving intra-state, as it was in state and local.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The one other little tale that I just wanted to get on the tape, and then I'll splice it together with what we were talking about with Mr. Howe. What Mrs. Dennis was saying about his frequent, the frequent times she served dinner to him here? Or I guess that was at Stony Landing, at that point.

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Would you just describe a little bit about what brought him to Moncks Corner and who he brought to dinner, et cetera.

**DENNIS:** He traveled in his own automobile, and he generally had some other lawyer riding with him. Somebody from his firm, or an associate from another firm. The entertainment for the group on those occasions was furnished by the clerk-stenographer, who used to be a big joke-teller. Jokes that related to court cases, some of them true stories of what happened in court. What I'm saying is that he did a lot of the talking. But Gedney was a great conversationalist. Like Gedney Jr. is.

**ROSENGARTEN:** He would, Mr. Howe would be coming to Moncks Corner as a solicitor? This was on his route or something?

**DENNIS:** As a solicitor, coming to court mostly, and then coming to prepare for court. He was a state attorney, to handle cases for the state in the Berkeley county court of general session. He'd come up before court to see witnesses and prepare the cases for the state. He and I were associated in many cases together for the state. I rode with him to talk to witnesses. Spent considerable time with him in preparation of the cases for the state. I had my own cases, too. We were on one side one day and maybe the next side the next day. He was real brilliant lawyer, and a smart individual, and a gentleman.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I had heard that he had many friends in the Jewish community. Rabbis and prominent Jewish thinkers.

**DENNIS:** He had what?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Many friends in the Jewish community.

**DENNIS:** Oh he did, because he was. For example, Morris Rosen and Gedney were very close friends. I hardly ever tried a case, other than a criminal case, that Gedney was involved in that Morris Rosen wasn't in. I had a real problem coming up in court, and I wanted Gedney to help me, nine times out of ten, Morris would be helping too. For example, I had the problem of a, attorney who was going to be prosecuted, disbaring was the proceeding, Bruce [Cordenami?] from Summerville, and I immediately said who we want to get would be Gedney Howe. Gedney said he'd been trying to get rid of those cases and didn't want anymore, but he wasn't going to turn me down. So I think that was probably was his last attorney disbarment proceeding that he handled. But he and Gedney, he and...

**ROSENGARTEN:** Morris.

**DENNIS:** Morris, and I went to Columbia. Stayed together in the hotel, interviewed the witnesses, presented the case to the grievance group and... A great experience for me.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You were representing the lawyer who they were...

**DENNIS:** Yes. I represented him and associated Gedney and Morris.

**ROSENGARTEN:** People describe him, Gedney Howe, Sr., as being a very philosophical person and a great thinker.

**DENNIS:** Very, very.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So, when he would come to Moncks Corner to appear in court, what would you do? Call Mrs. Dennis and tell her to set another plate, or try to give her a little warning?

**DENNIS:** On many occasions, yes. Sometimes when he'd come up for his work before court, he would come to lunch at Stony Landing. During court, probably one meal he'd come, and we'd bring the court reporter and maybe two or three of the other lawyers.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So your wife had to be kind of a short-order chef in those days?

**DENNIS:** Yes, that's right. But those were days of more ordinary cooking than the specialized cooking you have now.

They would love to come sit down to a table with rice and butter beans and potatoes, and string beans and so forth. Now fancy food's in order.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you employ a household staff at this time? Did you have someone who helped cook?

**DENNIS:** Always had a cook. We had a couple that lived in the yard, and the man would help some in the house. He'd take care of the lawn.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you recall their names?

**DENNIS:** Yes. Dawson. William Dawson and, I don't remember his wife's name.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I'll ask Mrs. Dennis, I know she'll remember. She was the cook, the wife was the cook?

**DENNIS:** Right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did Mr. Howe have the opportunity to reciprocate and entertain you in Charleston?

**DENNIS:** Yes he did. I was occasionally at his home. I didn't go to Charleston, we'd work whatever we were doing right up till lunchtime and then eat lunch and call it a day. So we ate at a restaurant mostly. Most of the time there it wouldn't be for an hour or two; it wouldn't take a half a day and a meal. We handled civil matters together. On the criminal side I was, as I said earlier, I was with him one day and against him the next day.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Now just before we took that break and talked with E.J., the question I had asked you had to do with the kinds of economic adjustments that had to be made after the war. For example, there was a War Assets Administration Disposal Center in the area that had to be converted to new uses. Some of the other contemporary issues were what to do with the returned veterans employment situation, and new assertiveness among black veterans for increased rights. Were any of these issues that you dealt with in the legislature?

**DENNIS:** In some measure, either by local action or legislative action, I would have been a party to dealing with all of them that came up for governmental consideration at the time. Specifically to pick any particular program, I wouldn't know what to refer to without reviewing the situation some.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was there a problem in this state with post-war unemployment with the demobilization of the war effort? People, men out on the streets looking for work and not finding work?

**DENNIS:** Yes, it was a problem. We were fortunate here because right after the war Santee-Cooper came along. Not only just Berkeley county, but for South Carolina, and particularly lower South Carolina, Santee-Cooper picked up a lot of the need for employment services after the war. It had big employment in clearing the woods for the lake systems.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you recall an organization called the Negro Council of Farm Women?

**DENNIS:** Farm Women? No.

**ROSENGARTEN:** There was a reference to this organization and I was curious what kind of an outfit it was. You know on a national level, these post-war years were the beginning of certain kinds of initiatives by Negro organizations to try to secure rights, which is kind of leading up to the next question I wanted to ask you. Would you tell me about what was called the Dixiecrat Revolt of 1948, when South Carolina Democrats for the first time since 1877 failed to support the national party's nominee?

**DENNIS:** Who was the nominee?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Truman. This would have been Truman's first election as President. He had been serving as President since Roosevelt's death. Do you remember being at that convention, the Dixiecrat revolt?

**DENNIS:** Yes ma'am. Can't do it like I used to, but I remember quite well the convention and some of the issues involved. We were at Philadelphia. The Truman forces were backed by the Roosevelt--Roosevelt was still alive, but he

died shortly after that didn't he?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, this was in, the Dixiecrat revolt of forty-eight would have been after his death. I know what you mean, in forty-four; we talked about that convention where he was only able to communicate by telephone. But this was four years later when Truman was running on his own, and had developed quite a reputation I think, as a, what, pro-civil rights...

**DENNIS:** Where was that convention?

**ROSENGARTEN:** I don't have that, but I'll look it up. I'll find out. You know, I think I even have a LIFE magazine article about this and I'll bring it, so we get all the details.

**DENNIS:** It was either Chicago or California.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Let me see if I can find it. Let's see.

**MRS. DENNIS:** It was in forty-eight?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was that in Philadelphia or Chicago or...

**MRS. DENNIS:** It was when you went, when Dorn... Have to do it like that when... Let's see, forty-four. E.J. was a baby. Must have been Philadelphia. That's when Strom Thurmond ran?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Right. The South Carolina delegates wanted Thurmond to run. There was this great furor against Truman, which I was, kind of... I don't, that was kind of a new...

**MRS. DENNIS:** That must have been in Chicago. I think Truman was looked on then as a very, as a liberal.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, specifically on his civil rights positions. There was a tremendous fear of him in the South. I don't have where it was, but I'm quite sure...

**MRS. DENNIS:** You went to Chicago twice, and I went with you the second time, so it must have been Chicago.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This was the, the Dixiecrat revolt involved not only trying to push Thurmond as the party's Presidential candidate, but also, there was a slew of measures proposed to try to curtail the Negro vote in, on a state level. Let's see what I have here. A variable voting age, restrictions on party membership, primary voting oath, literacy requirements, this kind of thing. These were measures that were proposed, I don't know if they passed or not. Do you recall any of this effort?

**DENNIS:** Yes I do. I'm trying to get details in my mind.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Who was governor then? Maybe that will help you. Would it have been Byrnes?

**ROSENGARTEN:** I have here, these are just the notes that I took, I think this was in that, I think it was a LIFE magazine article. Thurmond's executive secretary W.L. "Bill" Daniel of Greenwood, wrote this song, a solo vocal called "Let's send Harry back to the farm."

**DENNIS:** I went to the studio with him and joined in that song, out in Philadelphia. I wasn't too enthusiastic, to tell you the truth. I got hooked in on an invitation to go, and I got there and I had to be with the South Carolina crowd when I got there.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Olin Johnston was Governor.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You mean a recording studio? Is that, they went to a recording studio.

**DENNIS:** Yes. "Let's send Harry back to the farm." I remember that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What was it exactly in Truman's position that was so offensive that it would drive people not to

support the national party candidate?

**DENNIS:** That's a good question.

*[Interrupted by Mrs. Dennis]*

**ROSENGARTEN:** I think what I'm going to do Senator Dennis is get that article, try to find that article I read in *LIFE* magazine about this whole period and see... You know, historically speaking, this was a real turning point. In the post-war period, where blacks had served in the Second World War and were, you know, came home to the same old segregated, second-class citizenship, there was this tremendous effort to extend voting rights, and this, as you know, it was the first time that the solid South broke, and no longer routinely voted for whoever the Democratic Party would put up. So, in terms of national political history, this is, 1948, is a kind of watershed, and...

**DENNIS:** Right. Thurmond was nominated by an independent party?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Let me see, I think I just read something about that. I don't know. I think, I suspect that they just tried to, you know the South Carolina Democrats nominated Thurmond at the state's biennial convention, and then I suppose proposed his name at the national convention, and it didn't go. But for example, someone like yourself, a loyal Democrat, in that election, would you have voted, did you vote for Truman, or would you just, you know, abstain, or vote for the opposing candidate?

**DENNIS:** You know, I really don't recall, but I think I probably voted for Thurmond, because I was close to him and Jean at the time. I voted for Jean instead of him probably.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Jean was?

**DENNIS:** His wife.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Okay. Why do you think it took such a struggle to establish a state Fish and Game Commission in South Carolina?

**DENNIS:** Individual rights not to be tampered with except in most urgent circumstances, general philosophy of our people. Hard to regulate with game and fish, and it's gotten better, the Wildlife Commission's done a good job, and local offices have done a respectable job, but....

*[long pause, Dennis calls out to visitor, thanks him for coming by]*

**ROSENGARTEN:** We were just starting to talk about the state Fish and Game Commission. Were you involved in the effort to establish that?

**DENNIS:** Very much so. I was a big supporter of the chief game warden when I went to Columbia. It was Alf Richardson. He did a great job for South Carolina in wildlife conservation. When he was replaced by Webb, and then the Commission, or the Commission then Webb. Both of them I was very close to. Webb was a, I was a classmate of Webb's at Furman. Played center on the football team, and he played tackle, so we were very close friends. I thought he was a superb man for the head of Wildlife, just like Richardson was before him. I think by and large, Timmerman has been a third one. During my career in the General Assembly, Timmerman is a good one.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Timmerman?

**DENNIS:** Yes. They got him out of the Citadel.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What was Webb's first name?

**DENNIS:** James.

**ROSENGARTEN:** James Webb, okay. In what ways was the Commission a departure from the old spoils system?

**DENNIS:** The spoils system was elected officials naming the officers, and the Commission system involves a merit system. Setting up certain qualifications. One's personal and one's supposed to be scientific. It's hard to keep the personality out of the science, but it's worked pretty good.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was there a lot of resistance from the people who had benefited in the personal system against establishing the commission?

**DENNIS:** Yes, there was a good bit of opposition from the legislative, from some of the legislative fellows who were recognized as being favored by the Commission. By the chief game warden, not the Commission. In other words it was a political proposition. The old system. Supposed to be scientific with the new.

**ROSENGARTEN:** We've run past one o'clock, so I want to end for today. This has really been wonder...

*[TAPE FIVE ENDS, TAPE SIX BEGINS]*

**ROSENGARTEN:** Before I jump into the 1950s, I have, I think, four questions left from last week. First, could you tell me about Mark E. Mitchum? The Berkeley County House Member who died in 1948 at the age of 33?

**DENNIS:** He was a very efficient legislator. He had good personal habits. He was a religious individual and he was a hard worker except for the growing weaknesses due to poor health. He had had a disease when he was fifteen years old that left him permanently deterred so that he knew that he had a short expectancy. As he began to serve in the House, it began to get closer to the time of the inevitable. He really had tremendous courage, he handled his day-by-day work in a commendable manner and in his speeches he espoused a good philosophy. He just was a number one man. It broke my heart to see his health gradually fade away and he left us.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I had kind of assumed, because he died so young, that it was an accident. I hadn't thought of the possibility...

**DENNIS:** Oh, I'll tell you in a minute what he had. They thought that one of my boys may have had it. There's two kinds, one is... Natalie, what was Mark's disease?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Nephritis, a kidney.... Luke had acute nephritis, and Mark had regular....

**ROSENGARTEN:** In this period of time, in the late forties, were you involved in attracting textile industries to Berkeley County?

**DENNIS:** Very much so. We realized that farming and cattle raising were having bad times and Berkeley County needed industry to replace this agriculture which was fading fast. So, we decided to concentrate effort to get industry to come to Berkeley. The first one we got was at Jamestown. Charles Daniel got into the picture, Daniel from Greenville. He was interested in getting industry because he was going to build a plant but he also got interested in Berkeley's need for them and he was a very good industrial promoter for Berkeley County. We had some great sessions together discussing industry and we had social occasions for the Daniel people and for industrial prospects.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was he in the Senate as well?

**ROSENGARTEN:** I think I also read about the Berkshire Woolen Company leasing a site in Moncks Corner during this period. Do you remember, could you describe the opening in 1949 of the LeNuds Ferry Bridge on Highway 511? The newspaper report said that 51 hogs were cooked in 10 barbecue pits that day. It was obviously a big event.

**DENNIS:** Yes, it was. It was considered a real red-letter day for Berkeley County. The previous crossing of the Santee River was by ferry boat. This was the big step forward. I remember the day quite well. I was to speak and of course I was uptight about that.

I had a trip from Columbia with Gedney Howe and some of the other local politicians, and the Sumter representative Webber Bryan was with us.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Is this the bridge that is there now--the same bridge?

**DENNIS:** The same bridge.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How do you pronounce it?

**DENNIS:** LeNuds Ferry. It was replaced by the Santee River Bridge.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This connected Berkeley County with Georgetown County or is that Horry? What county is right across the bridge?

**DENNIS:** That was an important connection between Williamsburg and Georgetown County.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The bridge officially was called the Walter H. Andrews Memorial Bridge. Who was Andrews?

**DENNIS:** From the city of Andrews. Named after the city of Andrews.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Had you and these other senators been instrumental in bringing the bridge? Were you responsible?

**DENNIS:** Oh, there was a little episode on the dedication of it. It was a federal project. It was more important to the people of this county to connect to communities of Andrews and Georgetown with Jamestown and the low end of this county.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In 1950 you opposed legislation to create a "non-political game and fish commission" and to abolish the office of the Chief State Game Warden. What did you mean when you called the proposed law a rich man's bill?

**DENNIS:** Say it again, please.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You opposed legislation to create this fish and game commission, so-called nonpolitical. To replace or abolish the chief game warden. In your opposition you described the proposed bill as a rich man's law.

**DENNIS:** I was a strong supporter of the state game warden at the time, Mr. Richardson. I was afraid of what it was going to do, take the power away from the local authorities. Richardson was a strong believer in delegation handling the game matters, which is so important, both from the standpoint of the interest of the people and the political end of it. There was a group of us in the Senate that felt like they were destroying the old way of life in South Carolina with game and that's what it was too. The local delegations and chief game warden handled decisions on the taking of game, handling of game. They were going to put it into a commission form and the power would be divided up over the state. Those of us in the low country, where we had most of the game, were afraid of the lack of understanding on the part of the commissioners from non-game counties. We just were afraid that the handling of the game laws in South Carolina would deteriorate and we had had a period of such fine administration by Richardson, the chief game warden. I guess that since the Senators were very close to the chief game warden that they would lose a lot of voice in their local government. That was one thing too. The appointment of game wardens for example.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This was an important political plum?

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you think that that has come to pass? I mean, we do, am I right? They passed the fish and game?

**DENNIS:** My fears about it were allayed for a while. But to tell you the truth, in recent years I've seen some of the fears that I had then come true now. The handling of the matters that pertaining to wild game and fish by a commission at times has led to questionable decisions, or the lack of local input into the decisions. The big difference in the upcountry and the lowcountry, and you just can't handle the game and fish situation exactly the same in the lowcountry as you do in some counties of the upstate. So what I say about it is that the change from legislative delegation control through chief game warden to commission control with commissioners all over the state and a lack of local projects suffered in it. Does that make sense to you?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Yes. What is the commission called? Is it still called the fish and game?

**DENNIS:** Wildlife Commission.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Wildlife Commission. Because the other thing which I know that they do a lot of which is sometimes at odds with sportsmen's interest is their conservation efforts to declare a certain area basically off-limits. Of course there are also whole preserves that they run for hunting. I am thinking about the Yawkee Wildlife Reserve and the Santee Coastal Reserve and of course Cape Romaine is federal but they do now have hunting there but it is not an open--on the Santee Coastal Reserve I believe it is only for the people who donated that land to the state.

**DENNIS:** Or people who lease it from the state.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Is that where you hunted, Rembert?

**DENNIS:** Yes, the Santee Gun Club.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When it was the Gun Club, oh.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Don't they still have that though?

**DENNIS:** Yes, they still have it. I was a member of it for three or four years.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You were? I think it is Jack Leland that told me stories about the Gun Club. I guess it was his father, do you know Jack Leland from Charleston? He was a columnist.

**DENNIS:** Jack Leland? Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** He told me about the cook at the Gun Club. A black man who was a fabulous cook. Okay, this is now from my new list of questions, so let's jump into the fifties with both feet. Your uncle William H. Dennis, supervisor of Berkeley County died in January of 1951. The *Berkeley Democrat* recorded that the active pall bearers were all Dennis'. Would you describe the event for me?

**DENNIS:** Yes, we called him Uncle Bill or Uncle Willy. He was my father's brother and he lived a rich life of hunting and having fun. But he was made a good record of county supervisor. He had an unusual situation at one time. My father had two brothers and while he was serving as senator during one term, his brother Walter served in the House and his brother Willy served as county supervisor. That was a Dennis monopoly of being officers in the county at the time. They didn't get along completely together, some differences developed between daddy and Uncle Willy and Uncle Walter, but it wasn't serious. Wasn't too serious.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I was just curious to ask you what you recall about the funeral. The *Democrat* says that you were, all the active pallbearers were, Dennises, and I imagine it was quite family clan gathering.

**DENNIS:** It was a real nice affair; we were such a big family of young people at that time. Uncle Walt had fifteen children and my father had three sons, four sons. So, there were plenty of pallbearers in the family.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Had he lived to a full life? Was he an old man when he passed away?

**DENNIS:** Yes, he was an old man. Natalie, you and I weren't married then were we? You remember going to the house before the funeral the afternoon he died? He lived just across the canal. He had a store that his wife ran. He had a store behind Biggin Church that he operated for years but then when they built the new highway and it bypassed that crossing as a part of the Santee-Cooper development, he moved the store out on new 52 and he had big clientele. It was a popular place to stop for hunting material and groceries. Had a big business.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That was right here in Moncks Corner?

**DENNIS:** Just out of Moncks Corner, over the diversion canal.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So the funeral was here as well? The funeral was here in Moncks Corner?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Where was the funeral? At McBeth, Rembert? He was a colorful person.

**DENNIS:** The funeral was at McBeth. He died before he had that new store. His wife had the new store. He died a resident of the old store, right behind the Biggin Church Cemetery. It was close to the old canal to the Cooper River and the Santee Canal and then they dug a new canal across Santee-Cooper. So he was in an active location for hunters and fishermen and he was a great hunter and fisherman himself.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I imagine it was a very big funeral.

**DENNIS:** Yes, it was a very big funeral. I remember it. Do you remember going?

**MRS. DENNIS:** I can't seem to remember. I remember going to the house.

**DENNIS:** That was at... His friendship, close friendship...

**MRS. DENNIS:** McBeth? Was it McBeth?

**DENNIS:** Yes, the church society at McBeth. .... still in operation.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Um-hmm. But I don't know what the name of that church is.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Actually I think we've talked about it before, and I can look in the transcripts. I think we mentioned the Methodist Church in McBeth.

**DENNIS:** Rehobeth Church.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You said that to me not more than three months ago. [laughs] Do you remember the inauguration of James Francis Byrnes as governor? Can you describe a little about him and his background and his term in office?

**DENNIS:** Of course it was in the nature of a welcome back home. He was coming to serve as governor after he had served so brilliantly in Washington, almost up to the point of being, I'd say, being elected President. I had an unpleasant experience with that election because one of his opponents was a Berkeley County individual, Lester Bates. Mr. Bates had been to see me, and I told him I thought I could support him. When Mr. Byrnes came to see me I shocked him terribly by saying that I didn't think I could support him because I had a friend who was going to run from Berkeley County. He didn't understand it at all. A member of the legislature of South Carolina not supporting Jim Byrnes to come back to be governor. But I told him and he went back up the street to the County Health Department--Dr. Fishburne was the County Health Officer--and he was shocked and surprised and a little bit enraged that Rembert Dennis had the temerity to tell him that he didn't believe he could support him. This caused a little bit of an arm's length situation with him when he got elected governor. I was a legislator with some experience then, I had been in ten years and was beginning to be up in seniority, and as far as he was concerned, getting too big for my britches. But we got along well, that was during the time when Berkeley was trying to move forward industrially and he was a close friend of Daniel. He was down in Charleston for a big meeting we had, it was the announcement of one of the plants that was coming--Albany Felt Plant. He spoke and I spoke and I wasn't as complimentary to him as I would have been for somebody who hadn't been a little bit of a past misunderstanding. I was complimentary; I wasn't rude, of course. As senator I worked with him well in his program but I wasn't close in on his negotiations.

**ROSENGARTEN:** According to the newspaper he'd won that election with 71% of the vote.

**DENNIS:** Yes. Lester Bates didn't make much headway, though.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You supported the man, although you probably knew very well that he wasn't going to win.

**DENNIS:** Oh yes. But I had pride in my county and in a native who had advanced enough to be considered and get 30% of the votes; he did pretty well against a man with Jim Byrnes' record up to that time.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I read in this same article that Byrnes had been, besides being a friend of FDR, was Truman's secretary of state?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And we talked last time a little about South Carolina's attitude towards Truman when he ran for president and really the tremendous opposition. Was there any problem with Byrnes as a South Carolinian serving under Truman?

**DENNIS:** No, I don't think there was any real problem. Might have been a problem with Mr. Truman because Mr. Byrnes was a possible candidate for president. It would be hard for me to keep chronologically in mind various years when we had the conventions. I went to all the conventions from 19... I was elected in Senate in 1940. I think I started going to national convention in 1944, 48 and so on.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I wonder if Truman was trying to placate South Carolina by appointing Byrnes. Sort of saying, "Okay, I'll give you a voice in the government"?

**DENNIS:** Not to support Byrnes?

**ROSENGARTEN:** When Truman was nominating his cabinet, I wonder if he didn't, it was kind of a political move to try to get more support from South Carolina, since he had the experience of being so strongly opposed.

**MRS. DENNIS:** When Truman was made the vice-president, didn't Roosevelt talk about naming Byrnes...

**DENNIS:** He was made secretary of state.

**MRS. DENNIS:** No, I know. But didn't they talk about it, putting Byrnes in?

**ROSENGARTEN:** His name had been in the pot, so to speak.

**MRS. DENNIS:** To be vice-president, too. In the negotiations with Roosevelt.

**DENNIS:** Course some of them split with the national Democratic party and Byrnes. So Byrnes was provoked with them for not taking him instead of Truman.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I have to say that I am glad I am not a politician. You have to enjoy a level of conflict and jockeying for position. This is the period when the development of Bushy Park was getting underway. What was your role in the project?

**DENNIS:** Well, as chairman of the Berkeley County delegation, I had a considerable amount of responsibility in the negotiations and maneuvers and the acts to get it through. It was a difficult project because of the need for money for it and the rest of the state mostly not being willing to put up money out of the state treasury for a local project. So, I had a big responsibility in trying to put together the financing for it. We financed it by way of state putting up \$600,000 cash and giving authorization to bonds and that was a real interesting process there -- who was going to be responsible for the bonds. It floundered for a long time on very insecure financing plans. It was really successful financially because of the risk that Mr. Byrnes was willing, I mean Mr. Lee, Robert Lee agreed to build the project with \$600,000 cash and the rest, \$4,000,000 I think, in bonds. This little Berkeley County lawyer had the difficult responsibility of trying to get the Charleston people to support the project when it was going to be really a Berkeley County project. It was handled through the Mayor's office rather than the county administration. The authority was set up by, the Bushy Park Authority, was set up by the legislature with members on the authority from Berkeley and members from Charleston. They had advisory committees with legislative groups involved. My responsibility - it being a wonderful opportunity for development which would benefit Berkeley County particularly - and how to get it financed was the big question. I gave it priority over everything else. Every week I was down in Charleston for a meeting with the authority and Mr. Lee or some of the state people in connection with the recurring problems that would come up. It was undertaken with an organization for it but no money appropriated for it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This development was basically an industrial development to bring industries in?

**DENNIS:** That's right. The delegations of the two counties got together on it. There was the Greenville senator and we

passed the necessary legislation to set the authority Board up, and then we got appointments on the board that would help the two counties. The main difficulty, of course, was getting the money for it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The authority was constructing, actually building the area, creating waterways, roadways, whatever?

**DENNIS:** There was no money appropriated by the general assembly for it. The organization, the Bushy Park Authority, was just set up. That organization, you get the money where you can, how you can. We got the state into it, to put up a small amount.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was there much opposition to the project, for either ecological or other reasons?

**DENNIS:** Yes, there was ecological opposition and monetary opposition. No optimism for it to be a successful venture. Little optimism for it being practical. A lot of pessimism, a lot of battling between the political forces of the city of Charleston and the governor's office and Mr. Lee. Mr. Lee was a controversial individual and I sat many times at a meeting and watched Mr. Lee get red in the face and stand up and say "Well, you bunch of SOBs, you want to have it your way or no way. So we can forget about it." And he would go out and go down the hall. I'd have to get up and say "Wait a minute, gentlemen" and go talk to him and get him to come back in. They went through that dozens of times. They were hard people that get along with, but Mr. Lee was one of the hardest in the world. This is way we are going to do this, we can do it. Very difficult to deal with. But he was a man who didn't have enough cash but had the equipment to do the job but finally we weathered enough stormy meetings to get a contract. And he went to work with \$600,000 cash, the rest to be bonded, or akin to paper and no real value. Went through several years, we kept meeting in Charleston till we worked it out and got to a point where the Columbia people...

*[SIDE ONE ENDS, SIDE TWO BEGINS]*

**DENNIS:** We got the support of enough of the people in the legislature to pass legislation that allowed the Budget and Control Board to loan some money to the authority. That was Mr. Lee's contract for a million dollars in hand. \$600,000 came from the state by legislative appropriation, the rest of it was to be paid in bonds and he went to work on it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Interesting to think a million dollars wouldn't go that far today.

**DENNIS:** No, it wouldn't. He had the equipment to build the dike. It wasn't a complicated project; it was an earth-moving project--to build a big dike from one end of it, the little end of it, going through Cypress Gardens. Now I couldn't tell you how many tons of dirt that dike cost. Had to have the dike, it was a lowland peninsula, and the dike was used for the construction of the project. One of the real interesting features of it was on the Charleston end of the dike. It was a flat area and a little island where the Bushy Park Authority got the interest of the German people who hoped to use a little bit of land and a lot of water. That was their way of making chemicals and so we got the chemical plants from Germany to come in on the lower end and that's where the industry started.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And then, from what your wife was saying, before it was the long uphill struggle to attract industry.

**DENNIS:** I had a responsibility as chairman of the legislative delegation to help with the proper legislature for the project and then I had the responsibility to help get the financing for it and to see that it got in operation.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you also participate in trying to attract industry?

**DENNIS:** Very much so. I made some trips with members of the Authority and state development board. Talked to various groups for possible location there. I spent a lot of time and effort in promoting the project and getting it in construction and completion and then in getting industry. I had about ten years of work there which kept me moving all the time.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did the outcome live up to your expectations?

**DENNIS:** Very much so. We have now, and we have since we first got the German people, development of industry on each end of it and some along in the middle section. What was the biggest Bushy Park project you know about?

**MRS. DENNIS:** .... the German project was, that's probably it, or was SCE&G a...

**DENNIS:** That was the next thing. South Carolina Electric and Gas decided that they could use most of the territory or a good deal of the territory for their uses and they built their steam plant there. The Williams Steam Plant, a great power plant and that brought the industries of that great company into the Bushy Park area.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Berkeley County itself did not have any development board. You can imagine back in these days, and Rembert was really the development board, too. We worked hard. The local people helped.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That was really the responsibility of the legislative delegation. To jump into this 1952 convention that we were looking at the article about, could you describe what happened in the amphitheater in Chicago during that convention?

**DENNIS:** Was that the fire?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Yes, I'm talking about the fire.

**DENNIS:** The convention was sort of stale-mated because of the fight of the young turks. Soapy Williams, senator from Michigan and another Democrat - ran for president, but never got elected. I can't remember his name.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The names are not... It's not that critical. Did you say his name was "Soapy?"

**MRS. DENNIS:** Mennen Williams, but they called him Soapy.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What was his real name?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Mennen, I think. M-E-N-N-E-N, the old aftershave, whatever they call it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And that's why they called him Soapy? [laughs]

**MRS. DENNIS:** I guess. He wore a bow-tie all the time.

**DENNIS:** What were we trying to find?

**ROSENGARTEN:** You were just beginning to describe that convention, and the various kinds of fires that you put out.

**DENNIS:** I can see the aisle now that we were sitting on, and up ahead of us was the James Roosevelt crowd that was trying to get instrumental at the time and Jimmy Byrnes and Burnet Maybank. They were all down the aisle in front of me where I was sitting. That's where the action was. Byrnes had the tie up on the organization, who was going to be the chairman, the conservatives led by Byrnes I would say, trying to get somebody nominated who would be more conservative than the Roosevelts. The real power in the convention at the opening of it was taken over by a group they called the Young Turks. That was Senator Williams, Soapy Williams. He was Governor, wasn't he? Right back at the same point, the senator who later was Vice President.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Not Barkley?

**DENNIS:** No, a Democratic leader, that Soapy was against because he was too liberal. I'm sorry I can't think of his name.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What did it mean, the 'Young Turks'?

**DENNIS:** That was a group that was going to take over the running of the convention. Control the elected offices and run the convention. Well, they elected the temporary chairman only. After he served his term the old guard got back in and that's when Rayburn was elected chairman and the old group took over the convention.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I read somewhere that it was Edgar Brown who invented that phrase, the Young Turks, is that true?

**DENNIS:** He did in South Carolina. But it was a state and local term, not a federal term. I just get completely up in the air if I can't think of a name.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Kefauver. Was it Estes Kefauver? You're not talking about Adlai Stevenson then? I know he ran two or three times. Sparkman?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Let's backtrack a little bit so we can remember where we were. The people you were trying to think of as the Young Turks were Soapy Williams, Hubert Humphrey. And was that signified as super liberal--is that what it means? These were the real liberal young politicians.

**DENNIS:** Yes, and southern people talked in terms of conservatism, they talked liberalism.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did the fire break out before or after the Rayburn group got back in?

**DENNIS:** The fire broke out before they got back in. That was Byrnes. He didn't do it really, but he said "we helped put the fire out." The fire was a few seats from where I was and I took off my coat and laid it in the seat two seats behind me, but I didn't accomplish a great deal in putting the fire out. It had the fireworks groups; the fire was right close to us.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How was it started?

**DENNIS:** Careless cigarette.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was it James Morrison that you were sitting near?

**DENNIS:** Morrison and I were sitting with each other. He was state senator at that time from Georgetown. Later he was a circuit judge.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was he a friend of yours, a political...

**DENNIS:** Very close.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So you both jumped up and sacrificed your jackets?

**DENNIS:** Yes, I didn't know he was engaged in trying to put it out at the time. But he got something burned on him.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This article that Mrs. Dennis is looking at, in their editorial section they declared that a realignment of parties was at hand and the South was overdue for a two-party system. Was this your perception at the time?

**DENNIS:** Two-party or a three-party?

**ROSENGARTEN:** They said two-party. In other words, that the Republicans would become a force in southern politics again.

**DENNIS:** That's what the battle was about, trying to keep the Democrats from splitting and the Republicans having the controlling power. That's where we were headed then. When we tried to patch up the Democratic Party differences from time to time as best we could and this was about the time that Thurmond ran.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He ran in forty-eight. That was the...

**ROSENGARTEN:** The Dixiecrat Revolt.

**MRS. DENNIS:** ...Dixiecrat Revolt was in forty-eight. This was a little after that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But I think the issue was very much the same? Wasn't it basically a civil rights issue, that the Democrats were getting too liberal on civil rights and the loss of state's rights?

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**MRS. DENNIS:** And the loss of state's rights. But I think this was mainly... At this time, this was really your civil rights,

which meant Negro rights.

**ROSENGARTEN:** *LIFE* also editorialized that the majority of southerners at this point in history recognized that white supremacy was a lost cause and they projected that the next frontier in terms of achieving rights was equal opportunity of employment. Is this pretty much of what your sense of it?

**DENNIS:** That was the feeling that was all around me and me too.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Anticipating the landmark Supreme Court ruling, *Brown vs. the Board of Ed.*, the South Carolina General Assembly debated in January of 1953 -- so that's one year before *Brown vs. the Board of Ed.* -- the Assembly debated how to respond to a desegregation decision if it were to come. I mean obviously people knew it was coming. Do you recall what options were discussed in this debate? What are the various ways the state might have responded?

**DENNIS:** I haven't got it yet. And what was the question before?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Just before the big desegregation ruling by the Supreme Court in 1954, the state obviously anticipated that it was coming. I don't know how they knew, but apparently they knew. And so there was actually a debate in the General Assembly about what to do if the Supreme Court passed on this ruling. Maybe we should jump ahead a little bit, this might be the answer, I honestly don't know. There was another article from the same year, 1953, which described your argument in the General Assembly that the whole basis for South Carolina's case for continued segregation of the races was a \$75 million program to equalize the Negro and white schools. This is what you were putting forth. I wanted to lead into other questions about the efforts that you made to finance improvements of the schools, but was this one of the kinds of strategies in the state of how to deal with the possible desegregation ruling?

**DENNIS:** Yes, it was. I would say that Gressette was really the leader of it and he had plenty of helpers, including his desk mate -- me. The idea was to eliminate from the public school system any basis for charges of... Let's put it this way, those who wanted to maintain the system as it was contended that segregation should continue and that it did not weaken the school system. The school system could be improved with segregation. But it became obvious that that was going to be impossible, and South Carolina was going to have to yield to desegregation. So it was a fight then for time to gradually do it -- not all of a sudden do it. That was what I was talking about, Gressette's stand was "we know it's coming, but let's hold long enough to get it in place without too much trouble or too many problems."

**ROSENGARTEN:** At what point do you think it became clear to people that it was an inevitable event?

**DENNIS:** When Mr. Roosevelt was re-elected. He couldn't get the South to turn over but in South Carolina it developed a movement in state government and it was inevitable. "Let's prepare for it and do and then do it with the least harm to each other and to the people." A great leader for that effort was Marion Gressette. He's branded and denounced in the public press about being a great unyielding segregationist but he saw the inevitability of the school and segregation. And he began to work just as hard, and that was a high level of work, to have a reasonable desegregation as he fought for segregation as long as he could.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He thought equal schools would help, would do it.

**DENNIS:** Separate, but equal.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What were the conditions of schools in Berkeley County, Negro and white schools, at this point?

**DENNIS:** The blacks had a right to contend that they didn't have an equal opportunity. Everywhere in South Carolina was the same situation. Time and money to do it was only... The fight was given up to maintain them separate, obviously we couldn't do that. Supreme Court decisions started coming down, so South Carolina made an all out effort to establish a reasonable, separate but equal school system and they are still working on it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What were some of the proposals? I know that some of these were actually...the initiative was made by yourself. How did you propose to finance school improvements to try to upgrade the Negro schools?

**DENNIS:** Sales tax.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was this the beginning of the sales tax in this state?

**DENNIS:** Well, it had been on several years, but when it was put on it was put on by many who felt like it could be a means of having separate, maintained segregation. But I knew there had to be a lot done to make them equal.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you attend the groundbreaking ceremonies for Berkeley's first so-called sales tax school? The Russellville High School? Do you recall that?

**DENNIS:** Yes, I can't remember who the speakers were but I was there, I know.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So, they were actually using state sales tax to finance school buildings, school construction?

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What about the kickbacks? This was a word that cropped up like a hot political potato.

**DENNIS:** It was a hot potato but it was the salvation for many of the weaker school districts financially. Senator Gressette and I were Senate leaders for the kickback program, and of course the program was very simple. In the event of a surplus of school funds at the end of a year, there would be kickbacks for counties for legitimate school purposes. Sometimes it was a dollar, sometimes two, per pupil, but it helped out considerably in the poorer districts.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Is this a program that you thought up, you initiated?

**DENNIS:** I'd say that where the thought came from was an obvious conclusion of what had to be done, but I was one of the strongest supporters, Gressette and I and others, for a realistic state program that would end the differences in opportunities as far as money was concerned for students -- one school against another.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did the Negro and white schools have separate school boards? Were they controlled separately?

**DENNIS:** They were controlled by one board of trustees, but the blacks had very little representation and that was one of the first changes made. Blacks were given places on the local school boards.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What about their budgets? Were the budgets separate or was there a school budget that was divided equally or separate budgets for black and white?

**DENNIS:** The budget for the school districts and for whatever schools that were in the districts, during all the time that I served, when this fight came to the forefront, admittedly there was some money more for schools that had more white people than for blacks. But it was a gradual process. I did establish a reputation for trying to be fair to the blacks and to provide equal opportunity for them with the whites and then the same opportunity in the same schools with as much money as possible. It was a very gradual process to end the segregation and then to have black teachers and white teachers working together, and black children and white children going to the same classroom, same school, same classroom. It was a time for change that people considered a tremendous change because some of them it wasn't any gradual proposition at all. It was almost an overnight proposition.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Of course, I didn't live here then but in McClellanville there was no real change until 1964. Ten years after *Brown vs. Board of Ed.* And at that point what they did was they made desegregation voluntary. They said any blacks who want to come to school in the white school or, I suppose, any whites that wanted to go to the black school could cross over. And a few blacks did. In 1964 a friend of mine who graduated in the class just a couple of years after that said that she remembers the day when the first black child walked in to her classroom. But it wasn't until 1974 now, twenty years after *Brown vs. Board of Ed.* that, I guess it was the federal government -- I don't know -- that finally the word came down. This is it folks, all the schools are going to be together now and they actually created one school for elementary kids, one school for high school kids.

**DENNIS:** It was a gradual process in Berkeley just like that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It was? But you know it didn't work in McClellanville because on that day all of the white students withdrew and started the academy. They started a private school.

**DENNIS:** We had a little bit of that, but not much. The Berkeley Academy in Moncks Corner was supposedly supported by whites who would not accept the absolute inevitability of desegregation. What the whites did was the white leaders tried to get the government -- and the government leaders tried to do it -- to have equality of monetary support despite the fact that a black child could go to a white school in some areas of the county. But there were so many blacks and so few whites, so the black schools continued voluntarily by permission, not by any defiance. The whites saw a trickling of blacks and then it increased. But even now, after all these years, take a school like Cainhoy. That's about 98% black. That's because it's a black-dominated residential community.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And the few whites that live there probably don't want to send their kids to that school. This is the situation in McClellanville. There's a little change now because the public schools are good enough to attract white families -- academically good enough. In 1974 that was not true. Sending your child to that school would have meant giving them an inferior education.

**DENNIS:** Like at Moncks Corner, the Berkeley High School started its desegregation by building a junior high and it was a gradual process. [Lord] Berkeley Academy came out of the disappearing of the black school, by each year a few more student bodies come to Berkeley High would an increase. It was a gradual process.

**MRS. DENNIS:** We didn't have enough room, you see, and so you had to build, and add on, whereas maybe theirs were inferior and you wouldn't want to use that one. We had to gradually take them in.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What's the balance of the population in Berkeley?

**DENNIS:** It's about seventy-thirty.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Seventy per cent white?

**DENNIS:** Yes, seventy white.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But it used to be less than that didn't it, Rembert? Because we didn't have the Goose Creek-Hanahan area. It used to be more black. But the Moncks Corner schools here, they'd have, that problem. It was probably sixty percent white, when the children first started, and forty black.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This is another issue that is of very great importance to me because it's happening right now in McClellanville. If every kid in McClellanville went to the same school, it would be seventy-five per cent black. That's the population. So you see, if it were a sixty-forty situation I think there would be less problems.

**DENNIS:** You take Cainhoy School district and it looks something like that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That's the demography. We have a very good public school now. But it's only been good, my son is very lucky because the year he started, in 1984, was the year that we moved to the new facility, got a new principal who was a very strong educator and everything started to go right. I mean he has had, he's in fifth grade right now and he has had an excellent experience. But the two years before him, not so. It was rough. We probably would have moved. People were looking for alternatives. The proportion of the population is one of the big factors in this case.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Rembert, when you became Senator, though, if I remember right, there were no buses for the blacks and you did start trying to provide buses and provide better schools for them, did you not? Rembert was a very fair senator, wherein some counties did not have as much as Berkeley.

**DENNIS:** I yielded to the inevitability as quickly as possible.

**MRS. DENNIS:** And that was way back then.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, it interested me that it was before *Brown vs. Board of Ed.* that this became an issue. Because I thought that everything happened as a result, as a response to that. What happened to your academy?

**DENNIS:** It's still operating and increased in student enrollment.

**MRS. DENNIS:** They must not have increased too much, they haven't grown too much.

**DENNIS:** They have a percentage of black as against the percentage of population, black and white, it hasn't increased a great deal.

**MRS. DENNIS:** No, she's talking about the children who go to the white private school here.

**DENNIS:** Oh, I said black, I meant to say white.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So it still remains a small school.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I would say the high school was inferior unless they have really added a mighty lot that I don't know anything about.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How do they support it financially?

**DENNIS:** Tuition.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But I don't know how the people who go, send their children, can afford it and then send them to college.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, in McClellanville the academy is not expensive and they don't support it by tuition, they can't. People can't afford to pay what it would take to support a school.

**DENNIS:** How is it supported?

**ROSENGARTEN:** They fundraise constantly. The parents, every weekend there is bake sale, a shrimp dinner or some kind of festival. The shrimp festival in McClellanville is their biggest fundraiser, they make about I think well over \$5,000.

**MRS. DENNIS:** These people do a lot of that too.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And then there are private contributions, endowments. Wealthy people who, I don't know what the terms are, I don't know how they do it, but I know that they have gotten contributions.

**DENNIS:** [Lord] Berkeley Academy school has gotten contributions like that from people like the Ware brothers who were staunch segregationists.

**ROSENGARTEN:** We are talking about a revolution. You know, it's not a small thing, and you said something about the North was more gradual. We had the same situation in the North. The community I lived in which was a post-World War II housing project.

*[TAPE SIX ENDS, TAPE SEVEN BEGINS]*

**ROSENGARTEN:** Mr. Dennis, I wanted to talk a little about the recent event that is going to be an important part of South Carolina history. Would you describe what happened here during the storm [Hurricane Hugo]?

**DENNIS:** I guess the greatest damage we had was to the trees and smaller structures - people's homes, trailers, things like that. It was a spotty proposition when the thing came through, some places were total loss and others were just damaged. It was quite an impact. Our own personal experience, we stayed here in the safety of this 1774 house and the double front doors blew open one time. The noise was terrible but fortunately we didn't get a direct hit.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What happened to the river?

**DENNIS:** Well, the river didn't come up as far as the house.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You didn't have flooding on the...

**DENNIS:** No, just right at the edge of it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Who all was here?

**DENNIS:** My wife and my son and daughter-in-law and grandson. I had one son at the gate at the highway in that house and I had one in Moncks Corner. The rest of them were out of the county. It was quite an experience. You don't think before it hits as much about it as after it hits and you see what was done and what could have been done. You really see that it could have been very much more destructive than it turned out to be. But as far as the forests are concerned, it was most destructive. The pines, hardwoods, these were ripped off and thrown away or else uprooted.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you lose a lot of timber?

**DENNIS:** You could say I lost all my timber. I haven't salvaged any of it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you have timber land other than right here on Lewisfield?

**DENNIS:** No, I had sold my other timber land across from us. I do have some timber land at a farm with my two brothers, part of the old family place and it was handled the same way.

**ROSENGARTEN:** They say that seventy-five per cent of the mature timber in the national forest is down.

**DENNIS:** Yes, that would easily apply to mine.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But you haven't been able to get any loggers in?

**DENNIS:** No, they been to look but I haven't been any actually to get any timber out. And even if they come there is very little that they can salvage.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Have you had any sense of the relief effort in Berkeley?

**DENNIS:** I haven't directly perceived any but they've been, according to what I'm reading here, doing here what they have been doing in other areas. Give them something, food relief and neighborly help. We haven't had any large government programs that have helped a great deal in this area.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I know that there has been a lot of criticism of the federal emergency agency.

**DENNIS:** Yes, I just don't know much that they have done. I haven't heard it or read about it in this particular area. I will say that the government leaders of Charleston, principally the mayor, is very active in his efforts to get all the help they could get. They got some, but there is only so far you can go with that sort of help. It's going to be a long time before the people in this area will realize life like they had it before the hurricane.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you feel that the response of the state government has been adequate?

**DENNIS:** I think they've probably gone to the adequacy of the state's capability. I think the governor did a good job in his activities and efforts to help. Nothing in so many ways that can be done, despite the efforts and willingness of people to help. Only so much you can do when you get knocked down and bowled over. Those who didn't suffer loss of their homes and I am one of them, we are very, very thankful.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How do you think this hurricane compares to Gracie or Hazel or some of the earlier ones?

**DENNIS:** This one was a giant. It was bad and so much as a degree to, this one will go down in history as one of the worst.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you remember where you were during those earlier hurricanes? Were you here?

**DENNIS:** We were in the county in different residences, but we were in the county. One of them I remember, we were up on the lake, up near Bonneau, and I kept putting off leaving and we weren't sure when it was going to hit. Finally it hit the

lake right fairly close to us and we saw and felt that one. I guess it was almost as bad as this one. Course, this one we were very, very fortunate because we were getting the reports telling us what we should do, where we should move, and it was certain for a pretty while that it was going to hit in the Charleston area, but we just took a chance. We were very fortunate that we weren't hurt any worse than we were.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It was a miracle that no one drowned in McClellanville.

**DENNIS:** It was very miraculous that they didn't have a loss of life so many more times in McClellanville, on the water and other places. I was really worried about you folks over there with your water location. Awendaw may have been hit a little bit harder than you were.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I think Awendaw could have been the worse, but from Awendaw on up to the village itself, just about everything on the waterway was blown apart and with such violence it's hard to imagine. I mean the houses are acres away from where they started. Just floated or carried away. What do you think now; a lot of people are saying now that of course right after the hurricane the earthquake happened in California. A lot of people are talking about now of getting earthquake insurance.

**DENNIS:** Well, I think the fear of it, a once in a life-time or maybe two in a life-time experiences in our area of, say, hurricanes. I don't see much change as far as insurances are concerned. I think the prices are going to be so high that very few people can underwrite it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Now, earthquake insurance is supposed to be cheap. Flood insurance is expensive, but earthquake insurance they say is not expensive.

**DENNIS:** Well, I wonder how good the benefits are though.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Which is more frightening to you? The earthquake or a hurricane?

**DENNIS:** An earthquake. I have lived through several hurricanes; that makes a difference. You fear more what you haven't seen yet in a catastrophe. I'm gratified about the courage that our people showed in this area and I'm complimentary, as I expressed my thanks, to the people in public positions as they seemed to respond with the greatest efforts. The mayor of Charleston for example, the old mayor in rural McClellanville -- I saw him on television several times, and the other public officials seem to display as much concern and effort as they could. We were hit so hard and so heavy though, it will be years and years before anybody will say that "I have fully recovered".

**ROSENGARTEN:** In McClellanville, there is kind of a political issue because the village is organized politically. It's an incorporated village that has a town government. The outlying area has no government except for the county. All the aid that comes in goes to the village, so there has been a lot of resentment in the outlying settlements which of course are mainly black people -- that they are not getting their share.

**DENNIS:** Well, that same sort of thing occurs in the surrounding areas of the large cities. Lots of people say Charleston got more attention than the surrounding areas did. That's the way it works because the city administration can pull the best strings the quickest.

**ROSENGARTEN:** As a politician what would you advise the people in the unorganized areas to do?

**DENNIS:** To strengthen as much as they can their means of joining forces, communicating and joining forces, when a threat is published. Even though there may be times when you go to a lot of trouble and expense and it doesn't hit. When it does hit it's so terrible, so all the preparation you can make for it by way of holding hands and hearts is the best thing you can do.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, I want to get back to what we were doing. We were talking about the political situation in the early 1950s and the young Turks who tried to take over the democratic convention and whatnot. Anticipating the landmark Supreme Court ruling, *Brown vs. the Board of Education* in January 1953, the South Carolina General Assembly debated how to respond to a desegregation decision. Do you recall this period and what options were discussed?

**DENNIS:** I recall the period very severely. Voluntary compliance as against resistance and fighting with them as to what

the question was. The government areas and among the people. South Carolina adopted a sort of quasi-policy. In some areas they sought compromise and they fought in, some liked the educational situation, they fought that pretty hard. And of course, thinking back, you can think of many things the government should have done to make things easier for itself and for the people, but the politics of it and personal feelings doesn't always respond properly to the inevitable change in the ways of life, changing the ways of life.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What were some of the half-way responses that this state developed during its early desegregation period?

**DENNIS:** Well, we had a special committee set up by the legislature to work on it and the cities and towns had their... Largely talking now about education. Efforts were made by the state and by the communities to either comply or get ready for compliance. The resistance was more token than anything else. Just a matter of postponing the actual impact. The state was very responsive I think financially, taking into consideration its ability to move forward with additional facilities in a brief time. We were a very poor state but I think commendable efforts were made to provide the education opportunities on a non-segregated basis as rapidly as could be done. I think for a long time, before the first move was made, there was realization among the state leaders and people in charge of the public's business that social changes had to take place and education was a big factor.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Why do you think people were so afraid of integrated education?

**DENNIS:** Experiences of the Civil War had a lot to do with it. And antipathy between the races as a result in large measure of the war, speaking of the people in the immediate southern area. On the national scale, social intermingling was not the general...

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you feel that your attitudes on school integration have changed over time?

**DENNIS:** I don't think my personal feelings about it have had a great change. I realized things that went on and I was a party to by way of not doing anything about it at the time. I knew we weren't being completely fair to every person in society on an equal basis, and particularly in education, and that there would have to be a change. I just lived like the most of them did, with the hope that we would gain the ability to desegregate as it became inevitable.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In this era, the South Carolina Senate was characterized by the writer V.O. Key as a gentlemen's club. Do you think that name was appropriate?

**DENNIS:** I think that the rule of the Senate was so designed to favor senatorial courtesy to the extent sometimes beyond the extent it should have gone maybe, but individual rights and courtesy extended one to another, and by the body itself under its rules, sometimes got lost in the shuffle. An individual who gained some legislative strength and power and who was personally a racist or a bigot had to be handled by those knew better when it came to legislation. It should be for all the people. I was glad for every occasion when we could try to show in my county, in Berkeley County we knew we were living on limited time, on the old traditions and customs and practices, there had to be a drastic change. To prepare for that change and to commence it whenever you could in a small way to let you know, let the public know that your heart was in the right place, and that things would change as soon as you were financially able to do it. I think we started the first school bus transportation in this county, in this school district and in the state. We did it on a slight level, on our, aid a group to buy a school bus, by giving them some financial help for it. And black children, children had been hauled all along, we just started gradually. I'm saying I think this county's one of the first, this county school district one of the first to transport the blacks to the schools.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes, I was going to say that too. He started way back, when nobody else had it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, this was your, a particular crusade of yours, the school bus.

**DENNIS:** It was.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Why did the nomination of Edgar Brown to the U.S. Senate provoke such an uproar in 1954, when Burnet Maybank died? And why did Thurmond oppose it?

**DENNIS:** Nomination of who?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Of Brown. When Senator Maybank, his untimely death, I guess Brown was appointed?

**DENNIS:** Brown was nominated by the Democratic Party to run. All that, meeting of the Democratic party in Columbia. Of course I'm very familiar with what happened. Matter of fact I nominated Senator Brown. It was a matter of party rules and party politics. We were told at the meeting of the state executive committee we had to have a candidate by such and such an hour, which wasn't very long. Brown wanted the nomination and he was well qualified and well experienced and qualified and there was developing in the state at that time a big fight within the Democratic Party for leadership. The Brown leadership was some of the older ones, and ones who'd been in legislative politics, state politics longer. At that time there was a first indication of split in the Democratic Party, which was a forerunner to Republican growth in the state. Republican strength. The Democratic Party was torn within, the opposition was from strong people in the party like Jim Byrnes, who'd been experienced in the national politics and wanted Burnet Maybank's successor to be somebody who'd be recognized in Washington as being a progressive, not old Democratic party. That's were the fight was.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You think that Brown, was too, sort of Old Guard, for someone like Thurmond?

**DENNIS:** Thurmond was helping in a tremendous way to start a new party. That is, a new, get rid of the power of the Democratic Party. That boils down the real issue. Whether there was going to be a second strong party in the state. Republicans were few and far between. The real fight had to be between strong Democrats.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But they didn't like the way it was done either, did they darling? They didn't like the way he was nominated, did they?

**DENNIS:** I don't know. They thought that he shouldn't have been nominated, he should have been, had an election.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes.

**DENNIS:** The party felt like, if it could legally do it, it should have a candidate. They thought they had taken a, legal approach to it. There were many good lawyers at the executive committee meeting in Columbia, who didn't make a strong legal fight on a legal point or points involved. Bob Figg was there.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Bob?

**DENNIS:** Bob Figg, Charleston. Lawyer. I guess at that time he was considered in this area one of the leading attorneys and certainly he was. He didn't make any legal fight for the party to nominate somebody or not to nominate somebody, but he joined the opposition when it, when Thurmond organized it. He strongly supported Thurmond, and used a legal angle, rather than just a political angle. He said the party should have had an election not a primary.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Would you describe a little of what Senator Brown is known for? For example his relationship to Franklin Roosevelt, his responsibility for designing the Budget and Control Board, his, you know, what his legacy is?

**DENNIS:** Senator Brown's legacy -- strong leadership for financial strengths and wisdom in state government. Chairman of the Finance Committee, member of the Budget and Control Board, a strong financial leader. He himself was financially able. Senator Brown was a very strong legislative leader in the Senate. Personally equipped, a great speaker, a wonderful personality, a hard worker. He knew how to win a battle.

**ROSENGARTEN:** A good lawyer.

**DENNIS:** Good lawyer. Excellent lawyer.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How much your senior was Senator Brown?

**DENNIS:** Very much. Let's see, when I succeeded him as Chairman of the Finance Committee, he had been in the legislature, he'd been Chairman of the Finance Committee I guess for, probably forty years. Maybe fifty years. And I had been in the General Assembly, for, how many years?

**ROSENGARTEN:** About a dozen, fifteen?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was he a contemporary of your father?

**DENNIS:** Yes he was.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This same year, when there was the struggle over Brown's nomination, you announced you were not a candidate for the state Supreme Court, and then the next year became an active candidate. Can you describe that, you know, decision-making process, why you changed your mind?

**DENNIS:** When I ran the first time, I felt like I made a good race against the odds that were against me. I guess why I ran again was prompted largely by resentment of defeat and the desire to prove I could handle it. I can honestly say I'm glad I didn't get it. When I thought I could get it the first time I ran, that wasn't my ultimate goal. I thought that would be a good stepping stone in state politics to advance further. I liked the work, I thought I could handle it all right, but there were other attractions too. Well when I got beat the second time, after the sting of the defeat had died down some, I realized that I had made a mistake and I was glad I got beat.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This was your defeat by Circuit Court Judge Joseph R. Moss? The second time?

**DENNIS:** The first time it was by [Lionel K.] Legge in Charleston. Second time by ...

**MRS. DENNIS:** I thought it was when Littlejohn...

**DENNIS:** By Littlejohn...

**MRS. DENNIS:** ...and Bubba and those ran it. I thought it was Littlejohn but I could be wrong. They would come and go, you know, they'd get in the race and then get out. And they'd keep trying. Rembert I'm a little mixed up. It was three they must have run for, to have elections for two months there.

**DENNIS:** That was, towards the end of a session, for a couple of months. I ran against, well there were a number of candidates who would get, a number of people who got votes. The leaders in it were Littlejohn and Ness. I think it was a question of which one of them I was keeping from being elected. As it turned out it was Littlejohn. Littlejohn was elected the first of the next session, and I got out of it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So you're describing your interest in the judgeship as kind of a stepping stone. What were, at this point in the early fifties, what were your political ambitions?

**DENNIS:** I wanted to be governor, and then United States Senator. I thought I'd talked about in my early days of politics when I... I thought I was a good candidate then for anything but maybe not President. But as I served I learned. The more I learned, the more I found out the less I knew. If I haven't learned yet. I would have loved to have been a United States Senator. Being a governor never did appeal to me much. I thought when I got to be Chairman of the Finance Committee, with my years of seniority, I was getting along about as good as the governor, but I had a desire to get into the national picture. I gave it up quickly when I got so busy as Senator, and Chairman of the Finance Committee.

***[SIDE ONE ENDS, SIDE TWO BEGINS]***

**ROSENGARTEN:** You say that you just kinda gave up the ambition for a national office because you got overwhelmed with work?

**DENNIS:** Yes. I, you get better educated politically, because you have experience. I not only realized that I had plenty to do in South Carolina, and probably that was my calling, but I realized it would be one heck of a job, to come from Berkeley County and get elected to the United States Senate. Hadn't been any priorities [precedents?] set like that. Although, "Cotton" Ed Smith was from not a large county.

**MRS. DENNIS:** No. But that was a long time before you, Rembert. Times change. In South Carolina is a legislative state really. You had as much power or more than the governor in South Carolina. You had plenty of...

**DENNIS:** I had plenty of duties I can tell you that.

**MRS. DENNIS:** ...plenty of clout, I guess maybe is the word.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I'm looking for, last night I read some of these notes over again, and so, a reference, here it is. This is from sixty-four now that you were dubbed "the leader of the small counties revolt." The "Berkeley Finance Wizard." This is getting a little bit ahead of what we're talking about but what was the small counties revolt? Looks like this had to do with the school buses again.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Getting money back to the little counties.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Fight over the kickbacks.

**DENNIS:** Kickbacks. Must have been it. Any extra money that the state had, that is over and beyond necessary money for a year's expenses, would be kicked back to school districts and counties. That was a big fight I took a leadership role in.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Why would that be beneficial to the small counties?

**DENNIS:** It was distributed on, had to be distributed...

**MRS. DENNIS:** That's what I was just trying to think. It was, it's distributed now per pupil. It was not that then, and the larger counties ended up getting more money. And the little counties, I don't know how they divided it. That was why the little counties were short. They weren't as wealthy. The tax base was smaller.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So this would be a kickback of revenues from, like the general fund...

**DENNIS:** From the state surplus. We did it on school children. That's the reason it was so popular with us. Had a school population.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Maybe they did it back then.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So you felt that you were handicapped in a way, in coming from a small county.

**DENNIS:** As first, but after you establish yourself on committee appointments, I mean committee positions, that's what makes the difference. I don't say I discharged my duties exactly in that manner, but I was as strong as chairman of the Finance Committee, as a Senator could want to be. Because of appropriations, and not that you really do anything wrong, but you had, if it's your favorite senator, an apple to be divided. You could show a little more friendship towards an individual senator or the cause that he espoused. My main efforts, during those days when the state had hardly more money than the state government needed, was to give it to the school children.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Mrs. Dennis, let me ask you, because I know that you were very much involved with your husband's political career, did you feel at any point that the senator's ambitions were being frustrated, or...

**MRS. DENNIS:** No, I never felt like that. My feeling was, that he did at one time maybe, think he wanted to be judge, but then he changed his mind on that. And, he had such a good position where he was, and then when it came to any other, as far as governor, he had a lot more where he was as, than being governor. This was, is a legislative state, and now that governors can stay in longer than one term, maybe they are going to get more power with appointments and, to commissions and things like that. But at that time they only stayed in four years, and so they really couldn't get a lot of power. Rembert's position, and on the Budget and Control Board, gave him more power. I never felt he was frustrated. Do you think you were darling?

**DENNIS:** No.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You don't feel that your political ambitions were blocked at any point?

**DENNIS:** Yes, I think they were blocked when I had my automobile wreck and got knocked out of the Senate. I'd rather be a very active Senator right now. As far as being governor, or even United States Senator, that long ago fell by the wayside. I was perfectly happy as being Berkeley County's senator, and being Chairman of the Finance Committee. I had my hands full, my abilities fully exercised, and I was doing as much good for people as I thought I could do as one individual.

**ROSENGARTEN:** During this period, were you also active in your law practice?

**DENNIS:** I was always, until I got where I couldn't serve in the Senate, had to slow down the law practice and get out of it. Serving as I did in the Senate, as Chairman of the Finance Committee, curtailed me in my law practice. I couldn't practice as fully as I should have. My practice was in a firm, but it damaged my law practice. Serving in positions of responsibility that I had in the legislature curtailed me in my law practice.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Because you didn't have time?

**DENNIS:** Didn't have time. Had a partnership with my brother, which many other people in South Carolina talked to me about, saying that they wouldn't do that, because there are certain handicaps. Brothers don't get along as well as other people when it comes to handling law business, I can tell you that. Senator Goldberg used to tell me about what mistake it would be to be in practice with your brother.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Which Goldberg?

**DENNIS:** Senator Goldberg. He was a sharp little lawyer and senator. What happened to Billy?

**MRS. DENNIS:** I don't know. He died.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well did that turn out to be true? Was it difficult? To be in practice with your own brother?

**DENNIS:** I don't like to be quoted directly on that (laughter from DR and MRSD). But it's difficult.

**MRS. DENNIS:** You feel like you don't carry the load. Or they feel like when you're in the legislature, and out of the office so much, I really think Markley didn't realize how much you brought in.

**DENNIS:** No, and I've heard it coming from other family members in practice together, or was in practice together. It is, basic disagreements that arise, it affects your practice.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Rembert got out on a limited basis.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Became like a part-time partner?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** At some point, I guess it was in 1960, you and your brother purchased the old People's Bank building in Moncks Corner for your offices? Can you describe that building?

**DENNIS:** Well, it was a brick building on the corner by the depot. It had been the office of my father and my brother. It became available and we bought it. Very good location for a law office.

**MRS. DENNIS:** And the bank was downstairs and you all were upstairs, then?

**DENNIS:** Yes. It's still the location.

**MRS. DENNIS:** It was still the bank.

**DENNIS:** It's not bad to be in the same building with the bank.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Is that building still extant?

**DENNIS:** My brother uses it as a law office and they don't have the bank downstairs anymore. That got out while I was there.

**ROSENGARTEN:** During this time, did you have members on your staff as a senator? Did you have a legislative allowance or a way to keep a staff?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**MRS. DENNIS:** In Columbia.

**DENNIS:** That's right. No local staff, but a full staff in Columbia, and in addition to that, senators who had committee positions, or who had seniority, or who was chairman of the Finance Committee, could also help some of the students with legislative work, and I had a number of Berkeley County students who worked in the legislative hall as pages. Pages or clerks. It paid them; it would help them some with their education.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you remember any particular staff people who, you know, were memorable either extremely good, or someone you had to get rid of, or...

**DENNIS:** I didn't make many changes in my staff. I had some that were better than others of course. As chairman of the Finance Committee, if you wanted to go to the clerk in the office, they're going to put him over in the committee. So, I had a good staff. I had one, well I'd better not pinpoint that. I still have contacts with some of my former office staff members. They still call me for a favor or two. I had one clerk who now wants to be Sergeant at Arms of the Senate. He's just going to have to get it himself if he gets it. I'm not going to try to get it for him.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did any of these people write speeches, help write speeches?

**DENNIS:** Not on my staff. I had some help in speech-writing from, occasionally from several, but primarily my help with speech preparation was Phil Gross. Phil Gross was a newspaperman that got into a clerical position at the General Assembly. He worked for the Legislature and he helped me with my speeches sometimes. He was good. I wasn't as good in delivering as he was in writing, but between the two of us we got by. I think if you find any politician who is a great speaker, you'll find on his staff somewhere a good speech writer.

**ROSENGARTEN:** One of the issues that came up in this period, mid-1950, was the right-to-work bill, proposed early in fifty-four. What was your position on this bill?

**DENNIS:** I'm trying to think exactly what it did, what it provided.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, right to work must have been, basically an anti-union, saying that you're open-shop, that you don't have to join a union to be employed. That's usually...

**DENNIS:** I was, if I recall correctly, I was a vocal supporter of it, I was...

**ROSENGARTEN:** This, I have it here. It said, this was in the *Berkeley Democrat*, you clarified your position, that you support the right-to-work principle but not, you did not want to make collective bargaining illegal, an illegal conspiracy, and the agreements unlawful. So you opposed the bill as written, although you supported it in principle.

**DENNIS:** I remember that now. It was a proposition that government should be very careful in getting into private business, by trying to regulate the employment. But on the other hand, the rights of individuals in employment to strike or be protected in their rights is important government function also. I was very active in that field of legislative consideration. You had to be very careful in those days, when there was present in society the competition for it. Unionization and... Again, race was a factor involved. There was discrimination against blacks, but no government dictation of employment of people, regardless of race, creed or color. Fair employment practices.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you think the right-to-work bill would blacks or not help blacks?

**DENNIS:** I think during my administrative years, the employment discrimination didn't reach a point in our state where a

right-to-work law was needed. I read of places where probably it would have been helpful. Was passed, and was helpful. But where blacks had the qualifications for work, and qualifications for promotion, as he or she excelled, I think this state did pretty well in its public bodies and private industry. Oh, there were cases of conflict, both in private business and in schools and other public business. But our regulatory system took care of it all right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** During these years it was Jim Byrnes who was the governor, is that correct?

**DENNIS:** Right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What was your relationship with him like?

**DENNIS:** Close on occasion, but not frequent occasions. He was, he had national experiences that kept him busy, but it still was national communications. He and I got off to a bad start. When the candidates for governor spoke in Moncks Corner, Mr. Byrnes came by my law office. I guess I was one of the few politicians in South Carolina that told him I couldn't support him because I had a local Berkeley County citizen who was running, and I was going to have to vote for him and do what I could for him. He was very much put out about it. Went to see the county health doctor, Dr. Fishburne, who was a personal friend of his, and raised the question of my telling him I couldn't support him. Dr. Fishburne told him, said, well he told you that? May as well forget about him helping you, because he's going to do what he said. I'm glad he did, he didn't keep on Mr. ...., and I knew Mr. Bates didn't have a chance, but he was from Berkeley County. Qualified for the job, and I stuck with him even though he didn't win. But that naturally chilled the relationship somewhat between Governor Byrnes and me. Oh I tried to let it never be offensive in any way, and he came down, I remember this was in Charleston, when the industrial people had a meeting. We were trying to get a French firm, and we did get them, finally. A big man in South Carolina industry at that time was from Greenville. What was his name? I'll tell you in a little bit. But he came down to speak a group in Charleston, and Mr. Byrnes was there and of course he spoke briefly, and I spoke briefly, and there wasn't any clashing or anything like that. We got along all right on the surface, but I always felt like he held against me because I wouldn't commit to him.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But surely he could understand that as the senator from Berkeley you needed to, you know, support your local candidate?

**DENNIS:** Well, he just figured that Mr. Bates had moved away from Berkeley, and he was mayor of Columbia then and how...

**ROSENGARTEN:** Bates? B-A-T-E-S?

**DENNIS:** Lester Bates, yes. I'd have no reason not to support Byrnes, with his tremendous record, and it was somewhat embarrassing, but I felt like I had a good cause in sticking with Bates, and I did.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You just mentioned him coming down in the effort to get industry here. In the very early sixties there was a lot of activity in trying to fill up the Bushy Park site, and make it prosperous. Do you remember any specific negotiations or ups and downs in that process?

**DENNIS:** Yes, it was quite a hectic time, in getting the project built. Financing it. I spent a lot of time on that, and we made an agreement with Charleston for Charleston to be a party to it. I spent much time at meetings of the Bushy Park Authority. We got .... means from Manning, Robert Lee, contractor, construction contractor. Paid him in a little bit of money and a lot of obligations. Finally paid him out though. To get industry there was quite a job. I spent a lot of time in meetings with prospective customers.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Now what kind of position did Lee hold that you needed to buy him out from?

**DENNIS:** Lee was a, he was a construction man for roads, mostly roads and bridges, so this Bushy Park project had about \$650,000 elevated road to be built through it. That's what he was to build. Man from Greenville, got into some of that. Charlie Daniel, that's who it is. Charles E. Daniel.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So Lee became kind of a stumbling block in promoting...

**DENNIS:** Lee got into a number of fistfights in Charleston. He was a very nice man really, but he didn't like the

Charleston people. He just felt like they were out to do what they could for themselves and gut him any way they could. So practically every meeting of the Bushy Park Authority erupted in a Robert Lee statement to the chairman, that if you don't want to do business with me, to hell with you, I'm not going to put up with you anymore. And he'd walk out. Everybody'd look at me, and I'd have to get up and go follow him out and talk to him, bring him back. I did that a dozen times at least. But it was successful; the project was completed and had some fantastic success in getting big industry.

**ROSENGARTEN:** There were financial problems also with Bushy Park at this time. I have a note that in sixty-three the Authority needed to liquidate its assets to satisfy its creditor, the C&S bank?

**DENNIS:** Yes. It borrowed some money from the state, too; that caused some problems. Governor Timmerman was governor, and he had to come down and look over the project and make a statement to the, statewide and show that the state wasn't being taken advantage of, that it was a project that could be successful. It wasn't long after that that it did establish itself and became successful.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you have a good relationship with Governor Timmerman?

**DENNIS:** Yes, I had a good relationship with Governor Campbell as governor because of our previous association in the legislature. He was in the Senate at one time.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Timmerman was?

**DENNIS:** I'm talking about Campbell.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Oh, Campbell. Okay.

**DENNIS:** Timmerman and I were very friendly. Did you ask me about Timmerman or...

**ROSENGARTEN:** I had asked you about Timmerman, because you said he'd come down to help with the Bushy Park...

**DENNIS:** Timmerman and I were very close as a matter of fact. I tried to get him to back a conference committee one year, had a proposal for an increase in sales tax. That was unpopular politically, but for this state it's been an absolute necessity, and it's been un-oppressive and successful. 'Course this caused a little scraping for money, but it's done much for education in this state and for other things too. But the point of it was, it was unpopular at the time. It was fought hard, and Timmerman was afraid of it, and wouldn't go along with the conference committee that I was chairman of and went down to see him about. Then he changed his mind at the last minute and tried to call us back in to tell us he'd go along with it. I decided to tell him it was too late, and didn't do it. So my relationship with Timmerman was off and on. He and I were together at times, and I was against him at times.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Why did he change his mind on the sales tax?

**DENNIS:** Somebody talked to him and showed him that it would work out alright. Get a relief on some items by exemption, and then increase the rate of the tax. We agreed to audit exemptions during the process of passing it and keeping it. Some of which were wise and used properly, and some of which were unwise, and never should have been done. But it brought South Carolina out of the depths of despair in the school situation, the public schools.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Eventually the Bushy Park Authority was conveyed to the city of Charleston, is this right, and SCE&G?

**DENNIS:** Got some industry established there first. Then the rest of the land went to the city of Charleston for its waterworks plant.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was this an effort to liquidate the debt? Of the industrial park?

**DENNIS:** The debt was liquidated by the sale.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Why do you think it took so long to kind of get, get going?

**DENNIS:** Well we had to get the industry across the water. Didn't have any local, other than the power plant, and later on a few local industries. All the first of it, to get it going really, we had to go to Germany to get the people. German plants got it started and moving, in the development of it. I went to Germany on a trip to see some of the people along with, State Development Board, and we got several German plants to locate there.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you remember what year your trip was?

**DENNIS:** Must have been in the sixties.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So what, was it that the northern industry just wasn't relocating to the South at that point?

**DENNIS:** That's right. It's attraction was water. The need for water was largely in the German plants that we'd gotten, some American plants, but... Ought to know some of the plants that we got.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I'm maybe a little bit ahead. I've gotten ahead of myself with, I need to sit down and write up this next series of questions. I will look for it and see if I can find it for next time. This is what in McClellanville we called "Hugo Brain." Has anybody been talking about that here?

**DENNIS:** What?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Hugo Brain. You know, just sort of scattered. I'll see if I can find a reference to it. It was a chemical plant, is that right?

**DENNIS:** Yes. Natalie, you and E.J., what were the Bushy Park plants?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Huh?

**DENNIS:** What were some of the Bushy....

*[TAPE SEVEN ENDS, TAPE EIGHT BEGINS]*

**ROSENGARTEN:** I wanted to ask you if, we haven't talked much about your personal life or your family life in these interviews. Do you have any memorable Thanksgivings you want to talk about?

**DENNIS:** Well holidays has to my family through the years have been get together times for as many members of the family as can get together, and as what we did for Thanksgiving was very nice.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you often have wild turkey? Or ever?

**DENNIS:** Ever since I can remember. My father always killed one for Thanksgiving and Christmas, and after he left us, I had an older brother for a short time and then it fell to my responsibility. So both in my immediate family and with my new family, we've always had wild turkey available to us. I was always looking for an opportunity to make one available to me personally.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Is that your favorite kind of hunting?

**DENNIS:** I guess all-in-all it is a favorite, but just a little bit more than others though. A day of hunting has been a big part of my recreation. Duck-hunting and dove and quail. I've hunted everything through the years.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Wild hog?

**DENNIS:** A little bit, not much of that. Out in the Cainhoy area we have some wild hogs.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I remember once I was teaching a group of school children about the real Thanksgiving menu. It was mostly wild food. It was venison, and wild turkey and oysters.

**DENNIS:** Yes. As I say, oysters have a big part in it. Oyster dressing is so much better than the regular dressing.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well back to Columbia here. In 1960 you were described in the newspaper as moving up into the magic "circle of five" in the Senate seniority lineup. This was when J.D. Parler retired. What did this mean in terms of your committee responsibilities and your political power in the state?

**DENNIS:** It was a strengthening move for the few in number that were the leaders of the Senate at the time. Each of us had plenty of work to do. So we divided among us and had power and responsibility. Keeping our colleagues working together was one of the main purposes, getting Senate work done in timely fashion.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did this mean for example that you had less time to devote to your legal practice, or you spent more time in Columbia?

**DENNIS:** It did mean spending more time in Columbia. Matter of fact, I just left my brother practicing law. I guess at times I took advantage of the situation, and I let my senatorial obligations take a higher priority. He was always glad to do it ... what he could do. We had another lawyer or two in the office at all times. There were four of us most of the time.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you feel that your position as a Senator brought business to the firm, even if you yourself weren't there?

**DENNIS:** I don't think any doubt about it. It did bring business. Some good and some not too good. But it was an interesting life, to be engaged in the political situation, and then have a law practice, which tied in very well with the politics. Interesting life.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What did you have in mind when you said some not so good?

**DENNIS:** Well, there always are those cases that give you problems, and the political situations that give you problems from time to time. I went through a period of some threats to my life, and indications of bad feelings on the part of some, always the result of a political faction. The followers head of one group and the one that headed up the other group, constantly sought to control and dominate and they did until I was elected. It appeared about twelve years after my father's death that they had complete swing, complete control of the county - business to courthouse and everything. Naturally, I come in on the scene as a youngster, was a challenge to them to try to keep me from being a threat to their domination. I had plenty of meddling to do, both in the politics and in the law practice.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were these threats to your life direct? That is, someone either wrote or called and threatened you, or is it something you sensed?

**DENNIS:** Some direct. I had one of the older residents from Macedonia community, when I went down for a political meeting when I was running for the Senate, call me to one side and tell me that he didn't want to worry me but he felt like he had heard it and I should know it, that I wasn't going to walk away from the auditorium alive that afternoon. I looked around to see who some of my potential enemies, would have nerve enough to do something and I did see one of them at the fence, which was a little distance from the auditorium. I asked one of my friends to go to the porch just to keep an eye on him so he could tell me if he was coming in a threatening manner. Just one small occasion. The old gentleman was perfectly honorable and I know he was concerned about the situation and I knew too, there were some of them that still saw pieces of old Berkeley County's factional politics, and said it was a possibility.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Now these incidents were in the early days of your political career?

**DENNIS:** I was running for the Senate, first race for the Senate.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did that kind of factionalism persist into the period where, you know, the fifties and sixties?

**DENNIS:** It lasted a good while. Matter of fact, it lasted in some measure all my political career, but I did my best to patch up differences. I think by the time I'd been in the Senate a couple of terms, factionalism had kind of just about died.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You and your desk mate, Gressette, were chief adversaries over the issue of a pension raise for South Carolina policemen? What was your position on this issue, and how did political arguments like this affect your relationship with friends and colleagues?

**DENNIS:** Had no permanent effect. We would disagree about it and during the debate, but it wouldn't be a lasting thing, the disagreements. Difference of opinion. I was very much tied in with the efforts to raise the salaries of all people in the retirement system in South Carolina. Police officers were a very important segment of it. I had the responsibility of being chairman of the special committee on retirement, three Senate members and three House members. It put me in the position of needing to take a leading part whenever the pension system or the retirement system in any fashion came up.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Why was Gressette so opposed?

**DENNIS:** Gressette probably was director of the retirement system. It wasn't any vast disagreement, any lengthy disagreement; it was just this particular feature for government employees. I suppose his brother, practically all the time was, Tatum Gressette was chairman [Director] of the retirement system. But Marion and I on this particular occasion in regard to raises for peace officers, I believe it was, his view was a little bit different from my committee's. It wasn't a vigorous disagreement, but it was a strong Senate debate. We finally worked it out all right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Its always amazing to me that, you know, politicians can get so vehement in their opposition to other politicians and yet, you know, a week later, or even two hours later, might just be able to...

**DENNIS:** If you can do that at all, you keep personalities out of it. You don't have any personal vendetta as a result of it. Just try to let it be legislative and run-of-the-mill differences can be on everything, without making it personal.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Week before last we were talking about the struggle to attract companies to Bushy Park and how long it took to finally kind of break the ice. Right at the end you mentioned DuPont and Bayer as two companies you finally succeeded in attracting. Would you describe your efforts in this regard?

**DENNIS:** DuPont sort of came in on its own after looking at this area for a number of years. I worked with representatives of the company looking at sites various places in the county a number of times. Then when the Bushy Park opportunity was made available, it was sort of attractive to them too. They sort of came in on their own then. The Bayer and the other German companies, we had to court them some. I took a trip to Germany with some of the industrial promoters. We talked to the Bayer people, looked at their plants, invited them over and they came and we entertained them and explained to them what we had to offer. Had pretty good salesmanship results.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What were you offering? Were you offering tax advantages or...

**DENNIS:** Offering reasonable cost for sites at Bushy Park and the main thing was employees, available for them. A state system that was advantageous to employer and employee. We had some excellent people with the Employment Security Commission, it was the Unemployment Compensation Commission, and changed it later to the Employment Security Commission. It was the organization that was the liaison between the labor, both employers and employees, and the state. Our policies in connection with strikes and workmen's compensation were a big, tremendous factor in the working situation at the time. What we did in the Legislature was try to have as good a workmen's compensation system as we could possibly have, and make sure that laws were carried out as intended for the benefit of employer and employee.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were these German companies bringing their own labor force or were they hiring local...

**DENNIS:** They would bring a certain number of key employees with them, but it was mostly local labor hired.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So what they were getting as an advantage was some kinds of underwriting of employee benefits by the state, like workmen's comp and...

**DENNIS:** Well, that wasn't supposed to be an advantage for the employer. A good system for any problem between employers and employees could be worked out through an arbitration plan with the state. That's what workmen's compensation was. The main effort to get the industrial people to relocate at Bushy Park and other places in the area, I want to say just a word about that. Competition was tremendous. Opportunity was there because many of the plants in the Northeast were dissatisfied with some of the things that went on. I'm not saying any local area was at fault within itself, but because the New England area had the industry, they developed a problem with differences between employer and employee. South Carolina and other southern states sort of took advantage of the dissatisfaction of everybody, by having satisfactory arrangements plus relationships between neighbors and government and employees here in this state.

Particularly with Bushy Park, and our county and the Bushy Park area. I used to get the German people to become interested because they were, they were far ahead in the country in certain types of work they were doing with, trying to think of a word that would cover the system... (mumbles)

**ROSENGARTEN:** Technological kinds of advances from the Germans? This is what we're up against today with Japan.

**DENNIS:** Yes. At that time it was an opportunity for, the use of, energy, can't get my, the words I want.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The kind of energy use that they had developed?

**DENNIS:** Well, it was .... energy, it wasn't electrical energy.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It was what kind of energy?

**DENNIS:** ....., can't think of the term to describe it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It'll probably come to you in the middle of the night.

**DENNIS:** Yes. Let me cover this just a second. Gentlemen that were particularly progressive with it. Salt was a big manufacturing product. By-product of salt was used in various chemicals, production, that's what it was.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Even today it's my impression that South Carolina being a so-called right-to-work state, a basically non-union state, is a big attraction for industry.

**DENNIS:** Yes, that's something that the legislature worked hard on, to make us an attractive state. The right-to-work law is one piece of it. Having a good workmen's compensation group to adjust differences between employer and employee. South Carolina fared well in the industrial upward movement in the fifties and sixties.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And yet today, North Carolina is really the industrial state down here.

**DENNIS:** Well, it's always been a stiff competitor for us, but we've evened up with them at times, then they get ahead, and then we get up, and they get going ahead again. It's been our biggest competitor, but then on the other hand we've outdistanced Georgia in some instances, and some of the ones lower down. South Carolina's industrial record over the last twenty years is something we can be proud of.

**ROSENGARTEN:** During our last conversation, I remember Mrs. Dennis said, kind of half-joking, that South Carolina was really a legislative state and that you were in a better situation being senator than being the governor. During this period -- this is in the early sixties -- I read that Governor Donald S. Russell challenged the Legislature's prerogative of appointment of circuit court solicitors. In this case he was supporting Frank H. Bailey, and I believe you were supporting Arthur G. Howe?

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What was at stake here? Was this a...

**DENNIS:** It was a matter of whether it was a legislative power or a gubernatorial power. One of those that got into the fight in Columbia was Governor Russell. Took the position that when the, for example when it was an appointment to the industrial commission, appointment by the governor on advice and consent of the Senate, it .... control and the governor shouldn't pick out his own person for the position. It didn't really, the fight didn't come about with, rigorous and anything else that it did with local appointments. When it came to a local county position, county officer, that didn't cause much of a problem. The delegation and the governor had to work it out. But when the governor, on a appointment that involved several counties on each side, that's when we had the differences like in the solicitor's race. For us, it just happened to be two counties. If it had been a solicitor in some of the other counties, it could have been five or six counties involved. The Berkeley delegation took the position, and the Senator certainly took the position, and the Charleston Senator agreed, that the appointment belonged to the counties to decide not to the governor. We made a recommendation and the governor said well he'd already made up his mind for somebody else. So, we just raised a little Cain, but there wasn't anything we could do about it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So was this an issue of, I guess what you'd call patronage? Or was it an issue of who was going to hold power, the local people or the governor?

**DENNIS:** It was the principle of it more than the patronage factor. The solicitor didn't do anything but practice in the criminal courts. Senator Legare and I, was the Charleston Senator at the time, took the position with Governor Russell that it was our county right to select the appointee rather than his right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you recall what the outcome was in that case?

**DENNIS:** He won. He appointed Bailey.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I have here a note that, it was a couple of months later I think, no a year later, that Bailey ruled himself out, and that Howe eventually was appointed?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was that, Russell also appointed Howe, the second time?

**DENNIS:** I believe he may have gone to Washington by then. He didn't serve very long before Maybank died [**I think he means Olin D. Johnston here**] and he got appointed.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Why would Bailey have ruled himself out, I wonder?

**DENNIS:** Bailey was more a civil law practitioner. He was in the law firm with one of the finest lawyers Charleston ever had; I'll tell you the name in a minute. It's aggravating when your memory slips you on something like that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** If it makes you feel any better I do it all the time.

**DENNIS:** I don't know what's causing it, I...

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you think Mrs. Dennis would remember? This is someone Bailey practiced with?

**DENNIS:** Yes, they were partners. Natalie. Natalie!

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes?

**DENNIS:** Come here a second please. I can't think of the distinguished lawyer who used to come up here and practice, had him down to Stony Landing, matter of fact he died. Right after having dinner with us one day he went back to Charleston. Died the next morning.

**MRS. DENNIS:** You're not talking about Gedney Howe?

**DENNIS:** No, Frank Bailey's law partner.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I tell you Rembert, I really can't think either. Don't worry about that...

**ROSENGARTEN:** I'll write it down and we'll come back to it. I'm sure we can figure that out.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He'll think on it. I tell you, we had so many people for dinner. Rembert would just bring them home. But we should have remembered that if he died later.

**DENNIS:** He was a tremendous lawyer. Didn't fool with politics, directly.

**MRS. DENNIS:** We'll think of it. Go on to something else. We'll think of that later. I'll remember it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** We can look in...

**DENNIS:** All right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What changes were proposed in the state primary system in the mid-sixties?

**DENNIS:** Well, that's when we had the black problems. Gradually the primaries were open to black candidates and black voters without so many handicaps put before them. Everybody knows that that's what was done in the South, and it was done in South Carolina. Blacks were reluctantly accepted into the political system. I don't, with reluctance on the part of some. There were also elements in the situation that were trying to push them too fast, and gain side advantages themselves. They weren't for the blacks; they were for what they thought the blacks could do to upset some of the whites that they were against. You have all that working, co-mingling.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you think these changes also reflected realignments in the party system, essentially the emergence of the two-party system in the state?

**DENNIS:** Had a lot to do with it. The blacks were accepted by the Democrats generally, before they were by the Republicans. For a long time in South Carolina that was one of their numerical advantages, of the Democrats, they had the black vote. But the Republicans learned the need for them and worked on getting them.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How did you feel when Senator Strom Thurmond bolted to the Republican Party in 1964?

**DENNIS:** I was very friendly with him and I had been friendly with him when he was a judge, when he was governor and I regretted to see the break very much but I was a Democrat. While the Democrats made some mistakes in connection with the handling of it, matter of fact I nominated Edgar Brown for the Senate, because I was sitting in the Democratic executive committee room in the Jefferson Hotel in Columbia and I was told ahead of time that a move was going to be made to succeed, or to become the candidate for the position that had just been vacated by Burnet Maybank. The question was before the committee of whether you're going to handle it by a primary election or whether you're going to let this committee name the nominee. After some considerable time of debate, discussion of the points involved, the chairman said it looked like time is going to quiet us tonight now. I looked at Brown in front of the others sitting there, and Brown nodded his head to me, wanted me to make the nomination. I thought Parler from Dorchester was going to make it, but he was back in the crowd, so I nominated him. He lasted about two days as a fine candidate, then Jim Byrnes, who was close to Strom Thurmond, got to laying the political stones for the election of Thurmond. The newspapers took it up; they said it should be settled against Brown and for Thurmond. Of course the Legislature wasn't always popular in this state. Whenever it came a time when it was an issue involving one side against the Legislature, a lot of people were against the Legislature because the newspapers played it that way. .... and other newspapers were all supporting Thurmond, who would be the candidate for the people, not for the party bigwigs. Brown, nominated in a hotel room, by a few of the political leaders of the state. It got off to a bad start and it got worse as it went. Brown didn't have a chance.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was this after Thurmond moved into the Republican Party or before?

**DENNIS:** This is when he joined the Republican Party. **[THIS CANNOT BE CORRECT, THURMOND JOINED THE GOP IN '64, THE BROWN/THURMOND FIGHT WAS IN THE FIFTIES]**

**ROSENGARTEN:** This is when he joined. Do you remember any conversations you had with him about that decision?

**DENNIS:** Oh yes. I told him I wasn't going to get into any personality disagreements with him, but I was a Democrat, been one for some, whatever number of years it was then, twenty, twenty-five, and I wasn't going to change. He said well he hoped I'd personally support him because he'd been a personal friend. I told him I would to a degree, not all the way.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So you could understand his reasons for changing parties?

**DENNIS:** He had good, sound reasons governmentally speaking. He had excellent reasons politically speaking. It was time for him to, it was an opportunity for him to leave a party that wasn't making much headway politically in the state, and become the United States Senator when it was a good, excellent chance of getting it for the other party. Because he was, he had been the Dixiecrat candidate; he wasn't a solid Democrat to start with. Democrats, some of them were glad to get rid of him. The Republicans were glad to get a new chip for the big pot.

**ROSENGARTEN:** We recently heard a rumor that Arthur Ravenel was considering moving into the Democratic party. Did you hear that?

**DENNIS:** I heard that. I read about it in the paper. I said phooey he'll never do it. He is just feeling around to see if he can be another Strom Thurmond type selectee. Arthur Ravenel, I'm not, I don't know how you stand with him. I'm not going to make any derogatory statements about him, but I'll say he's not a strong man. He's an opportunist. He had an opportunity and he's not about to drop it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** He always struck me as being kind of inconsistent. In some ways he's a big liberal, supports certain social programs and positions, on the other hand on defense and other areas he's a hawk.

**DENNIS:** Well, you put your finger right on him. He is as inconsistent as you can get. If I was, it was thirty years ago, I think I'd run against him.

**ROSENGARTEN:** For Congress?

**DENNIS:** Yes. I always wanted to run for Congress, but I never did think I had enough points to put together to get elected. But I could give Arthur Ravenel a good time, I believe. He got elected to the Senate in Charleston by picking the right place to run from. .... Republican .... him, he's not...

*[SIDE ONE ENDS, SIDE TWO BEGINS]*

**ROSENGARTEN:** It sounds like there's no love lost between you and Arthur Ravenel. You do have one thing in common I can think of. Doesn't he have a damaged child?

**DENNIS:** Yes. We had a few conversations about it. The mother of the child and Arthur divorced. I've had some conversations with the mother. Arthur Ravenel had my complete sympathies and best wishes in that situation. I can't of any other .... he did.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When was your daughter born, the one that died?

**DENNIS:** She was born...Natalie! When was Mary Kathryn born?

**MRS. DENNIS:** What?

**DENNIS:** When was Mary Kathryn born?

**MRS. DENNIS:** She was born in fifty-one.

**ROSENGARTEN:** We were talking about Arthur Ravenel, and I said there's one thing I could think of that Senator Dennis and Ravenel had in common, that they both had children with difficulties. He said that's the only thing we...

**MRS. DENNIS:** Ravenel and I were on a panel for ETV one time, on that subject.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Really?

**MRS. DENNIS:** A long time ago. I was terrible.

**DENNIS:** You did better than he did, I'll guarantee you.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I didn't have to worry about it, he talked all the time.

**ROSENGARTEN:** He spoke at the sweetgrass conference that we had two years ago. I know the man who was his environmentalist at the time, and was writing his remarks. Ravenel was so funny, he was really very good in this situation, he stood up and he said, he's holding this piece of paper right, his prepared speech, and he said, "Uh, before I read to you what I'm supposed to say, let me just tell you what I think." He spoke very well, impromptu, and then he read the prepared speech.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He was probably better impromptu.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Why do you say that?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Well, I think he's right interesting when he talks. Generally.

**DENNIS:** I .... [sounds like he says Art Ragenagel]

**MRS. DENNIS:** Rembert you just talk terrible sometimes, I didn't mean it like that. And you shouldn't make that remark.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, its true of a lot of Charleston politicians, isn't it?

**MRS. DENNIS:** I think they try to.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Or maybe that's how they grew up talking?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Maybe so.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Ravenel does seem to speak before he thinks. In some ways.

**DENNIS:** She brought up about him leaving the, talking about leaving the Democratic Party. He doesn't have any more idea of leaving than I did. That same time. He's just trying to make a play for the Republicans to make an acclaim for him.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He wanted to get on the committee.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So he was a Democrat and then became a Republican, and now he's talking about...

**DENNIS:** Coming back.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He was. You saw that in the paper. But they gave him what he wanted.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you recall, Senator, how the decision was made to close the state parks, in September 1963, to avert their integration?

**DENNIS:** I didn't have any prominent part in that. That was handled by the executive officers in the boardrooms of state ....; there was no particular legislative input into it. If I'd taken any position, it would have been against it. I wouldn't have wanted that bill I'm sure, not to close them, but to adjust and continue to operate.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What were they trying to do, buy time?

**DENNIS:** That's all. What year was it?

**ROSENGARTEN:** September sixty-three. I think they were closed about a year.

**DENNIS:** Who was governor at the time?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Okay, this one only went up to Timmerman. Could that have been Hollings? Was Hollings governor that late?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Hollings was governor and then...

**DENNIS:** ...Bill Timmerman. [*this is incorrect*]

**MRS. DENNIS:** Russ... yes, Timmerman.

**ROSENGARTEN:** No, Hollings was elected in fifty-eight. I still need to put together a whole list. I've got them up through the fifties. I'm sure that's in one of the books, Mrs. Dennis, that you loaned me. This reminded me a little when Ted and I were doing some work in Alabama. When the ruling came down that the library had to be integrated, in the, I guess it was Alex city or Dayville, I can't remember where, the local response was to remove all the chairs. You know, empty the swimming pool of water; that was the situation. What finally brought the executive branch around?

**DENNIS:** Repeat the question please?

**ROSENGARTEN:** What finally brought the executive branch, in this case, around to reopening the parks?

**DENNIS:** Politics of the time, legislator's objections to it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** At this point would you say that the legislature was more willing or able to compromise on the integration issue than the executive branch was?

**DENNIS:** Senator Gressette was my desk mate. Very, very close personal friend. He, in his characteristic fashion of fighting for what he felt was right, he slowed down compromising on anything like that. I don't criticize him for it, because a little time helped to make change a little bit better. But he never did really give up his fight as a segregationist. Because he felt that way. He just felt that, some areas and services of government, there should be segregation.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What do you think it was, say in his upbringing and your upbringing, that made the difference in terms of where you stood on this issue?

**DENNIS:** How I was brought up and how he was brought up? The blacks were very much a part of my family's life. We had a black woman that looked out for the children, stayed with us for years and years. Had black farmhands that handled the wood for the house. No misunderstanding between us and the blacks. Senator Gressette probably had some younger life experience that caused him to be pretty strongly fixed in his strong stance for segregation. He was very harshly treated finally. That black man that got on the street in St. Matthews, not long before the senator died, put me in a tackle(?) in St. Matthews near his house, he wouldn't have done that ten years before then.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was Marion Gressette older than you?

**DENNIS:** Yes, he was older than me. Marion was ten years older than me. He was in a case that went to court after my father's death. It was tried in St. Matthews, and Senator Gressette was one of the lawyers that represented my family. That's the way I first knew him, so our becoming close friends was cemented from the outset. But we didn't always agree. We didn't, the fight over officers pay was one of the few times we debated against each other.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Sometimes an age difference of ten years can make really quite a significant difference in your political outlook.

**DENNIS:** It sure can.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The difference between the people who, say came of age in the fifties and those of us, myself included, who, you know, were in high school and college in the late sixties, tremendous difference. Night and day.

**DENNIS:** Right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In 1964, the so-called kickback advocates suffered a bitter defeat when the Senate voted to pay cash for school busses. Why did you lose this fight?

**DENNIS:** Because we had been getting a lot of money for the school districts and the Legislature thought it was time to slow down on it. Thinking back, they were right. We were going a little too far with it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This was not a racial issue at all?

**DENNIS:** Not at all.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It was during this period that tremendous dissension broke out at the South Carolina Medical College and Sol Blatt called for a legislative probe? What was that all about?

**DENNIS:** What was the first part of that you said?

**ROSENGARTEN:** There was some dissension at the South Carolina Medical College.

**DENNIS:** That was, it was not a black issue. I remember being down there, when the... Get Natalie to help me with this a minute. Natalie!

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes?

**DENNIS:** Do you remember we went to Charleston at the Medical University when they had to close it down and everything because of...

**MRS. DENNIS:** Of the strike?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This is like, sixty-four.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I wonder if you didn't go down there to a medical, to a meeting because you were on the Board of Trustees there for a while?

**DENNIS:** I may have, but the question she's asking is ....

**ROSENGARTEN:** What was the dissension over? It was a period when Sol Blatt called for a legislative probe of the college. Some kind of big battle was going on.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Was that when the strike was? When the blacks were unhappy? With their jobs? That was later wasn't it?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Okay. This was sixty-five, not sixty-four, but right at the beginning -- January sixty-five.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Why would Sol Blatt have done it? He was Speaker of the House. Must have been a resolution by him. The only thing I can think is that's what they had.

**DENNIS:** They had some outside people to come. That must have been.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I can go back and look at the article.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Were they trying to unionize it?

**ROSENGARTEN:** I remember what you're talking about, that there was a big union strike, but I don't know if that was, what I have written down here is from two articles in the *Evening Post* and the *News & Courier*. Blatt calls for legislative probe of SC Medical College, Dennis says recent dissension has been resolved, no investigation is necessary. So I guess you were speaking as a Trustee at that point.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He was chairman of the Medical Affairs Committee of the Senate at that time, and I imagine was on the Board. Imagine that's what it was.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Please describe for me the debate over whether to implement a non-discriminatory admissions policy at Furman College. I know you read the letter from the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, J. Wilbert Wood, on this issue. Again, this is in early sixty-five.

**DENNIS:** I may have been on the Board there, I don't know.

**MRS. DENNIS:** At Furman, I think you probably were.

**DENNIS:** What was the issue?

**ROSENGARTEN:** What was the debate? This is the point where they were deciding whether or not to allow black candidates, for the school.

**DENNIS:** It was brought about by the federal money that was available for educational institutions.

**MRS. DENNIS:** And if they got the federal money they would have to admit blacks, was that it?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So in other words, the school would face losing a major part of its funding.

**DENNIS:** It would lose considerable funding, I'd say.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This letter that you read from the chairman of the board was addressed to the Baptist Convention. From my notes here it also had some, I would say, altruistic kind of reasoning why it was now appropriate to have a non-discriminatory policy. This was a religious school, after all.

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I have here, these are just notes, because of the threat of the loss of accreditation and funding and faculty and because, these are the reasons that Wood was giving for doing, making this move, because its right, Christian, in the best interests of Furman and Baptists and in accord with the world-wide program of missions of the college.

**DENNIS:** I didn't take a strong part in that situation.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Is it something you felt the time had come?

**DENNIS:** I thought it had come ....

**ROSENGARTEN:** You were involved, I read somewhere, in the founding of Baptist College. What was your role in that?

**DENNIS:** I was one of the local area supporters, as a Baptist and a deacon in my church. I was able to give some money, not a great deal; I gave some contributions to it. I felt that I was very much impressed with Dr. Hamrick, who was the real moving party in the establishment of the new college. I felt like the young people needed another college in this area. I supported it as strongly as I could.

**MRS. DENNIS:** The College of Charleston was not as large then, and it was not a state school then.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When my friends my age were in school there, I think they said it was just a few hundred students. Its grown ten times that large now. As a member of the so-called "Hell-Hole Ring," were you aware of jockeying for power with the "Barnwell Ring"?

**DENNIS:** There were some issues that came up that caused some jockeying, but Senator Brown and I were so close, and I was also close with the House members from Barnwell. Other than .... .... I never, I laid claim to being a successor in the Legislature to some of the power that the Barnwell Ring had when it was in full swing. But I never did, I got along with the delegation from Barnwell, both Edgar Brown and Sol Blatt, to the point where I didn't fight them.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You were kind of regarded as the designated successor to Brown.

**DENNIS:** I was. Matter of fact he took that position.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I read somewhere that you were called the finance wizard.

**DENNIS:** Always hasn't been the truth, but I still retained it. Edgar called me a financial wizard. I came up with some answers when he was having a hard time.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So who exactly made up the Hell Hole Ring?

**DENNIS:** Lester Bates...

**MRS. DENNIS:** He was the mayor of Columbia.

**DENNIS:** Who else Natalie?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Mendel.

**DENNIS:** Mendel Rivers, Congressman.

**MRS. DENNIS:** And Bob McNair.

**DENNIS:** Bob McNair.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you actually have, you know, like, meetings? I mean, was this a coalition, or just...

**DENNIS:** No, it was just an appellation.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you recall who proposed the affiliation of Charleston, Berkeley and Dorchester counties as the Trident area? I know at this point you were instrumental in founding the Charleston-Trident Chamber of Commerce.

**DENNIS:** Yes. I took a very active part in it, working with the Charleston delegation and the Dorchester delegation. I wouldn't say I was a big leader for it, but I took a very active part.

**MRS. DENNIS:** It came about because of industry, did it not Rembert?

**DENNIS:** What?

**MRS. DENNIS:** It came about because of industry. That was one of the reasons? It started out like that probably.

**DENNIS:** One of the reasons. Yes, that's right. To improve the economics and opportunities of the three counties, by joining the forces, both in better facilities, getting industry -- although we competed for some of the industry, we did get together on working for some... It helped Berkeley with the, Charleston and Dorchester helped Berkeley with the Bushy Park project. We got some money from the state. We set up a system whereby we could attract industry. At the time we constantly helped Charleston, and we helped Dorchester with getting plants and other things. The three counties worked very closely together.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was this the beginning of the concept of a Trident area in the sixties?

**DENNIS:** Yes, that was the beginning of it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It's kind of helped you overcome some of the disadvantages of being a small county.

**DENNIS:** That's right. One big advantage we gained was being part of the education plan. Technical college. We joined those two counties and set up the Trident Technical Center. That did a great deal for industry in this immediate coastal area.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Your last three children were born in the 1950s. Could you describe your family life in this period? Six kids at home?

**DENNIS:** 1950.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Mary Kathryn, Luke and Bea.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Right, Bea was born in fifty-six.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Luke in fifty-four.

**ROSENGARTEN:** He kept you busy.

**DENNIS:** I wouldn't say it was any different then than any other period. I constantly tried to be with my family as much as possible, and include them in whatever I did, as much as I could. The boys and I outdid the others a little bit with the hunting, but we took them fishing. We tried to be a family that worked together and played together and prayed together.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He took the weekends for the family.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Where were you living at that time?

**DENNIS:** We were living at Stony Landing. That was my family's plantation. When I got married, Natalie and I, with the consent of the family, took it over to restore and to live in. We had a wonderful experience. We had much of the old plantation life system there. We could look out our window on a morning, up on the hill, and see the cows, calves, horses and colts, hogs and pigs, sheep, chickens, ducks - we just had a regular jammed up farm. Had a little pond right at the foot of the hill. House was up on a hill, the road was down the hill one side, and this little pond was the other side. We had the ducks swimming in the pond. We just had a...

**MRS. DENNIS:** Good place to raise children.

**DENNIS:** A good place, but a potentially dangerous place, because of the water, deep water. We just had to establish the policy of don't go that way unless we're with you. I love to hunt and fish, and I could do a lot of hunting right there, fishing. We sort of used it to keep a big pack of dogs for the hunting club. Had a lot times that hunting club members would come there with us to butcher the deer, and divide up the meat. Duck hunting. Everything was good for the men in those days, the women were out of pocket a little bit, they didn't get to participate in much.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So Mrs. Dennis at this point you stayed at home with the children, you didn't try to commute to Columbia?

**MRS. DENNIS:** No, I went a lot. He would call, you know, like on Wednesday, can you come up? Anything particular, and I would go up. I went up as much or more than the average wife. Maybe just for one night.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What kind of household staff did you have at that point?

**MRS. DENNIS:** I had a good... No one who stayed in. We had a house on the place, but...

**DENNIS:** We had a female, had a male in the yard.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I had good help. I had someone to look after the children. A young boy who lived in that house kept the boys outside a lot. So I was...

**DENNIS:** She had an elderly black couple that lived in the yard. William Dalton and his wife. He looked out for the dogs primarily, and firewood for the house.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I had a good woman on the road who would come and sleep when I wanted to go. It made it good.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And someone to help cook and housekeep?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes, had someone to help cook, and until we got washing machines, I had someone to help wash. You know, not that many, sometimes I had two, sometimes I just had one, according to what I needed.

**DENNIS:** That place was Stony Landing. At the early days at Stony Landing we were like the southern farmer in many

respects, we had, we produced our own butter. There was a churn in the kitchen, buttermilk and butter. Had our own syrup, living high on the hog. I'd go out and kill a deer whenever I wanted to.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It sounds idyllic.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Good life.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I wanted to pull a question from down here because it, this whole description reminds me of, this is little later in the sixties, the *Columbia Record* described you as being born on "the other side of the tracks from your Hell Hole compatriots, Rivers and Bates." You were born, they said, in "aristocratic Pinopolis." What do you think about this?

**DENNIS:** I try to let that make no difference, and it didn't really. Pinopolis was just a suburb of Moncks Corner. It was a wonderful place to live. Just like you were out in the country and yet you had your connections and communications close by. When Natalie and I got married, we were extremely fortunate I think in the rest of the family agreeing for us to use Stony Landing, so we could move from that nice quiet village to a nice home on the Cooper River. So for twenty-five or thirty years we had living conditions that you dream about. I love to hunt and fish, and I had game and fish almost at my front door.

**MRS. DENNIS:** There was plenty to do.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It's a lot of work to live in the country, but you know I can see from the point of view of a journalist or someone just, you know, on the outside, you were living the life of landed gentry. I mean, you had your estate.

**DENNIS:** Very enjoyable.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But it was a lot of work. You didn't sit down and do nothing. Not like they used to, I guess. When you had plenty of slaves in the yard. Makes a big difference.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Yes, it's a lot of work.

**DENNIS:** She used to handle the folks, and we belonged to a club, four or five members, five or six members. We killed a cow together. Of course we'd butcher our own hogs, and you'd have the sausage and the pudding, and everything to take care of. It was a lot of hard work. That was the womenfolk's work.

**MRS. DENNIS:** After we got freezers to do it, you could do your own.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Otherwise you have to smoke cure it?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Well, you did, but they used to kill them and share them. Like four or five families would kill a cow or a hog, and just divide them, at the time. Somebody would kill one Saturday, and somebody would kill the next, Rembert?

**DENNIS:** Yes. You did come in on some of the smoking didn't you?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes, I smoked.

**DENNIS:** We had a smokehouse. After they were smoked we put them in a separate room upstairs in the house. I used to go look at about a dozen hams and sides and leg quarters. The Lord blessed us greatly.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you also preserve and can vegetables?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes, did a lot of that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So you all raised a big garden?

**DENNIS:** Yes we did. Take a small area of the field and plant some crops like sweet potatoes and .... potatoes and cabbage. We had plenty of vegetables and plenty of meat and plenty of everything, I'll tell you this.

**MRS. DENNIS:** It got easier to do when you could put some of the stuff in the freezer.

**DENNIS:** I don't want to say much about it, but our financial situation deteriorated with my getting out of work, and losing our home by fire, having to rebuild. We've had some financial difficulties in the last ten years. I'm not a rich man now.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So the years at Stony Landing were kind of the heyday?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Why did you decide to move to Lewisfield?

**DENNIS:** We individually owned, and not share it with other members of the family.

**MRS. DENNIS:** That was in his family's name, that house.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But you all gave it to the, is it now state, or...

**DENNIS:** No. It's now state, yes, but we didn't give it to them. They paid a small price for it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were there other members of the family who, at that point, who wanted it, or you just, you wanted your own place?

**DENNIS:** Well, I had my two brothers and one sister that were looking for homes at the same time I was looking for a home. So it was a family agreement that allowed me to use it for a home. I didn't have title. Whatever was sold, when it was sold, the money was divided, not all the family, but the boys divided and the later sales, earlier sales, all six of us divided.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But I don't think anybody wanted to live down there. None of the family really wanted to live in the country like Rembert.

**DENNIS:** It wasn't all like this either, at times. We had some repairing to do. When we first moved here we didn't have any heat except fireplaces. Didn't have any telephones, but we gradually built up.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When did you move to Stony Landing?

**DENNIS:** Let's see. She'll correct me if I'm wrong. I'd say it was forty-three. [July 3, 1947]

**ROSENGARTEN:** Oh, Okay. During the war. And then you didn't move here until seventy-one or thereabouts?

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So you lived there for the better part of thirty years.

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So really all your children were born there.

**DENNIS:** That's right. Not here, at Stony Landing. Rembert Junior was born at Pinopolis...

*[TAPE EIGHT ENDS, TAPE NINE BEGINS]*

**ROSENGARTEN:** We had gotten up to around question thirteen on this list, Senator, last time. So apropos of the, what we were just talking about, school funding, you and Marion Gressette were described as the raiding forces pushing to use reserve funds to pay teacher raises and school kickbacks. This was, I know especially the kickback issue, was one of your long-term campaigns. Did you succeed in getting this additional funding for schools?

**DENNIS:** I would say that we got the program passed each year that the money was available. Considerably more for state expenditures and then kickbacks for local governments was almost an annual affair. I recall that most of the kickbacks were about ten dollars per pupil.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was the kickback your invention? I mean you're so closely associated with it.

**DENNIS:** I guess Senator Gressette and I together. I don't remember which one was first. We were the two in the Senate that inaugurated the move every year that the money was available, and .... how much was available in those days. Sales tax was hard to accurately project, and we had some money almost every year in the mid-sixties.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The kickback was something that benefited the smaller counties, would you say?

**DENNIS:** It was distributed on a per pupil basis.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So it would benefit you according to population.

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Among the people who opposed you, what was their, what was the reason for their opposition?

**DENNIS:** They wanted to spend the money on a state-wide basis. Kickbacks were handled by the county administration. They didn't want, those who opposed it wanted the state to have it, either through the Legislature or the state Department of Education. It was a matter of not enough money and filling the gaps where the need was the greatest or where thinking was that the need was the greatest. The legislative kickbackers, as we called them, felt like their local school people knew where the money was needed better than they did in Columbia.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The revenues that were used for the kickbacks came from state taxes?

**DENNIS:** State taxes. It was available, immediately after passage of the sales tax. It was hard to accurately project exactly was going to be coming in additionally. It was a struggle for that additional money, who got into the kickback category. Wanted the additional money to be used for either building or operations. Improvements or certain facets of the school program.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do they still use this method of financing today?

**DENNIS:** No. There's no kickbacks anymore. As time went on, projections of increases were more accurate, and our kickbacks are available in an unexpected surplus or availability of funds over and beyond what was thought would be collected when the bill was set up. Now, there is a deficit more than a kickback.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So the reserve funds simply aren't there?

**DENNIS:** Right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In 1968 the *News and Courier* reported a flare-up of the old Brown-Blatt feud over the budget liaison committee. Could you describe what this feud was about, and which side you were on?

**DENNIS:** Trying to think of the key issue involved.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I have here a note that you were hoping to avert bickering. That you proposed a liaison committee - House Speaker Blatt, Lt. Governor John West, plus or minus about seven key standing committee chairmen from each chamber, to prevent a Senate-House brawl over the budget. I guess this was a compromise committee?

**DENNIS:** It was a mediating committee before the issues were taken up; sort of agree on a division of what money was expected to be available, for the various causes of government. I mean so much for education, so much for general purposes, so much for teacher's pay raise and how much for various elements of a budget. It was an effort to promote harmony in setting up objectives between the House and Senate members. In order to avert some of the fighting over the appropriation bill. I think those liaison committees accomplished a great deal. Caused the Legislature to be able to avert

many a long drawn-out fights by reaching basic agreements on .... sharing so much money, how much that was going to be per pupil. Agree on various purposes that extra money was going to be used for.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What was the issue between Brown and Blatt over this? It appears to me that Blatt was in favor and Brown was opposed, is that your memory as well?

**DENNIS:** Blatt and Brown, behind the scenes, pretty well always opposed each other. Difference between House and Senate ideas, largely. Blatt supporting House positions that were sometimes vastly different from Senate positions that Brown was the chief supporter of.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was the liaison committee different from the Budget Control Board? Those were two different things?

**DENNIS:** They were different, that's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Brown was the powerhouse on the Budget Control Board, is that not so?

**DENNIS:** He was. And the committee chairman of some of the other committees used the liaison committees to compete with him, on some of his recommendations as against to what they wanted. Legislative fights to get for various causes most of the money that was available, particularly in those days, was greater because of the passage of the sales tax. Additional revenue was coming in. Any revenue beyond projections it was suspected that Brown got advantage of information that Blatt didn't have, so he could recommendations for appropriations that the money would be available for that Blatt wouldn't know about. Wasn't a great deal to that. Information was .... to the administrative offices and constitutional office and the governors office, available to all of them.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So this was kind of Blatt's attempt to get more of an inside line.

**DENNIS:** That's what it was exactly.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were the two men personally acrimonious or this was just a political thing?

**DENNIS:** Some people say that, but I knew it got pretty rough personally at times. It was ego against ego. Both of them real smart and able. Brown was supposed to represent the Senate's viewpoint, and Blatt the majority of the House viewpoint. They both did a good job.

**ROSENGARTEN:** They were both from Barnwell weren't they?

**DENNIS:** That's right. But they didn't have a lot of trouble writing their supply bill. Where into they got into difficulty was spending the state money.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you remember when in this century the first Negro was elected to the General Assembly? Was it Herbert Fielding?

**DENNIS:** I believe it was.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you remember any incidents or what the general sense of the Senate was at that time?

**DENNIS:** Well it was the same concept that was among the people was among the various legislators. Civil War and the aftermath of it had racial differences. It was harder for some white people to realize that blacks were entitled to more privileges than they were getting. That was the basic fight. Not person against person, but race against race. The issue was racial. For example in the school system, their big problems were what you're going to give to the black schools, and what you're going to give to the white. How are you going to handle the money so that there can't be any visible discrimination? Then of course the cases in court started. Education and, legislators had a terrible time trying to please the legislators as they were divided, and the general public as the services of government were concerned. I don't see how we got through it really. The battling was terrible, suspicions were rampant, and the white man had to be careful how he conducted himself, so as not to be branded as a fellow partial to the blacks to try to get their votes. They were troublesome times, I tell you. You were under suspicion either way.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Last interview you were talking about Marion Gressette as being kind of a die-hard segregationist. Do you remember for example, say the first time Herbert Fielding walked into the chamber? Did he have a reaction? Did he say anything to you? I mean, was there, was it open, or was it everyone just kind of watched quietly?

**DENNIS:** It was quiet in the house; he took a back seat to start with, because a freshman Senator took one anyhow. It wasn't a question of black against white, what you going to do for the black. It just worked itself into a gradual situation of big battles were back in the counties when it came to electing them. When they got to Columbia, from the very outset they were treated with courtesy and consideration. It was recognized that they were going to do everything that they could for the black people but it didn't turn out to be completely one-sided like that. Black legislators, by and large, were, except for color you couldn't tell whether they were black or white. Look at their votes and their positions. They realized that they were on the spot of course. Knowing that everything they did would be suspect of just being for blacks. But I thought they came out, in time, very well indeed, and made, established their place, got good committee posts. Racial differences in legislation are hard to find. Course the courts got into it, and dictated some things, but the Legislature itself worked out most of the problems. The court had to come in only when one side or the other, white or black, insisted on making tremendous changes in the law. That is as the law relates to human services. South Carolina was a very poor state, and the leadership of the state took the position that they were going to equalize educational opportunities as rapidly as we could under the state tax income situation. A white legislator was on the spot not to be overboard for the blacks without good cause, because he'd be accused of just playing politics to get their vote.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How do you account for Herbert Fielding being elected? Had the voting laws changed? Is there some...

**DENNIS:** Well, Herbert's election, and then the precedent set other blacks elected, was a result both of change of opinion of people and the law, too. Course the federal bayonet did a lot.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The federal what?

**DENNIS:** Bayonet. The federal law.

**ROSENGARTEN:** At that point they were pushing for one man, one vote.

**DENNIS:** And the office-holders on the national level, were two kinds. Some who were genuine and some just playing politics. Aftermath of the Civil War was a long time.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I've met Herbert Fielding, because he's now on the Coastal Council. So when the sweetgrass issue came up, he was someone we went to see. It was obvious to me he was from, probably from a family that had been free a long time. He was probably from a free family even before the war, and such, what they call in the history books, the brown aristocracy, fair-skinned and very...

**DENNIS:** Economically successful in the insurance business.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Funeral. He runs a funeral home now. Do you think that, I don't know how to say this. Do you think that there was a deliberate attempt at that time to put up candidates, you know, the first of the black candidates, the men who would be the most acceptable?

**DENNIS:** Yes, that was the white idea and the blacks'. Blacks would follow the one that would have a chance of being most successful and the white exception to blacks that could contribute more to the legislative process.

**ROSENGARTEN:** As a Democrat, did you find yourself in the situation where you had to campaign or support candidates?

**DENNIS:** Yes. Being from a rural county, the vote being, registered voters being variable and, getting people to vote was a job. When the blacks got started with it, got interested in the program of elections, keeping things on a fair scale was a big battle. I think that in our area the white people recognized that when blacks in various areas got themselves qualified by education and otherwise to serve in office, they began accepting it just like they did with Herbert Fielding. Herbert Fielding was an outstanding black man. He was one of the early ones accepted. He made a bad mistake and got himself in trouble, but he has pretty well redeemed himself from that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When was that? I'm not aware of that incident.

**DENNIS:** Trying to think... He did something that got in court about. He recovered from it completely. What was it Herbert did? Might have been connected with the insurance business he had. Natalie...Natalie?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes?

**DENNIS:** What kind of problem did Herbert Fielding run into?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Taxes. Tax evasion.

**DENNIS:** That's what it was. Income tax.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Tax evasion, is that the word you use? He didn't pay his taxes. He hid it from the government.

**DENNIS:** Different points of view, he might have not evaded, he might have been charged with evasion.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But he was charged. I think he said he was guilty, I may be wrong about that. Did he serve time? Did he Rembert?

**DENNIS:** I believe he did serve a brief time. Income tax, that's what it was.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Is this the same thing that came up with Dinkins in New York?

**DENNIS:** Yes, that's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But I guess the electorate kinds of looks kindly on that since everyone tries to fool the government.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I don't believe there's any way you can fool them. They've checked us I think every three or four years for years and years haven't they, Rembert?

**ROSENGARTEN:** We're one of their favorite, people to audit too.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I don't understand it...

**ROSENGARTEN:** Because we're self-employed.

**MRS. DENNIS:** We thought it was because Rembert was a politician.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, that's probably the case.

**MRS. DENNIS:** They never have found a great, you know. They had to pay you a little something one time this last time. Not much. They didn't pay us interest on it. We had to pay them interest on .... everything.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was there, have there been any blacks running for the Berkeley County delegation? Have you been on the stump with black candidates?

**DENNIS:** Yes ma'am. We've had black candidates run for various offices for the Legislature. We've had successful candidates for the House of Representatives for several years. Right now we have one black on the delegation. Who before him?

**MRS. DENNIS:** I couldn't think of anybody, that's why I was trying to think who you were talking about. Dewitt Williams. Rembert had appointed him to the Highway Commission before that. He was the first one on the Highway Commission, am I right on that darling?

**DENNIS:** First black in the state named to the State Highway Commission.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Rembert named him from Berkeley County. Dewitt Williams. He is still in the House.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What about women? When did women break into the General Assembly? I'll bet it took us longer than it took the blacks.

**DENNIS:** Well, Mrs. Ellis from Jasper County was the first lady legislator that I knew anything about.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What was her name?

**DENNIS:** Ellis. She was elected to the Senate from Jasper County.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When would that have been?

**DENNIS:** That was before I went there.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Oh!

**DENNIS:** It was back in the twenties.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In the twenties. But then when your mother tried to campaign for your father's seat, you had said that...

**DENNIS:** That was after my father's death in 1930.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So there was a period when women were acceptable, or accepted?

**DENNIS:** Mrs. Ellis had been elected, so it had started, the effort had started. I'm trying to think now, after Mrs. Ellis, it was a good while before another one was elected.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Before another went in. The one that I'm thinking about is, Fleming, lady from Manning, from Summerton?

**DENNIS:** Yes. Thomasine.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Thomasine. ....Fleming, no, it was, whatever.

**DENNIS:** Her husband was highway patrol chief. Chief of the highway patrol.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Then they started gradually coming on in.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So are we talking about the sixties? Is this the same period?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Thomasine was probably there before, in the fifties?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So maybe women did make it before racial integration.

**DENNIS:** What?

**ROSENGARTEN:** I was just trying to figure out if women as a rule were accepted in the Legislature before the blacks were.

**DENNIS:** Yes, they were.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I know a Thomasine now whose husband I think was in the, Thomasine Harvin, Thomasine Graham

Harvin, I think her husband was Alex...

**MRS. DENNIS:** Alex. Um-hm.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Also from the Manning area.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes. Alex had been there a good while, you know, a number of years. Women started gradually coming on in after Thomasine was elected to the Senate.

**DENNIS:** And the black ones started coming in too.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes, long about the same time. Might have been a little afterwards. Everybody made it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I know Lucille Whipper somewhat, and Harriet Keyserling is also a person I've sat with on a board.

**DENNIS:** She was just elected last, it was in the last two years.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Right. Very able women.

**DENNIS:** Yes. It's much better for the Legislature and for the local delegations to have some black representation. We accepted it in Berkeley just as soon as our people would allow it. The prejudices between the races were fanned by the Civil War. Hard for us to get over.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were you surprised when, in just this past election, several black mayors were elected in cities where there was not a black majority? Such as Seattle, or the Governor of Virginia?

**DENNIS:** I'd have to say I was. I don't say I was disagreeably surprised, but I was surprised. Although the evolution has taken place, and there's going to be more and more of it. It's hard for me to see in South Carolina, where we haven't had a candidate for governor, a black candidate, to see how one could be elected governor. It's a secular thing in the country.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But it does show a different kind of voting behavior when a white majority elects a black, a major black candidate. People obviously aren't voting on racial lines.

**DENNIS:** The fire's disturbing my thinking.

**ROSENGARTEN:** She must have put some kindling underneath. It feels good. Now in the period that we're talking about, in the late sixties, which, again is the first time that I feel I was politically aware or politically involved, if you had said to me that there would come a time when people would not vote on racial grounds, they would vote for whatever, on some other grounds, I would have not have believed it.

**DENNIS:** I think the racial situation or consideration in voting is going to be present for a long time. Where it's ameliorating its settling down. During my political life, I've seen the blacks come to positions in county government and state legislative elections, in frequent numbers. In our area it's been particularly true. McClellanville has got a black representative. Isn't there a female from McClellanville who's in the House?

**ROSENGARTEN:** No, I think you mean Lucille Whipper. She's from Mt. Pleasant, but she is East Cooper. She is our representative, very strong. Very, very strong representative.

**DENNIS:** It's becoming more and more frequent, and that's as it should be. By and large, the ones that I've had experience with have done an exceptionally good job. Fielding is one of them.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Who is that?

**DENNIS:** Fielding, Herbert Fielding. In the large cities other than Charleston we've had some black representation that's done a good job, like Richland County. Spartanburg and Greenville have had some outstanding black legislative members.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The late sixties were tumultuous years in national politics. As a state senator, what repercussions did you feel from say, the Vietnam War, or, in the case we've been talking about - the civil rights movement?

**DENNIS:** I felt like, the increase in representation among the blacks, and local legislation, and then county representation, had to be had, and should be had. I didn't have any real problems with it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What about the incidents in Orangeburg in 1968? I know, for example, that the Legislature had to pass on appropriations for the National Guard. Did this become a political issue that you were aware of or involved in?

**DENNIS:** I don't think it was a tremendous political issue. When it comes to violence and use of violence in affairs and services of a government, like we had in the Orangeburg situation...

*[SIDE ONE ENDS, SIDE TWO BEGINS]*

**ROSENGARTEN:** I was running, after the end of the tape, I didn't want to miss that. Sorry to interrupt, please go on.

**DENNIS:** All right. I think the white support in South Carolina, among official South Carolina, for... In higher education, I think it's been good. Having allowed to the blacks to go to the white colleges, and the Orangeburg situation was one where they had some problems with law enforcement. But by and large in South Carolina, the blacks have been taken into the higher educational program in a commendable way I think. Medical University and the other graduate schools, as well as the colleges and universities have accepted a new era of life in which the, in which segregation is removed out of the way in a reasonable manner I think.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you think that the National Guard used undue force in Orangeburg?

**DENNIS:** They were in a very precarious situation. I don't know. I don't say they used undue force. It was just unfortunate that the terrific force they had to use was brought about. There were mistakes made on both sides I'm sure. I went to some of the meetings that those people had over there. After it was all over, some recognition of some white law enforcement officers who stood up to what they were supposed to do. It's hard for somebody on the outside to see a situation like that, a race situation. What should a white officer do when, enforcement of a court order to be carried out? Blacks saying they're not going to do it. While the whites say you're not going to do it, you have a strong conflict, and officers aren't going to be able to fix. I don't think any of the officers involved were convicted in the Orangeburg proposition. I knew some of them and didn't talk to them greatly about it. I went to a meeting in Orangeburg where they were recognized for their services, and thanked for it. .... They were being thanked for doing what was called their duty.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What exactly were the students demanding? I mean, what was the issue?

**DENNIS:** .... just like that. Time and illness has handicapped me a good bit.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I can't use that excuse, and I don't specifically remember. I know, I think some of it may have had to do with integration of certain, I don't think they were even public facilities, but was there a bowling alley involved? I want to check that, because that's something I should know for the record, and there has been a whole book written about it.

**DENNIS:** The integration of public facilities was what it was. I did remember in Orangeburg, it was in the community and not in the institutions. What precipitated it there was the presence of a large number of blacks at Orangeburg College [S.C. State College].

**ROSENGARTEN:** Blacks who were probably keeping up with, as you said, the federal bayonet.

**DENNIS:** There was a day that the governor and the state militia were really tested how far they could go and .... officers sent to Orangeburg had a terrible assignment. How far could they go to promote peace, to promote law and order when the whites and blacks were at each others throats? I think it came out exceptionally well considering all the basic elements that were at work against each other.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Have you followed the recent trial in Miami? The conviction of the officer who shot to death two young blacks last week?

**DENNIS:** I haven't read it closely, but I've paid attention to it. The difference in color still promotes the conflict, regardless of where right and wrong is. But more and more white police officers are being shown that they're going to have to be very careful, that color is not a prime consideration in their action.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I wonder though if, for example the policemen in Orangeburg, if that incident happened today, say twenty years later, twenty-one years later, whether they would have been censured instead of congratulated? I mean this, or if what happened in Miami had happened twenty years ago, you see. I think it has a lot to do with the political climate, you know, more than the facts of the case.

**DENNIS:** That's right. That political climate varies in areas, sections of the state, as well as in sections of the country. The South is no longer the only place they have the white/black issue. You have it all over the country.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It's become primarily an urban problem now. One incident I was frankly surprised to read about in the scrapbook, this same period, the period when the Orangeburg massacre occurred, there was a resolution brought before the General Assembly calling for the use of tactical nuclear weapons in Vietnam. I think the resolution was defeated, I don't think it passed, but do you remember this incident, what was going on or why people felt called upon to advise the federal government on how to prosecute the war?

**DENNIS:** There was a great concern with it of course. Just like there still is about tremendous power of the nuclear weapons and control of that use of them. As a legislator, and as a citizen, I'll say former legislator and as a citizen, I lived through a time when these great changes have had to be brought about by the advent of the nuclear weapons and the use of them in war and peace. We've been fortunate that it's been handled conservatively. It's difficult to... A difficult proposition.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You were the father of several draft-age sons at that point, weren't you?

**DENNIS:** Yes, at the point of the latter stages of the war. Not the World War...

**ROSENGARTEN:** The Vietnam War.

**DENNIS:** The Vietnam War. I had my oldest son volunteer for service in the Marines. Sent to Parris Island, and developed a, I'm trying to think of what they call the physical situation... Tough officers over there trained to do what they're trained to do, didn't recognize it as being, didn't recognize that he was really ill. They almost killed him, but they fortunately had a... At the hospital, they sent him first to the hospital on the base at Parris Island, then sent him into Beaufort. Natalie? Natalie?

**MRS. DENNIS:** It's getting cold out there.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It's supposed to go down to twenty.

**DENNIS:** What was the diagnosis of Rembert Junior's physical problem at Parris Island?

**MRS. DENNIS:** He had a heart, to begin with they said it was a heart, it wasn't a heart murmur...

**ROSENGARTEN:** An arrhythmia?

**MRS. DENNIS:** No, the salt affected him. He's just the opposite. You know how they make you take salt? He's just the opposite of, so they kept the salt from them. He is just the opposite of your average, some chemical, and did they keep it from you or did they give it to you? Whatever they did, he was just the opposite, and it made his heart swell. But I don't know what it was. Once they corrected that, it went back.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Corrected the salt intake?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes. Wasn't that it Rembert? Wasn't that was they finally decided?

**DENNIS:** .... cut out the salt pretty well.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Was that it? The enlarged heart was what they said.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Oh yes, I've heard of that.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But it was enlarged because of what he was taking, or not taking. I believe they give you salt.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I think so.

**MRS. DENNIS:** And it was too much.

**DENNIS:** Yes, salt was a part of the training program. They used it to help them with the sweating, and his accumulation didn't come out because of the salt, that the salt went into his bloodstream.

**ROSENGARTEN:** We were talking about the era of the Vietnam War and the fact that you all had sons who were draftable.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes. E.J. came along, E.J. was younger than Rembert, and they started drawing, wasn't that it, drawing numbers, after that. His number must have been low enough.

**DENNIS:** Rembert wasn't drafted...

**MRS. DENNIS:** Oh no, he was not...

**DENNIS:** He volunteered.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But the disability prevented him from going?

**DENNIS:** He got a medical discharge.

**MRS. DENNIS:** They gave him... You know, after you have a problem...

**ROSENGARTEN:** I know.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Won't keep you. He got out. I think he had a choice. I don't guess they would have shoved him out, would they?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Oh yes.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Would they? Well, maybe they did, I don't know. I don't remember.

**ROSENGARTEN:** They don't want to put themselves in the situation of being liable.

**MRS. DENNIS:** They didn't want to keep him, I know that.

**DENNIS:** No, they discharged him. Medical discharge.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did the prospect of either of them going to the war influence your position on the war?

**DENNIS:** No, I had... I was of draft age, I had a tough decision to make as to whether I would volunteer. I was in a legislative classification that I was immune from the draft, but whether I should accept that or whether I should volunteer was a big question I had.

**MRS. DENNIS:** This county was in such bad shape.

**DENNIS:** What?

**MRS. DENNIS:** This county was in such bad shape, you felt like you had to clean it up.

**DENNIS:** I had built every day of my life so to speak, on running for the legislature to succeed my father. So what I stated publicly was, I wasn't going to decide the issue, I was going to let the people decide. I was going to run for the office, and if I was elected, I'd be exempt from the draft. If I were not elected, I'd volunteer immediately thereafter. So I said that decision's in the hands of the people.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But I think what she was asking you was about the Vietnam war. You were for the war; you were not one of these anti...

**DENNIS:** Well, that was not my time; I was going back to my time...

**MRS. DENNIS:** No, but I mean you were talking about your boys.

**DENNIS:** But I went back to talk about myself.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes. I know.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, I think the two are definitely connected. I mean you had an experience in the Second World War of, you know, basically deciding to serve your country at home. That, you know, the same kind of reasoning could apply in the late sixties or whenever, whenever Rembert junior joined the Marines.

**MRS. DENNIS:** We weren't so anxious for him to join, but...

**ROSENGARTEN:** I could imagine that this could be an issue that you two might have disagreed about.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But you know, you don't, whatever they wanted to do, I think is what you felt was right, didn't you darling?

**DENNIS:** I never felt like I could interfere with it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But you were not afraid of them having to go?

**DENNIS:** No, I didn't, wasn't afraid of them having to go. I had brothers in it. At their age I had nephews, and I had family, I had plenty of family in each war, but I just... Had my own problem with World War Two.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Did your husband have to go?

**ROSENGARTEN:** No, we were war resisters.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Were you?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Yes, we were. Ted and I both were very, very much opposed, and he... It was in the early days, let's see, his draft number came up, it was probably sixty-seven. It was in the early days of the Boston draft resistance. We were both in school in Boston. They didn't know how to deal with draft resisters, they hadn't had the experience. So he was completely successful, he made a big to-do. They said he was mentally unfit, and he didn't have to go. That was the end of that. By the time my brother came up, they had the number business. His number was, whatever, too low or too high.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Too high, I guess, because E.J.'s was, it seems like two hundred and something.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Right. But, you know, this period, I said to the senator earlier is when I feel I came, kind of became involved politically, and that's probably one of the reasons its so interesting to me. But it was also a very tumultuous time. If the South Carolina State Legislature is considering a resolution to recommend use of nuclear weapons, you know, this kind of thing, that's not in the ordinary day's work for a state legislature. So obviously it had, kind of...

**MRS. DENNIS:** Rippling effect?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Right, it had a rippling effect. Exactly. And the same way you talked to me about how long it took to recover from the Civil War, we're still in the throes of it. I feel that way about the Vietnam War. It's just now, people are beginning, with all the T.V. shows and the movies and the books and things, are beginning to try to deal with their feelings about it.

**MRS. DENNIS:** It was a war that in a way was wrong, and yet, I felt sorry for the boys that had to go.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And how. But I gather that this was a war you felt pretty much in support of?

**DENNIS:** World War Two?

**ROSENGARTEN:** No, the Vietnam War.

**DENNIS:** No, I didn't feel strong support for it.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But I think we went along with it because, you know, you sort of felt like what else is the thing to do?

**DENNIS:** I had the experience with World War Two and didn't feel like encouraging my son to volunteer, but when he volunteered I did nothing to cause him to get out. The Lord did that, I didn't.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But neither did we urge E.J. to go.

**ROSENGARTEN:** E.J. was the second?

**DENNIS:** I don't think E.J. got old enough for it.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes he did, he got a number.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What year was he born?

**MRS. DENNIS:** He was born in, let's see, Luke was born in fifty-one, I have to stop and count them. Rembert was born in...

**ROSENGARTEN:** Forty-six. Because he's two years older than I am.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Dorn was born in forty-seven, and E.J. was born in forty-eight. They were about thirteen months apart. So he got a number. He was in school, you know that was when you were in college too and they didn't draft you, I guess, right off. Then they gave him a number, but it was high. They never called him and he didn't volunteer. I certainly didn't blame the ones who did. You know, who complained.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well today I have friends on all sides. I have friends who were, my very close friend married a man who was in the Green Berets for several tours of duty. But I don't know, I can't say that I know anyone, this includes the vets, who support the war now. I think their experience over there led them to be critical even in the cases of the ones who signed up again.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But I think even then there were very few people who were totally for the war itself. I think after we got in it and they felt like maybe it was the thing to do if they were, were supposed to do. It took nerves to say no.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, on the other hand, it took nerve to go. You know, being such a dangerous situation. [long pause] This is moving on to a totally different subject here. This period of the late sixties was when there was a drive to establish a state university system, in South Carolina. Which institutions did you hope would be included in this state university?

**DENNIS:** I supported the, in Charleston, the university...

**MRS. DENNIS:** The College of Charleston?

**DENNIS:** College of Charleston for the University. In the private education I was a strong supporter of the Baptist College. The University of South Carolina got my full support in every way possible.

**MRS. DENNIS:** She's talking about the system where you all took the College of Charleston in, and what else did they take in? Isn't that what you were talking, when they took them in?

**ROSENGARTEN:** I think now the medical university is part of the state system.

**DENNIS:** I was talking about the same thing.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I forget what else went in.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I'm looking through my notes because I don't know.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Rembert, did Lander go in? In Greenwood? A number of them went in.

**DENNIS:** Anyway, I supported the program.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Rembert worked hard, I remember, getting the College of Charleston in.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What were the advantages of promoting the system to a university system?

**DENNIS:** Getting more of them educated I guess the biggest advantage.

**ROSENGARTEN:** More funding?

**DENNIS:** More institutional availability.

**MRS. DENNIS:** That's right, availability. The College of Charleston really couldn't make it on their own, I don't think. They were about under, weren't they Rembert?

**DENNIS:** They had sort of reached the maximum of what they could do.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Becoming part of the system they would achieve a different funding.

**DENNIS:** Yes. That's right.

**MRS. DENNIS:** [says something not picked up by the microphone]

**ROSENGARTEN:** Right, instead of being private....[rest of sentence lost to microphone static]

**MRS. DENNIS:** They needed a school in the lower part of the state, wasn't that what the...

**DENNIS:** [completely unintelligible sentence]. Baptist College came along...

**MRS. DENNIS:** Soon after that?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The election of sixty-eight was kind of a new ball-park for you. Could you talk about what the effect of reapportionment on Charleston and Berkeley counties, and what effect it had, particularly on the new two-party system in the sixty-eight election for your Senate seat?

**DENNIS:** It caused opposition. I had, it caused me to run in a part of Charleston County. It was quite a big change.

**MRS. DENNIS:** They had two or three Republicans from Charleston at that time, didn't they Rembert?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**MRS. DENNIS:** And they expected to capture your seat. They ran Lloyd Sineath from Hanahan. Even Strom Thurmond came down and worked for Lloyd Sineath because he thought the Republicans were going to take over.

**DENNIS:** You don't know that to be a fact.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He didn't really work, but he was at Hanahan the day of the election, because I worked down there.

**ROSENGARTEN:** They thought they were going to unseat the Baron of Berkeley?

**MRS. DENNIS:** That's right.

**DENNIS:** They thought they were going to beat me all right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you think so?

**DENNIS:** What?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you think they had a chance?

**DENNIS:** I did.

**MRS. DENNIS:** We worked hard, all over Charleston.

**DENNIS:** The Charleston end of it I didn't know anything about.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But what happened?

**DENNIS:** They had a Charleston candidate against me and a Berkeley, Berkeley running their own party, the Independent Party had a candidate, Republican Party, and I was the Democratic nominee. We had some lively campaign meetings and I was able to win.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But you not only won but what else? He took all the Charleston Democrats with him.

**DENNIS:** I wasn't going to claim that.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Well I can claim it for you.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It's in the newspaper I have. I have a question about it anyway. Wasn't there also some issue that, the new black vote in some way affected this Democratic sweep?

**DENNIS:** Yes. Well, that wasn't the controlling factor.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What do you think the important factor was?

**DENNIS:** The Democratic candidates had had experience. That's in the general election, now, who ran against me in the general election?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Lloyd Sineath? Would have because he was the Republican candidate. You all were running against, you know Worsham had been in the Senate, but was Worsham a Republican? I forget who that list of candidates [was].

**DENNIS:** Yes, he was a Republican.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But that was when Bobby [Robert B.] Scarborough came in and won. They ran as a team, the Democrats ran as a team, with Rembert. He brought them in, Berkeley County brought them in.

**DENNIS:** Natalie?

**MRS. DENNIS:** You did.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I have here that the Independent...Barnett?

**MRS. DENNIS:** That's right, Barnett.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Sineath, Dennis and Barnett. When, how do you pronounce his name, Sinett, Sinete?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Sineath.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When he came up with this campaign tactic accusing you of one-man rule, the Baron of Berkeley and all this sort of thing, did you respond to him on those issues?

**DENNIS:** Yes, I tried to. I'm trying to think of the campaign meetings. One was in Stevens.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes, I remember that one too. Sineath had never run to anything before, he really was sort of doing what they told him to do.

**DENNIS:** Yes, he was a formidable candidate, though he...

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes he was.

**DENNIS:** Was educated and well informed.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Would you say this was the toughest campaign you've had?

**DENNIS:** Yes, I guess it was, because I didn't have many. It was the only campaign I had other than when I first got elected.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Because after Berkeley's population came up you were running in Berkeley again, so this was short period. In the midst of this great two-to-one victory, your mother died. Would you describe these events, sort of this sad conjunction of events?

**DENNIS:** It was, mother had been in ill health for some time. She had, in addition to her health difficulties, she'd had a wreck that broke her leg. She was upset about the election, and I had a hard time keeping my decorum. I had the unfortunate experience, being invited to a hunt over in Georgetown County by a power company, South Carolina Electric and Gas. The election was on Tuesday and met over in Georgetown on Thursday afternoon. I didn't get a lot of people coming in needing things, but there was no excuse for it. I didn't get by to see my mother, and I got a call over there on Saturday morning saying that my mother had died. I immediately began to lecture myself for going on the hunt at all, but then particularly for going without seeing her first.

**MRS. DENNIS:** She was a bed-patient for about five years.

**DENNIS:** Oh, that was a rough time.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was she living with you at that point?

**DENNIS:** No, she was living in her house at Pinopolis. Natalie and I were living at Stony Landing.

**MRS. DENNIS:** She lived with us a short while while she was in bed, but she .... .., and then she decided she better go back home and stay because it was going to be some time.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did they, what did they say was the official cause of death?

**DENNIS:** My mother had heart trouble.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Heart and kidneys. She had broken a hip too, you know about four or five years before that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Broken her hip in the accident?

**MRS. DENNIS:** The opposite side from the one that she broke her leg on, because she really hadn't had a pin in it, so she really had a lot of problems.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I suspect you've told me this before, but where was she buried? What churchyard was she buried in?

**DENNIS:** At Pinopolis.

**MRS. DENNIS:** St. John's. The little church there. They don't use it now, but they used to use it when Rembert was a boy.

**DENNIS:** My father was a Methodist, and he was buried at, he was buried there, where Mother was buried.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Our church just keeps it up. We have services every now and then; it's a small Baptist church.

**ROSENGARTEN:** St. John's Baptist? Was it a big funeral?

**DENNIS:** Yes, it was a big funeral.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Big family.

**DENNIS:** Mother had been a school teacher for many years, and my father was, his political activity and as a lawyer, both of them had scores of friends.

*[TAPE NINE ENDS, TAPE TEN BEGINS]*

**ROSENGARTEN:** I wanted to just finish up these questions from the sixties before we tackle this new list. Mrs. Dennis and I were just talking about the logistics of working in the State House, you know, staffing help and office space and whatnot. In 1968 the State House was renovated. What, did this cause any inconvenience in terms of where you had office space or where committees met?

**DENNIS:** Not for the major committees. Some of the smaller committees had to shuffle around some, but the Legislature always made, give priority for adequate space for Finance and Ways and Means in the House, the most important committees.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What about your office space? Were you put out for a while?

**DENNIS:** I didn't have any office space in the State House until they built the new building.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Where were you expected to work?

**DENNIS:** We had to work in various committee rooms, and in the hotel.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did Senator Gressette or any of the slightly more senior senators have offices, or was this true for everyone?

**DENNIS:** Nobody had their, the committee rooms were the offices. All of us got offices when they built the new office building. We really didn't have offices in the State House for many legislators. In the Senate I had an office when I became President Pro Tempore of the Senate. When I was Chairman of the Finance Committee I had an office there. Had an office for the Finance Committee when it was working on an appropriations bill. But when we built the office building for the Legislature, all of us were given offices then, freshman senators and senior senators.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did it make a big difference to you?

**DENNIS:** It made a difference in convenience of handling your business.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I can't imagine functioning for example without a telephone. You know, without...

**DENNIS:** That was a difficulty. You had to use the phone in the lobby, although the committee rooms they used phones.

**ROSENGARTEN:** During these years you continued to work for industrial progress in Berkeley County. Would you describe your support of the Trident Park in Hanahan, the revolving fund to finance water resource development projects and the 1969 sales-tax hike? These are three issues that were coming up at the time.

**DENNIS:** Say one of them at a time.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The Trident Park in Hanahan?

**DENNIS:** It never did amount to much.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I can't help you because I don't remember what... It was a, sort of a small version of Bushy Park? Was it... [long pause] Let's see, then there was the revolving fund to finance water resource development projects. [long pause] The other one I picked up was this 1969 sales-tax hike. Was that involved with industrial, funding industrial development?

**DENNIS:** That was for the state to give what help it could to industry coming in.

**ROSENGARTEN:** On that water resource I have here that you were... At a conference in Myrtle Beach, you came out in support of a quarter-million dollar revolving fund. I'm not sure what that is. To finance water resource development projects. That would be like Santee-Cooper?

**DENNIS:** .... on that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Okay. This was the period when the notion of developing kindergartens in public schools was first proposed. The pilot project was supported by Governor Robert McNair and Lieutenant Governor John West, against Senator Brown and Speaker Blatt. What position did you take on this issue and who was successful?

**DENNIS:** I was in favor of the program. I knew we had to undertake it slowly, which we did, but it was gradually put into effect.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In one of these newspaper articles they described Speaker Blatt as the "arch-enemy" of the kindergartens?

**DENNIS:** It was because of the cost of it. He didn't think the state was able to do it. It was a big burden to take on.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Why did you think it was necessary?

**DENNIS:** Because the educational program, in my understanding, was more successful the earlier it started. Information made available to us about how private kindergartens had helped caused us to think that the recommendations to us from the educational people on the national level definitely included a kindergarten as an integral part of a educational program.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was this seen as especially beneficial for the black community?

**DENNIS:** That's one part of the program that I don't think tilted either way, black or white. They both needed it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I asked that because this was the same period when they started the Head Start program in Mississippi. As far as I understand, that was pretty specifically to serve the black community. In 1969, Hollings made an impassioned speech they called the poverty statement, in front of a Senate subcommittee. Why was this chronic problem suddenly considered news? Poverty in the state of South Carolina.

**DENNIS:** The news was that one of the office-holders was going to make a special effort to do something about it, in a limited way. It was always a problem, always the biggest problem. Financing improvements in education. Senator Hollings was considered to be on the right track, is what it amounted to.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Knowing him personally, you feel that this was a really sincere feeling of his?

**DENNIS:** I think it was.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How did you respond to threats to cut off federal funds to Berkeley county schools unless certain integration requirements were met?

**DENNIS:** I opposed the concept of cutting off, and recommended to our county government that we respond by showing 'em that we were doing all we could within our financial capabilities. I went to court representing the county, in a case heard in Orangeburg, by Judge Simons. And I sought to show in that case that Berkeley County was doing all it could with the money it had. For education. Doing it on a basis that was in keeping with the ruling of the courts on integration.

**ROSENGARTEN:** During the last interview we talked a little about the so-called Orangeburg Massacre of 1968. Do you remember how you heard about it, how it first came to your attention?

**DENNIS:** I'm sure it was by a telephone call from somebody. I don't remember who. It was immediately the front-running piece of news in every news dispatch.

**ROSENGARTEN:** If you had been Governor at that time, what do you think you would have done?

**DENNIS:** I would have done just what the Governor did. I would have sent the troops there for the safety of the people and sent the best negotiator that the state had to try to work out the problems. That's what McNair did.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So you feel he did, his response was the appropriate one.

**DENNIS:** I think so.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Okay, that's the end of the sixties. Do you remember attending the Tricentennial banquet in Charleston in April of 1970?

**DENNIS:** I'm sure I did, and I think I remember it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You did? Do you remember anything about it?

**DENNIS:** I'm trying to think of who the invited speaker was.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I don't have a note on that. What I have is that there were eight lord proprietors and their ladies portrayed by various political figures. I meant to bring, I pulled out of the box a few pictures of these events. I meant to bring one, but I will next time. What were some of the political issues of the 1970 legislative session? On that list of questions I've got in parentheses some of the bigger ones that I pulled out.

**DENNIS:** What question is that? What point is that?

**ROSENGARTEN:** That's number two.

**DENNIS:** School desegregation and the new port terminal, changing the College of Charleston.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I think that's when it became state-supported, 1970.

**DENNIS:** Mini-bottle. Those were the big issues.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What is the mini-bottle issue? That one completely passed me by.

**DENNIS:** Mini-bottle was bringing in to this state of the law that... how various committees went around and checked in other states would allow for sales of alcohol by the drink by putting it in a mini-bottle. It was a good revenue producing proposition. Never was a day when the state seemed to be satisfied to be getting the revenue it was getting because of the sale of alcohol. That was another effort to do two things. To regulate the consumption of it - that went overboard I think, with the keen desire to sell as much of it as possible, so as to get the tax. And of course it didn't mean encouragement to drinking it wasn't necessarily involved because it was being handled anyhow. It was just a question of putting the heaviest tax on it the people would take.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Is this a measure that you supported?

**DENNIS:** Yes ma'am.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Because of the revenue possibility?

**DENNIS:** Right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When the issue came up to incorporate the College of Charleston into the University system, who initially proposed it? Was that an initiative from the College?

**DENNIS:** It was from the College and the Charleston legislative delegation. Trying to think who was the leader in that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Would it have been Dewey Wise? Was he...

**DENNIS:** May well have been. It was the Charleston delegation. Dewey I'm sure took a real leading stance in it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That's a tremendous obligation that the state was taking on.

**DENNIS:** That's right. But the area didn't have the Baptist College then did we? They were coming on about the same time. We needed to have educational institutions of the state more than just in Columbia.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This was also a period when there were student demonstrations on the university campus in Columbia. Do you remember the issue and any... I have little quotes from yourself and various politicians here. Do you remember any of the stands that, for example, you took? Tommy Hartnett I guess was the real hard-liner.

**DENNIS:** This was the College of Charleston fight?

**ROSENGARTEN:** No, it was at the University. There were anti-war demonstrations. I don't know if they took over a building. I don't have that in my notes, but there was a major militant demonstration and yourself and Hartnett made comments to the press. That was what the article was about. I have down here that you said that you were dealing with a small group of students and that the militants should be expelled with no chance of return to university. Turner, I didn't write his first name, Turner said that he thought that some students had just gotten caught up in the excitement. Hartnett said we can't end the war in Vietnam or Cambodia on the USC campus, and he recommended that parents cut off the funds for the tuition of the students. He was I guess, the strongest...

**DENNIS:** I didn't think I got into that very deeply.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Probably a reporter asked you what you thought, and you had to think quick. But does that, do you feel that accurately reflects what you thought at the time?

**DENNIS:** Did they quote me as saying anything?

**ROSENGARTEN:** They said you said that you were dealing with a small group of students and that the militants should be expelled from school.

**DENNIS:** I didn't think they knew what they were doing really. I thought there were so many problems from the world war around our necks that we didn't have time to be fooling with something else unless it became absolutely necessary as a nation-supported movement. I wasn't readily convinced that the Vietnam War was a necessity. That was why not being an

active participant in World War Two may have had some influence, I don't know. Everything seemed to be... There seemed to be too much need in this country for so many things that we didn't need to get involved in a war unless it was absolutely necessary.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did that, did your feeling about that give you any sympathy for the students who were reacting against the war?

**DENNIS:** Yes, I felt there was some merit in their position. I didn't see any, I thought it was useless but, I thought it was an individual right that shouldn't be suppressed, a collective right of a group of them. But I didn't think it would amount to anything. My thought on these was some p.... suppressive action. We were then, and we still are, heavily burdened with obligations from our other wars.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You know, I can see why student demonstrations looked very futile at that time, and yet in the end, it really was popular opposition to that war that stopped it. It was because the people weren't behind it anymore, it seemed to me.

**DENNIS:** Had a lot to do with it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Maybe the generals realized they weren't going to win. You know, maybe they saw that it wasn't working out the way they planned.

**DENNIS:** The mistake of starting it was finally coming home.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, coming back to...

**DENNIS:** Not starting it necessarily, but I mean, participating as fully as we did. We sort of took it on as our war really, the running of it. Other countries didn't help as much as we did.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Coming back to Berkeley County, between 1960 and 1970, Berkeley's population jumped 47.1%. That's in a ten-year period. What consequences did this have on politics?

**DENNIS:** Considerable. That was decade when... Black students were the big problem. The problem was the absolute necessity of, under the opposite of segregation. What is the opposite word?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Oh! Integration.

**DENNIS:** That's when integration hit, as it should have, and that's when we had the problem of integration and we needed to do everything that could be done to carry out our legal responsibilities.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So the jump in population would what? Increase the tax base?

**DENNIS:** It increased the tax base some.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Who was moving into Berkeley County? What kind of population increase was this?

**DENNIS:** Industry connected. Some of was from a distance, some of it was nearby. Attractiveness of jobs bringing people in. Started with the Jamestown plant and right in St. Stephens and we've got one at Moncks Corner. During that decade we had an industrial influx. That's what I spent most of my time on during that period, about ten years, trying to be as encouraging to industrial prospects as possible. I visited other states and I spent time here meeting with, I say here in the county, meeting with industrial prospects. Joining together with Charleston and making the Bushy Park property available for industry; that was a big segment of it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** One sort of indirect consequence of Berkeley's growth, am I not right, that Berkeley and Charleston had combined and you represented both for that period of time in the Senate. But when Berkeley became large enough by itself, you became strictly a Berkeley County Senator again.

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So in a way you went from being a large county senator back to being a small county senator.

**DENNIS:** That's right. I was a member of the Charleston delegation for all purposes for one term.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did that make a big difference in terms of what you did in the Senate?

**DENNIS:** Not a great deal. They had five and Berkeley had one. Course we had to work together when it was joint, pool our budgets, but I really concerned myself ninety-percent with Berkeley, and they concerned themselves ninety-percent with just Charleston.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you receive any criticism for being sort of pro-Berkeley, you know, taking care of Berkeley business, even though you were part of the Charleston delegation?

**DENNIS:** I felt that my .... responsibility was for Berkeley, I was Berkeley's resident senator.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The people in Charleston weren't resentful of that?

**DENNIS:** No, there were so many state-wide issues they needed help on, they were glad to get my help.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I can imagine when you back to Berkeley that, I mean in a way you were probably their most senior member on their delegation.

**DENNIS:** I was.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How would you characterize the political style of, I'm going to take these one by one, of first Sol Blatt?

**DENNIS:** Not a very dramatic style. He was a great speaker and he knew how to point out the needs of the people. [*pause in the conversation for a break*]

**ROSENGARTEN:** They do have some real problems?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Yes, what?

**DENNIS:** Money.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Money. Well Hugo didn't help this year.

**DENNIS:** No, they got a lot of problems with Hugo too. That's more local than state-wide.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So they call you for advice, is that...?

**DENNIS:** They called and tried to get me to help with a proposal that some of them had in mind. Wanted money for local governments, they're trying to .... those up there with all the Charleston .... They're trying to get a new program of somebody for housing development. Joe Riley was up there and trying to form a new agency, or an additional agency to the one they have, and give them means to raise enough revenue to help local governments.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Especially with housing?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** They need that, that's true. It sounded... Like you said, Hugo didn't help. Well, we were, I had asked you to characterize the political styles of some of the prominent leaders of this period. You had just talked about Sol Blatt. What about Edgar Brown? How would you characterize his political style?

**DENNIS:** A very large, very persuasive, and a hard worker for what he proposed. No doubt about it, Blatt and Brown, or Brown and Blatt, strange they came from the same county, but two of the greatest politicians South Carolina ever had on the scene. They had a lot of things in common, and they had their different styles and their different attachments and approaches. They were just two great men, no doubt about it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I get the impression Brown had a gentler personality than Blatt. Do you think that's so?

**DENNIS:** Had what kind of what?

**ROSENGARTEN:** A more gentle, less aggressive.

**DENNIS:** That's true, but he could get very aggressive too. But on the gentle thing, what you're saying is right. Their styles were different, up to a point.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What about Marion Gressette, your desk mate?

**DENNIS:** He was very, very smart, very tough in his determination to do what he thought was right and very successful as a lawyer and legislator.

**ROSENGARTEN:** His committee, the Senate Rules Committee, was called "Gressette's Graveyard" in the press. What was the implication of that?

**DENNIS:** New legislation didn't live long, didn't get far in it if it was for a change of things. He was a traditional-type fellow, he thought don't make a change unless it's absolutely necessary. It was when we came into this period of great change everywhere; he became a target for the change-makers. Thought he was too fixed in his position. A very brilliant man with great personality. Tough fighter. Very successful.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What about James Waddell? This news story reported that he had managed Governor West's campaign. What kind of man was he?

**DENNIS:** I've got to be very careful about how I talk about him. Off the record, Jim wasn't even in the same class as Gressette and Brown and Blatt, but he tried hard. Still off the record now. He got him a secretary that came between him and his wife. Caused him to lose a lot of influence. .... a personable individual. He worked hard and he's doing the best job he can with that particular handicap.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did he divorce his wife?

**DENNIS:** No. That's the part of it that hurts him most. I don't know how he handles his home. He has children. I believe he just .... a divorce by an agreement, not by court approval. I'm sure Jim provides the finances adequately. They have children that are grown, they put them through college. But my comment on him would have to be that, very hard worker, and fills his job well. That's what I'd have to say about him.

*[SIDE ONE ENDS, SIDE TWO BEGINS]*

**ROSENGARTEN:** When he (Waddell), having been the campaign director, the campaign manager for Governor West, did he have a particular influence during West's governorship?

**DENNIS:** No, just mostly legwork.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Waddell did legwork for West?

**DENNIS:** He didn't have any big vote connections that West didn't have.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But if you wanted to get West's ear, so to speak, or you wanted to find out what his opinion was, would you go through Waddell?

**DENNIS:** I think Waddell did help him on issues what he felt like would be popular with the people. With West, on that West didn't need much help. West was very smart. I'm off the record right now. He's much smarter than Jim Waddell. Only thing West needed was help with the work. He had the ideas.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What about James P. "Spot" Mozingo, III? That's a politician I don't know much about.

**DENNIS:** Well, he was my immediate senior on the Finance Committee and in the Senate, and he was a tremendously successful lawyer, and a successful politician. Great speaker, spoke with a great sense of humor. Had a tremendous law practice. He didn't contribute a great deal, I'm off the record again now, didn't contribute a great deal to South Carolina's government, because he was tied up in too many things outside.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But he had a great deal of seniority at this point?

**DENNIS:** Yes he had, he was second in seniority, in the Senate, or third. I became president pro tempore. Well, there's Gressette. Gressette was there, Gressette was second seniority, and there was, later I was beginning to come into the top ranks. Gressette, Brown and then Gressette, and Mozingo was third. After Jeffries left, I became fourth. And after Brown left, Senate seniority went to Gressette. Mozingo left before Brown, got beat. So then it was Gressette and Dennis and Williams, who's now taken my place.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Why did Mozingo leave the Senate?

**DENNIS:** He died. He didn't get beat, he died. Wait a minute. Let me think a minute now. I believe he got defeated before he died.

**ROSENGARTEN:** He was your senior, he was older than you?

**DENNIS:** Well, he was elected to the House when he was twenty-one, to the Senate when he was twenty-three or four.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Now the hardest one. How would you characterize your political style?

**DENNIS:** Aggressiveness and calculation. I tried to be very aggressive, but I've also tried to not overplay my hand.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You achieved a lot of recognition for your ability to handle financial matters. It wasn't until you became Financial Committee chair maybe that you had the prime responsibility, but very early people relied on you for that.

**DENNIS:** Yes, I seemed to have the confidence of my colleagues that I knew the best thing to recommend for the state financially.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I wanted to hear how you said you were.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You missed it.

**DENNIS:** It came from my political experience, not personal. I was not a wealthy man personally. I was considered to be, suppose property ownership, being a wealthy status, but the property changes in recent years have forced me to lose a lot. When it comes to strictly the government reputation that I had, the confidence that I had of Edgar Brown and the others, they were satisfied that I could handle the financial end of the state's business better than anybody else in the legislature. Brown depended on me greatly. I performed all right with my assistant.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Did you say you were a good compromiser?

**DENNIS:** Yes, that was part of it. I was able to get two opposite views together a good bit.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Something I noticed when I was working on these questions, it'll come up later, you know, in specific instances. I was struck by the fact that you seemed to be able to say "I have changed my mind." Very rare in a politician. You could say "I've looked at this issue again and I changed my mind." I don't know if I've ever heard another politician say that. You know most people, they'll, they paint themselves into a corner, and then they just stay there, no matter what.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Rembert is a good listener. Most politicians you do not, they...

**DENNIS:** Get their minds fixed.

**MRS. DENNIS:** ...won't listen to your side. Get the facts, that's right. He was able to talk to people. He never demanded that they vote his way, but he was able to talk them into things a lot of times, voting the way he felt was the right way. He could work that Senate floor.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, experience has a lot to do with it but also, you need to feel very confident to say "I've changed my mind" and not to feel that you're going to be criticized or made vulnerable that way.

**MRS. DENNIS:** It's hard for people to do it, just for us as human beings.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That's right, it's very hard. When you've got a squad of newsmen out there ready to write down what you say, commit you to paper on every opinion you have, it's rough.

**DENNIS:** I've had some hot times with some of the changes.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Even when you were young and just starting out, Rembert, you were never afraid to speak your mind, and say how you felt, even if it was not the popular thing a lot of times.

**DENNIS:** Sometimes.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Sometimes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What, which, what were you thinking about, which of these issues became hot for you? When you changed your mind.

**DENNIS:** If I got pushed too hard I would show my temper.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But [what] particular issue were you thinking of, darling? He could give a rip-roaring speech and change their minds too. It was according to the time.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I know that's going to come up again because whenever I noted it I've made a point to ask the question about how, you know how you, what persuaded you to change your mind, or how you handled it politically. This is actually a good question for you too, Mrs. Dennis. Do you recall the inaugural ball in January of 1971, for John West and Earl Morris?

**DENNIS:** I went to it, I can't offhand think of anything outstanding.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I can tell you one thing that was outstanding. He had the country music singer there. Which one? You probably remember. I remember us sitting upstairs listening to the program at the Coliseum.

**DENNIS:** Coliseum. Loretta Lynn.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Coal miner's daughter. She was rough looking. I know you all know her. Big bosom.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Is it the one who's on T.V. now?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** She's the most well known, I mean I know her name.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I don't know why I can't think of it. But up close she looked, I guess you don't think of them as looking rough, until you see them in person. She had a hard life. One of twelve children I think. Something like that. She sang, I just happened to remember that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was, were you a personal friend of West's? Did you know him personally?

**DENNIS:** Who?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were you personally acquainted with John West?

**DENNIS:** Yes. I wasn't nearly as close a friend with him when he was elected, but I began to be very close with him during his term and after he left and went to Vietnam. We had...

**MRS. DENNIS:** Not Vietnam.

**DENNIS:** Where did he go?

**MRS. DENNIS:** I'm going to tell you. Not Iraq, but one of those, what's the wealthy country over there?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Iran?

**MRS. DENNIS:** No.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Saudi Arabia?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Saudi...

**DENNIS:** Saudi Arabia.

**ROSENGARTEN:** He went what? As an ambassador?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I didn't know that.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But he was in the Senate with Rembert, so Rembert really was friends with him...

**DENNIS:** I remember he came back from Saudi Arabia.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He went to Hilton Head to practice, .... real well.

**DENNIS:** Very supportive of me.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But you became pretty close to John when he was in the Governor's mansion.

**DENNIS:** Yes. We visited the mansion a good bit.

**ROSENGARTEN:** He was described in one of these reports as an authentic disciple of FDR and LBJ. Do you agree with that?

**DENNIS:** I would say so, yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** A kind of New Dealer type politician?

**DENNIS:** Right. I agree with that. Would you?

**MRS. DENNIS:** I guess so.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That means what? Involved, interested in social welfare legislation?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes. When John was Governor, when he was Governor, Rembert, those were the years we had a lot of

money?

**DENNIS:** Those were the years that the revenue...

**MRS. DENNIS:** Was good.

**DENNIS:** ...was good.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He was able to a lot on account of that. Through the legislature.

**DENNIS:** I wasn't chairman of the Finance Committee, but I met with him quite often and tried to help him with some of his programs.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Earl Morris, is that the same Earl Morris as called you yesterday? He was also a colleague or a friend?

**DENNIS:** Earl was lieutenant governor then.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He was in the Senate and then...

**ROSENGARTEN:** And then lieutenant governor. And now he's back in the Senate.

**DENNIS:** No, he's controller general now.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was he a man of the same kind of political stripe as West?

**DENNIS:** He and West have a lot in common. He tried to conform his style now to what a majority of the people are for. He's a populist type of politician.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I thought of your country singer. Dolly Parton?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Dolly Parton. That's right, that's who it was. You're good.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, that's the most famous name.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Oldest one that I remember.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So she sang at John West and Earl Morris' inaugural. That's interesting. Do they usually have entertainment?

**MRS. DENNIS:** As well as I remember, that's one of the first ones that I've ever heard of a country music singer and entertainment like that. Because some years they didn't have an inaugural ball.

**DENNIS:** They had an entertainment program instead.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Well they danced afterwards didn't they? I don't know whether they did or not, I might be, we might be wrong, but I remember the floor being so crowded you and I didn't stay too long after this was over. They had the Grand March I guess after that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you have to buy a ball gown, a new ball gown for each...

**MRS. DENNIS:** Well, sometimes I'd, I've forgotten now, I'm sure I must have. Sometimes you use, get a skirt and get a different blouse maybe or something. Maybe I did. I probably did for some of them.

**DENNIS:** She purchased enough to keep in style, I can tell you.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Enough to keep in style, that's right. Earl brought this by for Rembert. The award of excellence in

financial reporting for the state of South Carolina. This is an award that he, we, his office won, when he came by last week. On Monday I think it was.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Where were you when you heard of Mendel Rivers' death early in January of 1971?

**DENNIS:** In Columbia. Went to the funeral in Charleston.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He had gone down to this operation in, Birmingham, Rembert?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**MRS. DENNIS:** They had just started doing that type thing with your heart. It was not a, it was not like yours Rembert, it was...

**DENNIS:** One by-pass it was.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Forget what it was. A little different they do it then it's usually no problem, but that was a fairly new one then.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So he died in surgery?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Well, soon afterwards I think. Wasn't it a day or two afterwards?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I think he survived the surgery, but maybe a day or two afterwards.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did that come as a blow to you?

**DENNIS:** Very much so.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Mendel did a lot for this area.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Who, after he died, who took over his political role? For example, in promoting military facilities in Charleston and the vicinity?

**MRS. DENNIS:** The Davis fella who worked for him. Was he the one elected then darling?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**MRS. DENNIS:** His secretary.

**DENNIS:** Mendel Davis.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Mendel Davis.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He was able to get on the, what is that committee? The Armed Services Committee.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So his secretary succeeded him in office?

**MRS. DENNIS:** I say secretary. Isn't that what they called him? He was the top man Mendel had.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Are there any particular memories you have of him that you'd like to share?

**DENNIS:** He and I used to hunt together, both at Oakland Club and at [P.O. Mead senior's property]. We'd turkey hunt together at Mead's. I remember being in a duck-blind with him, early morning before daylight, waiting on the turkeys to come. Quail, I used to quail hunt with him a bit over in Oakland Club. We'd ride horseback and get the guy that handled

the dogs and then we'd get off and shoot. There were other hunts that we were on together, but those were the main hunting courses that we had.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Tell her what Mendel said when someone spoke to him and said "You know who I am, don't you?" What'd Mendel tell them?

**DENNIS:** If you don't know who you are, you're in a hell of a fix. .... kept telling him oh, you don't know me, you don't know me. Mendel said, "Well I think so, just a minute." "No, you just don't know me." He said, "Well, if you don't know who you are, you're in a hell of a fix, I can tell you."

**MRS. DENNIS:** He was very plain. That was just like him.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Plain-spoken.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Country-type, and yet he could bet, yet he could act, he could like an aristocrat in a way, couldn't he Rembert?

**DENNIS:** He could act real...

**MRS. DENNIS:** Polished.

**DENNIS:** Dignified, but it wouldn't last long.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Where did he come from?

**DENNIS:** He was born in Berkeley County.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Bonham?

**DENNIS:** Born at, Jamestown. Lived at St. Stephen until his early boyhood, and then moved to North Charleston.

**MRS. DENNIS:** What was the name of his place, darling, the little tiny house outside of Jamestown? What was the name of that place?

**DENNIS:** I don't know that it had a name.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Because didn't Mendel when you'd call him sometimes, he'd say I'm Mendel Rivers from, something in Berkeley County? He'd call you early in the morning sometimes. He'd get to his office early.

**DENNIS:** Lived by Dennis Bishop.

**MRS. DENNIS:** That's what they'd call it. Yes, that's it. Can't think of the name of it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Is this his, like his home place?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So he came from humble origins?

**DENNIS:** Gumville.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Gumville, that's it. "This is Mendel Rivers from Gumville." He was delighted telling people that he was from Gumville.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And that's really where he was from?

**DENNIS:** That's where he was born.

**MRS. DENNIS:** A little tiny house too.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How did he, rise to such heights? I mean he's the one South Carolina state politician that most Yankees know about.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He moved to North Charleston. Did his father die, darling, in St. Stephen, and his mother took him and moved to North Charleston?

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**MRS. DENNIS:** So he really lived in North Charleston after he was about twelve. Wasn't that it?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I guess that's how he got in. You know he got in the House and you stay in so long he was able to rise to the Chairman of the Armed Services.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But he must have had either unusual abilities or a driving ambition, or you know what I mean? He must have had some, unusual capacity. Not everybody from Gumville...

**MRS. DENNIS:** Could do that.

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Rembert, what did he used to tell about staying in staying in a grade? Didn't he say he stayed in the grade a long time? He used to tell funny things.

**DENNIS:** A friend was introducing him one night, and said one thing about the Congressman, he didn't excel in education; he stayed in the sixth grade five years. When he got up the first thing he said was, "I have to correct my friend. It was sixth grade I stayed in seven years." He didn't excel in education. He wasn't a dummy, he just...

**ROSENGARTEN:** He was not a lawyer? He did get through law school?

**DENNIS:** Yes. He went to law school in Washington while he was working for the Department of Justice.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But he had enough knowledge. He was intelligent in a lot of ways. He probably didn't study.

**DENNIS:** He was a good speaker.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When you and Senator Drummond were criticized for taking rides on the South Carolina Wildlife Resources Department airplane, how did you defend this and other prerogatives of your office?

**DENNIS:** I pointed out that that was a habit in South Carolina, a custom for the governor and certain legislators, and some others to use state planes on state-connected business, and once in while on a hunting trip. They made a big to-do out of it because I was a rural senator, small-county senator, and they used people, thought they would hurt me that way. It didn't hurt me a great deal, and I didn't quit it either. I didn't feel like I took advantage of taxpayers. I got a plane to take me to Columbia for business, and on occasion to take me somewhere not on business.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Not very much.

**DENNIS:** Nope. Not very much.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But you felt this sort of goes with the territory. You're a state senator.

**DENNIS:** What?

**ROSENGARTEN:** This is just, you know, one of the perks of being a state senator, you could say.

**DENNIS:** Being chairman of a committee.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In response to a proposal to make the state a liquor wholesaler, you declared you would never vote to put South Carolina in the liquor business. Why was the Senate at this point so desperate for funds that it would even consider such a radical step?

**DENNIS:** What year was it?

**ROSENGARTEN:** It was a proposal to make the state the sole liquor...

**DENNIS:** I got the question, but I'm trying to figure the time.

**MRS. DENNIS:** 1970?

**ROSENGARTEN:** 1971 probably.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I thought we had enough money. Bob McNair was still Governor then, or John?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Okay, now this was right after West's inauguration. Maybe they weren't money-hungry. That's what the news reporter -- I mean it could have been a figure of speech. He said, "Money-hungry Senators eye state liquor wholesale business," or something like that.

**DENNIS:** South Carolina's always been a poor state, and that was considered an opportunity to get some money for some needed things, mostly education. For a long time our constitution carried a provision that, funds derived from liquor go for education. South Carolina has been a leader in my time, not by my leadership, but at the state, everybody working together for it, in educational improvement. We've been short of money to do it with. First it was funneling what we had on a segregated basis. The end of segregation, which South Carolina worked to accomplish as much as any other state. The burden got heavier, we put on sales tax for it, and South Carolina made terrific efforts to keep its head up in the educational field. Primary and secondary education and higher education. That has come a long way for some reasonable tax in the last twenty-five years.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Why were you so adamant against this measure to make the state a wholesaler of liquor?

**DENNIS:** Politics. A bad political stance for a churchman to take.

**MRS. DENNIS:** For the state to be in the liquor business.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I think it's a little, even the lottery is a little bit, not in South Carolina but the states that have a lottery, is a little hard for politicians to swallow.

**MRS. DENNIS:** They've been trying to do the lottery for a long time, off and on, you know, through the years.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Provides a lot of money.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Really does.

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Lot more states are getting it too. Are beginning to.

**DENNIS:** It'll come to South Carolina.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You think so?

**MRS. DENNIS:** The gambling brings in the Mafia and things like that, is what they say, but would the lottery? That

wouldn't necessarily bring in...

**DENNIS:** I have to say the same thing about lotteries as they do about horse racing, betting on horse racing. It has a lot of outlaw efforts connected with it, but I don't know...

**MRS. DENNIS:** I think the poor people is what they say they use, they would do that. In class, I guess. Brings in the money.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It would be interesting to see who does bet, I mean buy lottery tickets, whether it's poor people, middle-class people, or who. I have no idea. I'm an anti-gambler. The idea of gambling is just like, why would anyone do that? I just assume I'm going to lose my money. I never think I'm going to win, so...

**MRS. DENNIS:** They were coming in from North Carolina. Does North Carolina have the lottery? Some state was coming in to Spartanburg, had a store set up there selling tickets to the lottery.

**DENNIS:** Did I answer her question?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes, go on.

**DENNIS:** Objection to the lottery as a public issue. Poor people participate and spend money that should be spent on food and clothing, necessities of life.

**MRS. DENNIS:** In any gambling.

**DENNIS:** What?

**MRS. DENNIS:** In any gambling. I'm not a gambler either.

**DENNIS:** If you gambled with me you lost.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Oh no, I didn't do bad.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, I know some gamblers, and I know that its sort of an addiction. There are people who can't stop.

**MRS. DENNIS:** That's right.

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But, in a way it's like liquor. You're taking advantage of people who have a problem, in a way.

**MRS. DENNIS:** That's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You're taking advantage of their problem. But you think it will eventually come?

**DENNIS:** I think it will.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I think it will be some years down the road, myself.

**ROSENGARTEN:** During the early seventies, what wildlife legislation did you support?

**DENNIS:** Raising of the revenues. Raising of license fees, fines. Making fines.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I read about a bill for protecting owls and hawks. What was that bill about?

**DENNIS:** I wanted to protect them. Had a bill to increase the permission to take hawks I thought.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Rembert almost all wildlife bills were the hottest issue. Would be, there would be more argument over that than...

**ROSENGARTEN:** That's interesting.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But a lot of your bills, hunting...

**ROSENGARTEN:** All the licensing bills, would cause this furor.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Coon-hunting. If you started to change the time, people had a fit, didn't they? Hon?

**ROSENGARTEN:** The only thing I have about the owls and hawks was that you supported a bill to protect them without the sacrifice clause. Unfortunately I didn't write down what the sacrifice clause was.

**DENNIS:** I don't know what that was.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Okay. This was the period when they were trying to pass the tidelands bill. Would that have been a wildlife measure?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** With eighty-three year old Finance chairman Edgar Brown ailing and refusing to retire, did your role on the six-man committee change?

**DENNIS:** What was the change?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Chairman of the conference committee, was that it? I mean the...

**ROSENGARTEN:** Finance committee. Brown was not, he was elderly and not feeling well, but he refused to retire. He was still there. Did you basically take up the slack at that point?

**DENNIS:** At his request.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He really was not able the last few years he was there much, was he Rembert?

**DENNIS:** No.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Rembert sort of did it.

**DENNIS:** On occasion the conference committee went to Barnwell to wrap up its work after we finished work on a bill. That's the way I became chairman, working with the bills as acting chairman during Senator Brown's absence. I was competing with, for the chairmanship, for a while by Senator Mazingo, who was a senior senator to me, but he lost out before the chairmanship came up. I think I could have defeated him anyhow because I was much more active, he never was active, real active, on the committee.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He was defeated.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In election. Was this position something that you were very anxious to achieve?

**DENNIS:** It was. I tried for the Supreme Court you know, and I didn't make it. So I settled my energies and efforts to being the best senator I could and to become chairman of the Finance committee, which I did.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What kinds of things changed for you when you became chair? Mrs. Dennis mentioned for example that you got a secretary. When you finally became chairman, not just acting chairman, what changed?

**DENNIS:** I had additional office help, more than one secretary. Had my own office, course all the senators with the new legislative building had offices then, that was a big change. What year was that Natalie?

**MRS. DENNIS:** I just got her one of those...

**ROSENGARTEN:** I have that because we...

**MRS. DENNIS:** You got that?

**ROSENGARTEN:** I can't tell you exactly what the...

**MRS. DENNIS:** That's all right. It was in the seventies, something...

**ROSENGARTEN:** It was in the mid-seventies because there was all that hoopla over the office furniture. We'll get to that later.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I have the date right here.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The building, this is the Edgar Brown building, was that what it was?

**MRS. DENNIS:** No.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Oh. This was the, what was it?

**MRS. DENNIS:** The Gressette building. And that's not, you've probably got the Edgar Brown building...

**ROSENGARTEN:** I have the Edgar Brown building.

**DENNIS:** They built two more that were legislature. One was Blatt and the other was Brown. No, wasn't it Gressette?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes, that's right.

**DENNIS:** Gressette and Blatt were the last two of the legislative buildings. All of us were well fixed with offices in those buildings, but before that we had to work out of committee rooms and anywhere we could find a little space.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you see a noticeable increase in your workload after you became Finance chair?

**DENNIS:** Very noticeable. Although I had been gradually increasing it as Senator Brown retired. But it was a tremendous increase in workload, and responsibility.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Legislative salaries seem ridiculously low to me. In this period I think there was a small raise up to four thousand dollars a year. How did lawmakers, including yourself, make ends meet?

**MRS. DENNIS:** It was eight hundred at first, and then...

**ROSENGARTEN:** It was eight hundred at first?

**DENNIS:** That's ....

**MRS. DENNIS:** It was four hundred when I worked on the House desk.

**DENNIS:** That's another deficiency of South Carolina. Until they got around to a reasonable pay.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Even so it was a thousand dollars for a long time.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You called it an efficiency? It's an efficiency you think? They were trying....

*[TAPE TEN ENDS, TAPE ELEVEN BEGINS]*

**ROSENGARTEN:** During the last interview Senator, we, the tape cut off at the point where we were talking about legislative salaries, and the problem that legislators had supporting their families on these ridiculously low salaries. What was your feeling about this issue? For example when the, there was an attempt to raise salaries from four to seven thousand dollars I think.

**DENNIS:** As I recall I voted for the raises each time, because I thought they were very much needed. Particularly since most legislators had become professional people..... from their offices. So much that the salaries had to be adjusted or good people wouldn't have been able, wouldn't have still run. I thought we ran a risk of losing some of our best legislators if we didn't have some salary adjustment.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How did legislators make ends meet? I mean, you can't live on, a family can't live on four or even seven thousand dollars a year in 1970.

**DENNIS:** They just had to; lawyers charged a little higher fees, worked a little harder, charged a little more.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you find when you were in the legislature that you had time to practice law?

**DENNIS:** At a disadvantage many times. Your opponent that was legislature had the advantage of you, in that respect. You couldn't be as well prepared as they were many times, for the lack of time. You had to use your imagination a little more.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Would you say that there were some advantages in being a legislator when you were in the courtroom?

**DENNIS:** It was. Plus or minus situations. You got more cases, more people wanted to get you to be their lawyer, but then they expected you to give them a bargain on the fees because you were a legislator and would need their vote. You didn't have any real advantages as a lawyer against the other side, as a legislator. Except occasionally there may have been a situation where the judge had a little more confidence in you because of some prior experience. But ordinarily, a legislative lawyer couldn't expect any more than a hard-working lawyer.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you recall any times where you felt there was either a conflict of interest or a definite handicap in both of these roles?

**DENNIS:** Well, we had a big controversy over that in the Public Service Commission cases. Critics developed that .... so much against lawyers, legislators, appearing in Public Service Commission cases. Massive restrictions were put on the practice. Finally, it was ruled that you couldn't represent a client before the Commission if it, if you were a legislator.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was that only for fee-setting hearings, or in all cases?

**DENNIS:** It was for charging fees, but .... lawyer could very well represent a client before the commission, and any responsible situation and not charge a fee except so much time.

**ROSENGARTEN:** No, I mean when they restricted your capacity to represent a utility before the Commission, was it only when the Commission was hearing a, what do they call it, a rate-setting, not a fee, a rate-setting...

**DENNIS:** Yes, that's what it boiled down to.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In other words, when the Commission was setting the rates that the utility could charge, is that right?

**DENNIS:** No. Electrical rates and...

**ROSENGARTEN:** You and some fourteen other legislators in this period were criticized as you say for receiving fees, for legal services, from utility companies. When these charges were raised, how did you answer them?

**DENNIS:** They were referred to the record of it being a fact for many, many years, what was the reason to change? That's when they got into the situation with Turnipseed, and some other legislative politicians. Politics got into it, that's what it was. Turnipseed tried to make himself popular with the voting public by attacking the practice of legislators going before

the Commission. A political ploy was all it was. It was considered for some time, the legislature decided the best thing to do was to draw them out of it, because it created such a talk of whether they got a better rate for clients than another lawyer. It wouldn't prove I wouldn't think that they did, but anyhow that's what the issue was. The legislature gradually reduced it, then cut it out.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So did you actually lose your utility company clients?

**DENNIS:** I lost some for appearances before the Commission. There'd still be other work I could do for them. I represented South Carolina Electric and Gas, and Santee-Cooper for all during my legislative career, but not appearances before the Commission, it was for other work. I tried cases in Circuit Court. Both the Santee-Cooper and the private utilities, such as what were they going to pay for property when they obtained it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** One of the things I read in this interview about the McNair years, you were describing one of Governor McNair's strong points, and said that he was able to get the private utilities and the public utilities and co-ops sort of around the negotiating table to deal with each other in a friendly manner.

**DENNIS:** Right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You're telling me now that you represented actually a private company and Santee-Cooper. Did you have any problem between them?

**DENNIS:** I had an agreement with them that I would represent them in a manner that they wouldn't conflict with each other. When an issue came up between one of the private companies and Santee-Cooper, I would have to not associate with either one.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did that ever happen?

**DENNIS:** It did. Not frequently, but occasionally it did.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This is the same fight they're having right now on John's Island I believe, between SCE&G and Berkeley. I guess it's the part of the island that they're annexing, or have annexed to the city.

**DENNIS:** Yes. That's a case that the Public Service Commission will get into. I don't think a lawyer, a legislative lawyer, should be in a case like that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Another issue of so-called back-scratching, or legislative privilege, that came up in this period involved the use of Belmont Plantation in Hampton County. It was a 600-acre game management area purchased by the state in 1941. Do you remember this confrontation and what was your stand on the use of Belmont? I believe it was by wildlife officials.

**DENNIS:** I considered that a lot of false charges came out of that. Made mountains out of molehills. I went there very infrequently, and I never did use it for any political persuasion whatsoever, and never knew of anything done for me to persuade me to do anything by the use of Belmont. I counted up one time, there'd been a lot of debate about it and newspaper articles about it. I pointed out that in, even though I was one of the most experienced legislators, I'd only been to Belmont a few times, I believe. I forgot how many years; it was only five times in a number of years. It was strictly for hunting that I went. They had food out for us, and .... good eating, but the hunting is what I went for. I didn't go there to carry anybody or try to influence them politically.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So that was the charge. The charge was that it was being used for political purposes.

**DENNIS:** Right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Would it have been the Republicans then, who were leading this attack?

**DENNIS:** The Republicans hadn't come into real activity during all that fighting was going on. It would have been a situation where a legislator tried to get a favor out of a corporate official by entertaining him down there. My personal situation was that they didn't have a lot to offer me at Belmont because I had better hunting, most of the time, out of my

back door.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you initially oppose the Cooper River re-diversion project, and did you later change your mind?

**DENNIS:** The re-diversion?

**ROSENGARTEN:** The one that they just, re-diverting from the Cooper back down the Santee.

**DENNIS:** I didn't propose it, but I supported it. That was a, I'm trying to think of something special about it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I think where I picked this up, here it is. This was in 1973, in February, from the State newspaper. It said that you and Hollings had gotten into an argument over the project. I didn't exactly say what the argument was about. Do you recall a difference of opinion with Hollings on that? That's the only thing I have on it.

**DENNIS:** No, I can't think of where we were different.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But in the end you felt that it was a wise move?

**DENNIS:** I never, I can't say that. I was somewhat dubious about it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I don't really think that they know yet.

**DENNIS:** No. There's still argument both ways.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Yes. What it's going to do to the oysters, and... Would you describe for me a typical Finance Committee meeting?

**DENNIS:** It was like any other committee meeting, mostly. Until we got the annual budget bill, and then all the attention in the committee was focused on it. Ordinarily we would handle the other bills that came to the Finance Committee just like other committees is what I'm saying. Whether we got state appropriations bills or any special appropriation bill before the committee, it was given uninterrupted attention. We would hold hearings on it, and then the committee would take it up section by section, and pass what they, or the majority wanted passed, whether it was changed or the same thing. Had plenty of time ahead of time to know what the issues were going to be, because the bill was first introduced in the House, it went through the Ways and Means Committee here, and on the House floor, we'd have debate, and then it comes to the Senate and goes to the Finance Committee, where we have a good background when we start. It was just a matter of what the majority opinion of the committee is over the various appropriations and issues involved. Most of the time it's not a great deal of difference among Finance Committee members.

**ROSENGARTEN:** How many members are there on the committee?

**DENNIS:** Eighteen.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Eighteen. So you could have a tie.

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And then what? Who breaks the tie?

**DENNIS:** Well, the Chairman would break it if he wasn't voting, but he generally voted too. So we'd have to vote over again. Put it off to another day and vote again. It was a tremendous experience for me to be the President and presiding officer of the Finance Committee for years, because I had seventeen colleagues that, at various times they were more informed than others, just like other committees, but you could depend on some interests, extreme interests, from some of the members on various appropriations that would affect their counties or their areas. When it was a hotly contested meeting, they pretty well always are, how did my people come out in this? Appropriations for the various institutions and agencies was one big thing, but there were many regulatory matters included in appropriations bills. Industrial regulations, and the operation of state government from the standpoint of whether to have a tax increase or to use the money you had was a big issue. Chairman of the Finance Committee had a tremendous responsibility. It was hard work. You try to be as

diplomatic as you can to keep a majority of the committee together so you don't get bogged down. So you have to watch the logrolling. A senator wants this appropriation because his county is going to get so much out of it. Have to watch that closely. I believe that's what they call it - logrolling.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And probably sometimes the members would help each other roll their logs, if they'd do the same on another appropriation.

**DENNIS:** They make agreements to trade votes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So then once the Finance Committee has come up with recommendations, it goes to the Senate?

**DENNIS:** It goes to the Senate. The Finance Committee has the responsibility of trying to pass it pretty well like they passed it in committee. There were still issues that they'd withdraw their support from the committee bill on, for they have certain reasons for their area in connection with the matter. Chairman had a time sometimes keeping a majority of the eighteen for it so we could get it through the Senate, without too much change. It's a heavy responsibility.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Then, the Senate version and the House version have to somehow be reconciled, is that right?

**DENNIS:** That's right. Then you have the proceeding known as the conference proceeding. The Chairman of the Finance Committee and two senators appointed by the presiding officer represent the Senate. Chairman of the Ways and Means, and two House members appointed by the Speaker, represent the House to consider the bill that had differed in the two bodies. Then they work on either a conference report or a pre-conference report. A conference report has to be confined to a reconciliation of differences between the two bills. Pre-conference can insert another approach, a different solution. That lasted around the clock pretty well, proceeding to get this through.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And then is the result binding, or does it have to go back to the...

**DENNIS:** The conference report then goes back to the house and Senate.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And they have to vote.

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It sounds like it could take forever.

**DENNIS:** It feels like it sometimes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So, this is the normal procedure during the legislative session. Where does the Budget and Control Board come in?

**DENNIS:** They originate the bill. They send the first bill to the Ways and Means Committee, and that's the document where the work starts. Ways and Means then changes it, puts its version on and sends it to the house, same thing in the Senate. It's a massive piece of legislation, and it follows the preceding year's bill pretty well. It's a matter that .... the most time and the committee infighting and the new matters that are brought into it. What the total appropriation is going to be, whether there's going to be a new tax or not.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So the Budget and Control Board is actually the, writes the bill, is the proposing agency? The Finance Committee chair is on that, and the chair of the Ways and Means...

**DENNIS:** Ways and Means person and Finance.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Another thing that I read in the interview that interested me. You talked about various financial advisors to the Budget and Control Board and how important they were in terms of providing information.

**DENNIS:** We had Dr. Morris for most of the time I was chairman. Chairman of the Board of Economic Advisors, and he was a good one. Had a lady that worked with him, and she was very good. She's a specialist on certain features of it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Barbara somebody?

**DENNIS:** Yes. [Dr. Barbara Feinn]

**ROSENGARTEN:** So what kind of information did these, do the advisors provide? That they, they make estimates...

**DENNIS:** Estimates of the revenue. That's their big function. They're supposed to tell the committee before they finalize the bill, just how much revenue they've got have to meet the terms of the bill.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Can you remember any situation where you just didn't take their advice, or felt that they were, incorrect?

**DENNIS:** On the Budget and Control Board?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Yes. Here it is. Barbara Feinn? Was that her name?

**DENNIS:** Yes it is.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Dr. Barbara Feinn, F-E-I-N-N is how they spell it here.

**DENNIS:** She's very smart. She and I got along very well together. I defended her version of a report before the Finance Committee many times because I had a great deal of confidence in her ability, and she gave full reasons for what she recommended. Most of the time they were together Dr. Morris was chairman.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Dr. James Morris. The other person mentioned here was Dr. Eugene Andy Laurent? He was another on this board of advisors.

**DENNIS:** I think he was on at one time, yes. Big surprise to me. I knew him. I thought very well of a state employee working in one of the departments. I didn't know he had fiscal capabilities, but he did after they put him on that board. He was well qualified. As chairman of the committee, mostly the committee would have them to come in to advise and to ask them questions sometimes, particularly when we had the bill up for consideration. But then we developed official relationships and talked to each other to, for the legislators to become more informed about some of the details. I spent a lot of time with Andy Laurent and Jim Morris, and the other board members.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did these people have tenure through different governor's terms. I mean are they, state employees that don't change with political elections.

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Are any of them still in that position? Morris or Laurent or Feinn?

**DENNIS:** They're all off now. That wasn't because the Republicans took over, they just, their time of service was over and they were not renamed.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Who appoints them?

**DENNIS:** What?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Who makes the appointment?

**DENNIS:** The legislature.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When you became chairman of the Finance Committee, what other committees did you head?

**DENNIS:** Not long before I became chairman of Finance, the Senate had a reorganization procedure, and greatly reduced the number of committees you could, I say greatly, reduced the number of committees you could serve on, and you couldn't be chairman of but one major committee. Before that I was on too many committees, and chairman of several.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I know you were the head of the wildlife committee.

**DENNIS:** At one time. Well, when you get to be chairman of the Finance committee, you've got your hands full, committee-wise.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So you were relieved when they passed this restriction?

**DENNIS:** I was glad, yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** During this period in 1973, one news reporter described a little bit of your home life and said you had more than fifty hunting dogs? Do you remember any dogs in particular?

**DENNIS:** Yes I do. That fifty was for a short time. I kept an average of twenty, twenty-five. Some of them came to me with names, and then I established a lot of names. Buck was an ordinary name for many hounds. Then .... the color dogs, Red Man or Black Man. Belle was one of my favorite dogs. Your affection for your dogs developed around how well they would trail and jump at .... , how fast they could run. Fox-hunters competed for speed among their dogs, more than other hunters, but deer hunters liked speed too, some of them. I had a female, that was my favorite I guess of my dogs, all through the years, as many as I had. She was a black and tan, her name was Molly. All the times I've shot a deer on the big Hagen plantation, I'd be shooting at deer and looking at Molly coming across the pine woods, running, at how fast she was. You can develop a deep affection for... I've cried more than once on the loss of an especially good dog.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Some people have cemeteries that have places where they... I've even seen headstones.

**DENNIS:** That's not done very much with hunting dogs. Somebody's great pet dog.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you know where I saw that? It was in the back yard of the Miles Brewton house. This is from way back, you know. This was an archeological excavation and they had, they were finding dog burials.

**DENNIS:** Your area of Georgetown, McClellanville, through the years has had a reputation for having good deer dogs. I've had some real good ones, some I've been real proud of.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Where would you get dogs from?

**DENNIS:** Various places. You buy them sometimes on the market. Some friend would go up to North Carolina, and bring a load back and .... them around. I raised a lot of mine. I had plenty of room to do it. I'd keep twelve, fifteen puppies most all the time. I'd have a particularly good fox dog that was getting up in years, and that would make the best kind of deer dog.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What kind of dog?

**DENNIS:** A fox-hound.

**ROSENGARTEN:** A fox-hound. Were these dogs specific breeds? Black and tan, fox-hound?

**DENNIS:** Yes. I had all kinds, but I had most success I guess with the Walker and the Red Bone and the Black and Tan.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you have to have a dog-keeper, or someone who was in charge of...

**DENNIS:** I had to have somebody to take care of the feeding of them. I did it at the farm, had a man at the farm. Cook everyday in the wash pots for them. Drips and cracklings and meat scraps. I've fed a lot of dogs in my life.

**ROSENGARTEN:** That could be quite a dent in your budget, feeding fifty dogs.

**DENNIS:** I'd hate to even try to estimate what dogs have cost me.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But you tried to raise whatever feed you could?

**DENNIS:** Well, for a long time I did. I had my corn, that I'd get ground for the grits. I'd use cracklings or bones from the butcher. Then I started to feed them on the dog feed, bought feed. That's a little more expensive. It's an expensive operation.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But not as expensive as horses.

**DENNIS:** Not quite.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Would you tell me a little about your horses? The two they mentioned in this article were Bill and Sugar.

**DENNIS:** I had one I had a long time. Don't tell me I've forgotten his name. Bob. I kept a horse; I changed it about every ten years. I hunted heavily from when I got out of college, let's see, what year now? That would be about 19 when I started hunting heavy, real heavy. That was right after the war, about 1945, to 1975. I did a lot of hunting. I had dozens of dogs during that time, and I had a new horse every ten years. Eight, twelve, approximately every ten years. I rode many a mile through the woods.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you keep only one horse, or did you usually have two?

**DENNIS:** I generally had two. Had some good ones. Bill and Blaze and Bob were three I remember most.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Are these thoroughbreds?

**DENNIS:** No. Bill was a quarter horse, no Bill was a .... Bill and Blaze. Bob was a quarter horse.

*[SIDE ONE ENDS, SIDE TWO BEGINS]*

**ROSENGARTEN:** I'd say within the last two years, three years? People have moved in and opened small, very small, horse operations.

**DENNIS:** I tell you, for a man who loves the hunt, I don't see how you could have a greater thrill than going out in some beautiful pine woods, even swamps, where they're fairly open, and have about twenty deer dogs and a nice horse to ride; it's hard to beat.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you also have special guns?

**DENNIS:** Well, each person has kept to themselves a gun that he could handle better, or liked better for some reason. Most of my friends, who were double-barrel people for a while, and then the automatics got so popular they went to automatics. I never did like to shoot automatics off my horse, because it kept throwing the shell out, the stubs, and hits him on the ear or head. Generally .... the automatics, I used mostly a double barrel on a horse. I used, a Parker gun was my favorite.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What kind?

**DENNIS:** Parker.

**ROSENGARTEN:** A Parker. A Parker double-barrel?

**DENNIS:** Yes. You can't kill a deer with that, you can't kill one.

Why, the years fade it I guess, because hiding behind a dog when he's trailing it and shooting the deer when he got up, he didn't kill the one we shot down but he, as the driver he was supposed to drive them out and you rode up a lot that you didn't shoot, and a lot that you shot didn't get, so you didn't hurt standards very much. We had such wonderful places to hunt. I had some on property that I owned, but most of my hunting was on property that was leased. Leased by me for myself and some friends. Hunting club. I've had, I've been president of hunting clubs that had as many as sixty members. We'd hunt at the club once a week. We'd hunt somewhere else another time. During the deer season I averaged deer hunting twice a week most all the time. I didn't do a lot of other hunting during deer season because I just went deer

hunting. I didn't ever see anything go by that I didn't hunt some of it. That was turkeys and duck, and quail and doves, and squirrels even sometimes. I was a, what's the best word to use to describe yourself as a hunter? I was an avid hunter.

**ROSENGARTEN:** In a season, how many deer would you bag?

**DENNIS:** In my early years, before the time I got hurt, I was hunting regularly, I'd average fifteen a year.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And most of that your family would eat?

**DENNIS:** Right. Family and servants, and friends sometimes. That were not deer hunters.

**ROSENGARTEN:** When you shot a deer, did you clean it yourself? Is that part of the...

**DENNIS:** That was part of it yes. I participated in the butchering. I had plenty of quail at the house to eat also at one time. I hunted quail. That's one advantage a successful politician has. He gets more invitations than the average fellow. I'd go out all the times when I could, and a lot of times when I shouldn't. My wife will tell you that I always had her refrigerator or her freezer pretty well filled with turkeys, venison, quail and dove, but dove's not as populous as quail, and the populous thing was .... than the duck and the quail. A friend of mine, a lawyer from Kingstree, always kind of came by to see me for just a few minutes on Monday morning, and he brought a dozen quail. We're looking forward to eating it now. I haven't had any in a good while. The good Lord blessed me with as good a hunting as any other man in South Carolina, I guess.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you inherit any guns from your father or your grandfather?

**DENNIS:** Yes. From my father I have a double-barrelled Parker that was my father's gun.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do know what became of General Dennis' Civil War guns?

**DENNIS:** No, I don't.

**ROSENGARTEN:** There's the museum person in me. That would be a very interesting artifact to have.

**DENNIS:** I'd love to run across it. He was a big hunter.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Among your sons, are they all avid hunters?

**DENNIS:** All of them. All three of them love the horseback part of it like I do, some of them more than others. Rembert Junior always had a horse. He goes on a horse now, every deer hunt practically. He's taken my place as the driver. I would always go on and drive on a hunt you know, take the dogs and drive the deer out. I had some fabulous hunting places. My friends, the Bradwell family owned the place that was bought by .... furniture company. It was at the confluence of the Santee and the Cooper, two branches of the Cooper River. It was a fine hunting place. Had a pond with ducks on it in addition to rice fields.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Say the name again of the man, your friend who owned it?

**DENNIS:** The Bradwell family.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Bradwell.

**DENNIS:** The place was Hagen, H A G E N. It was down at, near Cainhoy. I had the lease on it for years and years. They were particular friends of mine. I had a hunting club there. We had a clubhouse for a long time. We'd go down and spend the night, and then the membership would go in a trailer start and .... a right good little trailer village. Six thousand acres to start with, and then we added two. Eight thousand acres of pine, plenty of woods.

**ROSENGARTEN:** And you'd take the horses down in trailers?

**DENNIS:** That's right. Had stalls for them down there. Go down most of the time on Friday night, spend the night and

hunt Saturday. Had another hunt day during the week. Usually we alternated it, either Thursday or Saturday. Go down Wednesday night and spend the night, hunt Thursday. Had some wonderful hunting. In addition to the deer, I had ponds over the place, plenty of duck. Always had a coon dog. I say always, I mean for many years I kept good coon dogs.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But the game like coon and squirrel, those weren't for your freezer?

**DENNIS:** They were what?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were they for your freezer? You didn't mention them when you were listing the venison and the quail.

**DENNIS:** Didn't eat them, just shot them for hides. Squirrel, we ate squirrel. Coons, we caught and sold the hides.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Were there ever any black men involved in the hunts? For example as dog handlers, or...

**DENNIS:** Oh yes. I always had, most always, with my brother, had somebody on the farm doing the plowing. He would be included in the hunt. We'd put him on a stand and he'd help with the horses and the dogs, and with the skinning. We killed so many deer everybody had to chip in for the skinning. I guess you know just like in your area, the Georgetown crowd, Berkeley is a great hunting county as far as deer and turkeys and duck was concerned, and quail.

**ROSENGARTEN:** It sounds so much to me like what Thomas Chaplin, the planter that my husband wrote that book about, his descriptions of them going out to Hunting Island. They had, you know that still is called Hunting Island today; that was their camp, their hunting club. It sounds so much the same, you know, except probably for the vehicles.

**DENNIS:** I've had some wonderful opportunities of hunting. Not only on the regular club, or some of my own land some time. I belonged to the hunting club for duck.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Ducks Unlimited?

**DENNIS:** Natalie.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes?

**DENNIS:** What's the name of the place where duck club is?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Your duck club?

**MRS. DENNIS:** The Santee?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**MRS. DENNIS:** The Santee-Cooper?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Oh the gun club.

**MRS. DENNIS:** The gun club.

**ROSENGARTEN:** What used to be called the gun club. You were a member of the gun club before it was sold to the...

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Oh, I didn't know that.

**DENNIS:** They don't call it that now.

**ROSENGARTEN:** They call it the Santee Coastal Reserve.

**DENNIS:** That's the right idea.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But in McClellanville people still say the gun club.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But it still is the gun club. They still use it there. Well you know that.

**ROSENGARTEN:** The original owners have hunting rights on it.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Just the duck rights.

**DENNIS:** What was that check I made out annually to ....? Who was the payee?

**MRS. DENNIS:** To the fella in Conway?

**DENNIS:** Yes, but it had a club.

**MRS. DENNIS:** They called it the Santee Gun Club, and they still have that don't they? That's not it?

**ROSENGARTEN:** You're thinking of something else?

**MRS. DENNIS:** No, that's the one.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You mentioned another club to me way back, months ago. Was it Oak Grove? Am I remembering that name right?

**MRS. DENNIS:** They still have the gun club over there, you know. Where you all, you know that. They still shoot ducks.

**DENNIS:** I'm just trying to think of the name of it.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes. I thought they called it that, but it's another name?

**DENNIS:** Yes.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I think Senator Dennis is remembering another club, totally different.

**MRS. DENNIS:** No, he belonged to this one.

**ROSENGARTEN:** This one? You know who told me stories about that was Jack Leland, you know the newspaper columnist? He remembers the gun club very well.

**DENNIS:** The Santee club?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Santee Gun Club, right. And talked about a cook, a famous cook.

**DENNIS:** His club was the successor to that. Had the same property.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Some of the owners belonged to it. Some of the owners who owned it. After the wildlife, after they got it some wildlife, they formed a club and some of the owners, some of the original ones, belonged to it, but they had a very limited number. Twenty was it? A very small number in this club. A few of them were from South Carolina. I've forgotten when you got in.

**DENNIS:** Tell me the name of it.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I'm going to see if I've got the book, the number, because we used to call Tommy Strange sometimes to tell if they weren't coming. You had to let them know.

**DENNIS:** It was a wonderful duck place.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But Luke [son of Rembert & Natalie] says they don't have it now like they used to.

**DENNIS:** I don't think it was. Big ducks -- mallard and black, but the famous duck over there that I used to make ....

**MRS. DENNIS:** The Pin Tail?

**DENNIS:** Yes. Pin Tail.

**MRS. DENNIS:** That's what I have always liked. And he could only take a certain number. It was a fairly small club when he went. He could take one guest, Rembert? Or maybe two?

**DENNIS:** Spring.

**MRS. DENNIS:** You want to say Spring something? I don't have it listed down here. The only one I have is Tommy Strange's number in here. Because that's who he used to call. But I can find it out for you. I'll get it from Inez, because I'm sure she can look back and tell you.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I didn't know there was another, something other than the...

**DENNIS:** Santee Gun Club?

**ROSENGARTEN:** ...than the Santee Gun Club.

**MRS. DENNIS:** See, that's what Rembert really belonged to, but he says they didn't call it, that they had another name for it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Because there, let's see. The swamp area is called Blake's Reserve, and then there's another whole swamp area where they still hunt called Bellfield, that was once a plantation.

**MRS. DENNIS:** That's the only club that they've ever had over there, I think. And it is the Santee Gun Club, Rembert, but I think you all wrote, you probably wrote your check to a different name. Because that's the only one that was ever on that island. Rembert Junior will tell you the name; do you want me to go call him? I'll go call him.

**ROSENGARTEN:** We'll find out. Senator, I think it was the same article where they talked about all your hunting dogs. You told the reporter that your hair had turned white when you were at the age of thirty-three or thirty-four. Did that happen suddenly, was it an overnight...

**DENNIS:** Over a period of a couple of years. It went from just spots of gray to a pretty good covering of gray, and then after that there was no black hair left.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Was that characteristic of your family? Did that happen to other people in the family?

**DENNIS:** That's right. My father and my grandfather.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Can I interrupt you?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Yes. We're all ears.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Rembert said it was the Santee Gun Club, but after they, what, the state took it over I guess?

**ROSENGARTEN:** The wildlife.

**MRS. DENNIS:** They called you all's club, the Collins Gun...

**ROSENGARTEN:** Collins Creek.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Collins Creek Club. He knew it...

**ROSENGARTEN:** Okay. Because Collins Creek is the name of that road that cuts into the community called South Santee. Most people just say the South Santee road, but it's actually called the Collin's Creek road.

**MRS. DENNIS:** But he said they still called it the Santee Gun Club some, but that...

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well, that's, you know, people never will switch to a new name.

**MRS. DENNIS:** No, but that was the only club, and a few of the same people were in it, but it was very small.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You say that only a few were from South Carolina?

**MRS. DENNIS:** I think so, isn't that right Rembert? I'm wrong? Okay.

**DENNIS:** Wrong? You mean the Santee club or this club?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Your club. The Collins Creek Club. Most of them were from South Carolina?

**DENNIS:** Yes, I think all of them are.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I remember Jim Edwards got in after you did, didn't he? Governor Edwards?

**DENNIS:** No, I don't think he ever got in.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Oh, he didn't ever get in?

**ROSENGARTEN:** It was a very exclusive...

**MRS. DENNIS:** They had such a limited thing.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I know some of the guys who work down there, and they do have a good time. Because they have the run of the place basically. I'm not saying they hunt out of season, but they're there, every day of the year.

**MRS. DENNIS:** That's what they used to say. Tommy Strange and I forget who else.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Bill Mace. Young guy, very nice guy.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Our .... .., just she loved it.

**DENNIS:** She'd go down and eat some of the finest food you'd find on that course now. They had good cooks at that house. Good liquor to drink.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I didn't ever go.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I was going to ask that, if this was only men. Only men.

**DENNIS:** Only men, but we would have weekends when we'd invite the ladies down.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Seems to me that...

**DENNIS:** Very occasionally, not much.

**MRS. DENNIS:** ...that one of the men brought his wife.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I was just saying to the Senator that it's, all of his stories are so reminiscent of what Thomas Chaplin

wrote in his diary, the diary that my husband edited. I mean it's, what, a hundred and fifty years ago, but it sounds exactly the same. Except that they went everywhere on horses, they didn't trailer them anywhere, but getting a group of men to go off and having their slaves as dog handlers or whatever, and...

**MRS. DENNIS:** Well they didn't have slaves in your day, but you all had a lot of help.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You had to do the skinning yourself.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes.

**DENNIS:** They had a food butler, and the cooks; they got black females from around there to cook. They had the old plantation house. Wasn't anything finished about it, but it was comfortable.

**MRS. DENNIS:** The children, the boys used to say how the cooks liked you. I think what was always, you always...

**DENNIS:** They liked it when you tipped them.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes, but they said especially they liked you. I know you always go in, polite.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Express appreciation. That's very important.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I saw where this black, I read this article in the paper, and I don't know whether you take *The State* or not. He had moved back to South Carolina, he said that he just couldn't take the shooting and everything in the neighborhood where he was. He'd moved back to Columbia. He said one of things that he really liked about being back home, his parents didn't live here but his grandparents did, lived in Camden, he said that was people were polite. They said good morning. They spoke to you. Like you were somebody, regardless of color. He said they don't do that up north. We don't think about that do we? We speak to strangers, you know?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Yes. There's no question there's a whole different set of acceptable manners here. I mean, perfect strangers wave to you all the time here.

**MRS. DENNIS:** They don't do that. He said I still like it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But you know, even in the plantation days, I think this comes through in *Tombee*. The hunting parties and the fishing parties were the times when the blacks and the whites were the closest and the most, I don't want to say equal because there was still a master-slave relationship, but had the most camaraderie. I think it was a time everyone looked forward to.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Rembert has had a number of blacks to work for him, but he had one particular one at Stony Landing. I'm sure the years they've all hunted with you and fished with you, just like you were, the two of them, or whatever. George, you know who I'm talking about, don't you?

**DENNIS:** George Burch.

**ROSENGARTEN:** George Burch? Did you say fishing, too? I was going to ask you about that, because we've talked a fair amount about hunting, but not all about fishing.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Rembert, didn't you have two little, two boys who went with you fishing? Down at Stony Landing when you were young?

**DENNIS:** William Gadsden's son, one of them. I remember I got out of school one day, and I just started practicing law I guess it was. No, I guess I was still in college. I got Jim(?) out and went out and caught a string of .... redbreast in the rice field. Couldn't hardly bring them out.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You went to his school and come on out, or...

**DENNIS:** Where, our place was, you go by the school. There were two roads, one that people traveled in automobiles,

and one that we walked when we went, or rode a mule or horse. This particular morning I remember going by the school and talking to the principal about getting him out.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He was probably delighted. How terrible [laughing].

**DENNIS:** We caught a lot of fish.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Did you keep, continue fishing as you...

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes, we always did a lot.

**DENNIS:** Rice field fishing is real good. I'd go on an afternoon, two kinds of fishing. You'd either go and fish for the flat fish, the brown, redbreast, or fish for the bass, that was a little different. Fish with spinning rods when we know we're short of fish to eat.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So this is not in the river. This is actually in the fields?

**DENNIS:** In the rice fields. You had a lot of friends that called on you to let them go too. That's one advantage a politician had, if you let them go. A disadvantage if you didn't let them go.

**MRS. DENNIS:** We had so many people who came when we lived at Stony Landing who fished, that when we moved down here I told Rembert, I said, this is one place that's not going to be open. He was, to a fault, he was kind to everybody, black and white. Wasn't just white people. But it got to where it was terrible because people came from Charleston we didn't know. There were times that I was uneasy. I had a drunk man one night, took off all his clothes. He did! A white man. Do you remember that Rembert? You don't remember it? I had a house in the yard. Big William was in the... After I didn't let him in he went over there. Lord, he was so upset that something was going to happen to me, and the children couldn't... You know nobody was there. I don't remember what happened, seems to me I finally had to call the police. William made him put on his clothes, I remember. You don't remember that?

**DENNIS:** Yes. I don't remember the details.

**ROSENGARTEN:** He did that just to be a nuisance?

**MRS. DENNIS:** He came off the river, this man did. I'm not sure whether he came off the river or whether he came down there fishing. But Rembert had a hard time telling people they couldn't fish. You know, they didn't have anywhere, a lot of them.

**DENNIS:** I had so many places they could fish. We lived on a river. A lot of them liked to come there just to put in at the landing and go fishing. We had the rice field. .... liked to come down here and go to the rice field before we even moved down here. I leased the fishing for a long time, and some of the fields, to a Charleston club. They'd had it from the prior owners. I had a hunting club, too. Made some money out of it.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Probably not enough to pay for your hunting lease though.

**DENNIS:** No. My hunting expenses have always been high.

**ROSENGARTEN:** So you've leased land to some folks, and leased land from others.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Never had enough land to hunt.

**DENNIS:** Like she said, but I leased it for others too. I didn't lease it just for me to hunt on.

**MRS. DENNIS:** No, I know darling.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Anyway, you kept your grocery bills down.

**MRS. DENNIS:** That was one thing. You ate what you killed.

**DENNIS:** We used to eat fairly good; plenty of fish and quail in our kitchen.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You haven't mentioned wild hog at all.

**DENNIS:** We lived on that, too.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Do you get them up in these woods?

**DENNIS:** Over down in the Wando River area.

**MRS. DENNIS:** He brought one home. It was terrible, the first one I ever cooked.

**DENNIS:** You've got to know how to handle it. You can't just take it out of the woods. Got to catch it and shut it up. Feed it on corn for two, three weeks, and it would be almost like a domestic hog.

**ROSENGARTEN:** You can't shoot it in the woods.

**DENNIS:** Not any good really, like that.

**MRS. DENNIS:** People ate it. The first one I cooked, that he brought home, almost ran me out of my house.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Well I've heard even with deer that it's better to kill them standing still. That after they've run, and the adrenaline has gotten in the muscles...

**DENNIS:** That's right.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Do you all eat venison?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Whenever anyone brings it. Ted doesn't hunt. I mean, he has gone out with other people, but he hasn't done any serious hunting. Occasionally, when someone will... One of our neighbors, a doctor, is always trapping hogs. It's almost a... In fact one Christmas he had this trap out; it was kind of a neighborhood joke because Jim was going out all the time to check his trap. At Christmas his wife hung a little Christmas tree ornament in the shape of hog in the trap. As a joke.

**MRS. DENNIS:** We did eat it sometimes and it was okay.

**ROSENGARTEN:** We raised our own hogs. I've had wild hog I think twice.

**DENNIS:** Is Jim Morrison still living?

**MRS. DENNIS:** It seems to me that Judge Morrison died. Is he still living? Do you know?

**ROSENGARTEN:** One of the Morrisons died last year. It may have been him, I'm not sure.

**MRS. DENNIS:** I'm going to find out for you though. Because you and I talked about that the other day.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I can find that out too, because he's related to everybody in McClellanville.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes. Ask. You know you just sort of forget something like that.

**DENNIS:** We ate a meal over there with them. Went to eat with Jim but we ate with his brother. What was his name?

**MRS. DENNIS:** Can't tell you. Don't ask me now.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Jim Morrison's brother? It could be Malcolm. There are a lot of Malcolms in that family. There's Lee, there's a Malcolm. I don't know which are brothers and which are cousins, but...

**MRS. DENNIS:** There are too many. You form good friendships hunting, that's one.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Judge Morrison was one of your hunting...

**DENNIS:** He was a close personal friend.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I hate to get back to these political questions...

**MRS. DENNIS:** How far did you get?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Not that far because we got off on hunting.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Yes, well go on.

**ROSENGARTEN:** Actually, no, I think, I mean. The way I see these interviews is to really try to give a well-rounded view of your life, not just your political career, although obviously that's going to be the focus of it. I'm very happy to have other material, because its part of the picture. We're trying to do a biographical interview, and that's obviously as important in certain ways, in your life.

**DENNIS:** Where will this be?

**ROSENGARTEN:** Just at the archive. That is the only plan so far that anybody has said to me. This is for... It's not the State Archive, it's the University Archive; it's a different... This other interview, the one you did on the McNair years is at the State Archive. This is at the University. And after you read it, you can make a judgment if there's anything you want cut out or sealed for any number of years. You can specify that.

**DENNIS:** I hope I live so we can get this finished.

**MRS. DENNIS:** Oh, you'll do that. You know, when you asked about that, I remembered that the McNair years, that I remember us reading that, of course. But I was thinking you were talking about what they had on, that Governor McNair had done along these same lines. He did this just before Rembert. That's what I was really thinking.

**ROSENGARTEN:** I didn't know that. Well, to get back to the legislature here. One of the issues that came up in the early seventies, and became kind of an ongoing issue, was the idea of switching to state funding for the schools, as opposed to relying on local property taxes. This was a proposition that you backed right from the start.

**DENNIS:** We have to give them equal opportunity. I thought it was only fair that the financing be as much on an equal opportunity as you could have it, and that's the reason we had the programs in this state for public schools. County budgets would be supplemented by the state by way of payment of teacher's salaries, and certain other state aid measures. Wouldn't have been any way for the poorer school districts, the poorer counties really, to have had any chance at all at equal opportunity in education without considerable state aid. That's what Senator Gressette and I, I started it and he got with me on it, tried annually. To send back to the counties and school districts every dime that wasn't a necessity for the state to have. That's what they called the kickback. We got a lot of money for the local schools through the kickback.

**ROSENGARTEN:** But wasn't it during this period that, because the state revenue became so much in demand, the kickbacks were being, I don't know if they were being phased out or eliminated altogether?

**DENNIS:** Eliminated altogether now. But they increased the state aid. Local schools got same money and of course more money per year than the, an increase by way of state aid for teacher's salaries and school buses and all state aid ....

**ROSENGARTEN:** What advantages did you see in incorporating Hanahan into Berkeley County?

**DENNIS:** I think it was entwined with Bushy Park a good bit. I was afraid if we lost Hanahan then we might lose Bushy Park. Bushy Park was a tremendous shot in the arm financially for Berkeley County's finances. One phase of it was the financial end of it. Another was I expected, I don't know if it's over yet, I expected another bridge to connect the Hanahan communities and the Berkeley County communities across the river. Matter of fact, in the cases that went court, the federal

case that I participated in, I argued to the judge in Charleston that the future may hold a school district being partly on one side of the river, and partly on the other. I really expected it to be a good chance, and I don't see not still a good chance. How Berkeley County is peculiarly situated with a big lump of it down at Cainhoy? Being just across the road from Charleston and then down this way very similarly situated. I wouldn't have been surprised to see the Cooper River bridges being built now....

*[TAPE ELEVEN ENDS]*