



Charles J. Fendig

Hillsborough Remembers

Tampa businessman and WWII veteran Charles J. Fendig was appointed to the Tampa Public Library Board in August 1955 by Mayor Curtis Hixon and served for nearly 20 years. He actively promoted library services for the area, and provided leadership in establishing the foundation upon which the Tampa-Hillsborough County Library System was built. In November 2001, Mr. Fendig was honored for his service to the community by having the South Tampa Peninsular Library named for him.

[START TAPE 1, SIDE A]

This is an interview with Charles J. Fendig (CF) a former library board member, to gather information about his involvement in the library system particularly in the late 1950s, the 1960s, and the early 1970s. This interview is taking place on July 31, 2002 at the Jan Kaminis Platt Regional Library. In 2001, the Peninsular Branch Library was renamed the Charles J. Fendig Library to honor Mr. Fendig for his involvement and support in the building of that library and his work in building the downtown library, now known as the John F. Germany Library. Both of these buildings opened in 1968.

The interviewer is Patrice Koerper, (PK) Public Relations & Partnerships Coordinator for the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

This interview is being conducted at the request of the current library director, Joe Stines, to preserve the library system's history. Similar interviews will be conducted with each individual for whom a library has been named.

Patrice Koerper: *OK. Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed, Mr. Fendig. We are so pleased to have the opportunity to talk with you about your many years of involvement with the library system. I'd like to get us started by asking you how you first became involved in libraries in Tampa.*

Charles J. Fendig: *Patrice, first of all I do want to thank you for conducting this interview. It's mighty lovely of you and Joe to have such thought. And I'm delighted to participate with you.*

PK: *Well, thank you. OK, so we were going to talk a little bit about how you first became involved in libraries.*

CF: *My early recollections is then-current Mayor Hixon called me into his office one day and discussed the matter of our library system, and asked if I would like to serve on the library board. And I told him that I was not aware of their activities, or just what all their duties were. But certainly I'd be interested.*

And my association with him came largely through, I'd been re-elected to the Tampa Junior Chamber of Commerce for many years. And the JCs in those days was extremely active because it was the only young man's organization in Tampa. Sertoma had not been formed. The various civic clubs did not have branches, and therefore, it was the only group that a young man could participate in. And most of our political leaders and other leaders came up through the Junior Chamber at that time in Tampa's history.

The early days on the board our duties were not very clearly defined. I asked Mayor Hixon what we could do. He said, "Well, build some libraries," because at that time we really had three, as I recall in Tampa- the three Carnegie libraries. We did have a couple little small ones like Woodrow Wilson, Hyde Park, the old time branch, but they were very tiny. And he said "There is a lot that can be done if you get involved and interested."

But our early days, it appeared to me that they expected the library board members to review books, and make suggestions on items that should be in the library, things that are completely foreign to a board member today. And it became very, very much a labor of love, because the more I participated, the more interested I became. And then we had the challenge of doing something. And that was the big issue.

I often mentioned Quintilla Bruton from Plant City, and she was a vital force in all of our activities. And she did so much for the entire Hillsborough County system. I think she started the bookmobiles! To the best of my recollection, the bookmobile was her original idea. And it gave us circulation to the areas that we had no circulation at all. And, and she made you do things. She was a very energetic and powerful lady.

Actually, I guess the earliest days of the library, I recall mainly going down there and having a discussion with Bill Frieze about more of our internal problems. And I'm going to be winding around a little bit, Patrice, but I do recall we had such duties that seemed so ridiculous today. I mentioned to you previously that every month, the City of Tampa sent me the payroll report. And we had a list of everybody that worked for the library, and

we were supposed to go through the list and be sure that they were in our employ. And we had to sign it. And before they could be paid, they'd route that list over to my office, and I was supposed to review it and actually sign off on it- no computers, a typewritten list of everybody's name on it.

I'm not sure how you want to proceed from this point on.

PK: *That was just great. Now, when you were signing the list, were you president of the board at that time?*

CF: I'm not certain. I probably was not- probably was secretary, I guess. I don't know when I became what.

PK: *We can check all those dates out, too.*

CF: We had a lot of good board members and a lot of very active ones.

PK: *Did you meet monthly at that time? Was it a monthly situation?*

CF: Yes, I'm pretty sure it was at least monthly, and special call meetings.

PK: *[Tape skips] through the mayor at that time was to start building libraries.*

CF: Yeah, he said, "Why don't you do something, get a project, be active?" Says, "Tampa could stand some improvements, you know." Boy! Little did we realize how badly we needed ().

PK: *Now, did he give you direction and say we need a library here, or did he leave that up to the board?*

CF: That's a good question; no he really didn't. He--. It's hard to realize how relatively primitive we were. We didn't even have air conditioning. We had those huge big windows down there. We had--. Really, compared to your present day facilities, it's like night and day.

PK: *How did you decide then which projects to pursue?*

CF: I think little by little, we got involved more and more. Initially doing something in the

Peninsular area, because this area where we have to live had expressed through the citizenry a desire to have some facility. And I mentioned to you previously, the Friends of the Library were a, were a fine group. And they were, they were small, not really highly organized, but they were persistent and--. They--, I think they came up with the idea of "Let's ask the city if they will rent a little storefront," which we did up on Neptune-- I think it was Neptune-- where we can possibly show that there is some interest, you know. And as your records have shown, that little storefront circulated at one time a great volume of books.

PK: *It was very busy.*

CF: And so they, they, they were very proud of that accomplishment, and we met at least once a month with this Friends group. And I've mentioned to you in the past, particularly Ms. Levinson and-- *particularly* Ms. Levinson-- . She gave us her lovely home in which to meet, and we had many outstanding meetings in her home. The ambience there was so lovely that it was conducive to attending. And they attracted good people to these meetings, and later we realized the necessity to involve politics. So we had more and more city council members and mayors and people of influence to try to get them to lend support.

PK: *Now, they opened that branch-- the storefront you were talking about-- I think, in October of 1960.*

CF: Was it that far back?

PK: *Yes. And then in 1968 is when they finally opened the library as it stands today, the one that is named in your honor. Tell me a little bit about all of that process.*

CF: I didn't realize it was that many years, frankly. It--, that seems a long time. The process came about--. At one point, we said, "Where do we go? What direction do we take? Who do we talk to about planning and so forth?" And Bill Frieze was the librarian in those days, and Bill lended a lot of support to us. And we found-- I'm probably ahead of myself, but I don't remember it, chronology-- but, the--. We decided to contact as many experts as we could, people that were qualified to give us advice. And we wrote the

American Library Association, of course, and asked for names of outstanding people. They told us the librarian in the city of Miami was nationally known, and we didn't have to go very far to find an outstanding person, you know. And he did come up here on two or three occasions.

PK: *Who was that?*

CF: I wish I could recall his name, but I don't.

PK: *It wasn't Cecil at that time?*

CF: No, it was long before Cecil. And he, he came, and he discussed things with us. And Bill Frieze had quite a bit of input also. And came down to the point of location. How do you finance it? How do you build it? How large do you want it to be? These type questions that are logical. And it just seems, Patrice, that the years slip by.

PK: *Well, I know you did a lot of work on that project. Wasn't there some discussion about the location of the library itself?*

CF: Good question. Location was a major factor. Curtis Hixon, the convention center, existed then. And we thought it should be in that general complex. And I-4 of course existed, and it was relatively new. And everybody wanted to move the library more to the north. And we kept insisting that it should be at a point where you could reach it by, by walking to it- without having to ride there. And little by little, we were able to get the present location, which I think was an urban renewal location.

PK: *For the main library on Ashley?*

CF: For that main one, right. Interestingly, I, I say, I'm going to ramble a little bit.

PK: *That's OK. We invented the rambling.*

CF: You said, "You'll edit this out," so--. I saw the necessity to involve more and more people and--. I used to eat lunch every day in the University Club. Our offices were in the, in that building, the Exchange Bank building, at that time. And our offices were there, so it was logical, just so easy to go upstairs for lunch. And at that time, most of the main offices seemed to be downtown, and it was the center

point for business activity. Not that anymore- it has become more social. But it was largely business, and I used to see the same people almost every day. I often noticed John Germany having lunch with then-editor of the Tribune. And I should have researched and had these names.

PK: *Oh, that's OK.*

CF: But Jimmy Clendenin and-- a very well respected man--. And John and he ate lunch together. And I think John's law firm did the Tribune's work at the time, and so they were close. And we needed more newspaper support, so I said, "You know, the way to get some good editorials is to feed John this information, let him get Jimmy to help us." And so I did, and, and I told John that was my intention. And little by little, we interested him in the project, and I told him I wanted him to come to one of these evening meetings at Levinsons' home. And he did. I think he became more and more interested when he saw the sincerity of these meetings. And the Levinsons were very interesting people.

Just as a sideline- I think I might have told you that her uncle was Goldberg, who was head of the United Nations. And he was also on the Supreme Court. It's President Johnson that asked him to resign from the Supreme Court and head the UN. And he told us at one point that it was the biggest mistake of his life. He never should have gotten off the Supreme Court, that it was difficult to turn down the President of the United States, you know.

PK: *Now, this was Na Levinson's uncle?*

CF: Her uncle, her mother's brother.

PK: *Now, was Na a Friend of the Library?*

CF: She was active in the--. Yeah.

PK: *OK, so she was--.*

CF: Her name was on the plaque downtown that we put by the-- , that we put by the elevators, as I recall. And she came to--. I'd seen her at different meetings. She had moved further out. They live in Tampa still, but they moved further out. They own Treasure Island Shrimp Company, which was a big business at the time.

PK: Now, were you working on opening what was formally known as the Peninsular Library at the same time you were working on opening the main library downtown? Were those projects happening?

CF: I think they were pretty much together. One--. I think the time frame was pretty much together. The, the years just seem to slip by so rapidly. I do know that we felt the necessity of having a library director who showed a little bit more energy, and more maybe younger, and maybe more forceful than () Bill Frieze was, although he sure had definite capabilities that we respected. But we needed, we needed a younger, more vibrant leadership. In this connection, I think the search for director was an interesting part of what we did-

PK: Oh yes, definitely.

CF: --because it had a lot to do with our ultimate success. There was a consulting physiatrist here in Tampa, who was highly respected, and we enlisted his services gratis. And we had on a board-- a selection board-- of about five or six people, and anybody else who wanted to be present, but primarily them. We set it up very formally, and it was a regular business type meeting. Ms. Bruton was very active in it, and some of these other folks. And so we got the mayor at the time-- and I'm not sure which mayor it was-- to let us contact people throughout the country to see if they were interested in this position.

PK: So this was position as director of the library?

CF: It was director of the library. And we knew we couldn't interview them all, but we thought we could get to interview as many as possible. So if we didn't, we advertised in the proper sources. We had, as I recall, fifty or more responses. And we narrowed it down into discussions from their resumes as to those we thought were the most qualified. And finally we asked the city if they would pay the expense of six of them to come down here and let us interview them. And we did. And they all came, as I recall, and Cecil was our selection.

PK: So that was Cecil Beach, then.

CF: Cecil Beach. And of course, he proved to be very good. And then the state hired him away from us at a certain point, but he had much to do with our early success.

PK: Now, I know that you mentioned before that there was a lot of citizen input on where to locate the Peninsular Library, too.

CF: Yes, good point. There really was. I mentioned to you that we wanted to have it--. I think you're familiar where Grady School is located on Watrous?

PK: Yes.

CF: And there are tennis courts over there now. We wanted the school--, the library to be near the school by where those tennis courts are. There were no tennis courts. But most people preferred the tennis courts-- the people that lived around the area. We thought it was a great location because it had parking. And that's one of the objections of the Peninsular Branch now is the lack of parking. And we knew that to be a factor.

We kept hoping that they would acquire some more land around it, which they never did. But there was input, and the final conclusion was-- . And I guess money was a factor too, as to what was available and how much money we had to spend. And I think our earlier, earliest days with these various meetings we held, where we tried to attract political figures--.

My early recollections are largely with Julian Lane, who was the mayor. And he, he made the statement that we, you know, should move ahead. And I read in the data that you sent me that Doug West, who was on the city council, said that there is more to a city than streets and sewers, and I remember that comment. I thought it was Julian Lane that made it, but I remember the statement. And we, we concluded that we need to have some cultural improvement along with physical [Tape skips].

Yes, [Laughter] he sure did. Then finally, one thing moved ahead with--. Really, Nuccio, Mayor Nuccio, was probably the leading factor. I always felt that, I always felt that he deserved a lot more credit than he received. He, he was such a charming man, lacking in

formal education, but extremely bright, and he could handle people beautifully. He--. I mentioned to you previously [Tape skips]. I asked him to take John Germany with us; that was my request. I thought John could add something, and also I wanted someone to be with me. And I thought John would add a lot to the meeting, and he did.

PK: *Now, why were you going to New York?*

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[START OF TAPE 2, SIDE A]

PK: *OK. We are going to resume. We were just talking about your trip to New York with the mayor and Mr. Germany, or Judge Germany.*

CF: At that time, John-- I'm not sure whether he was with Holland and Knight then or not, but maybe another firm-- but he decided to be a judge. And Tampa needed some more circuit judges. And at the time he became a judge, why, they really had more judges initially than they needed, and they weren't all that busy. So therefore, we tried to involve him in other projects too, you know.

But as far as the trip to New York, I went by his home, and I had known his wife for years, and I said--, I drove up, and Maryellen says, [Tape skips] "Go have a good time in New York. Get John up there and make him forget he's a judge." [Laughter]

It always tickled me, because John was so formal, and she said "Make him relax and have a good time." I said, "Well, I'll work on that." And certainly, Mayor Nuccio was such--, so interesting. He was a great person, a great host. [Tape skips] He flew us up there first class. Julian Rice, who was the city controller, I think, at the time, he told me the mayor paid for it. I said, "Didn't the city pay for all this?" He said, "No, Mayor Nuccio paid for it." That's what he told me, so I have no reason to doubt him.

The only lady on the trip was Ms. Nuccio. There were four or five men. And Mayor Nuccio planned our trip up there, other than our formal meetings. He said, "Well now, I have a plan where I'm going to take you all to dinner this evening and tomorrow. And we'll

go to the Copa Cabana and places that he knew, you know. He said, "Now, you don't have to go with me. You can go on your own, if you want to." But I think everybody accepted his invitation.

And he had made many trips to New York. And Tampa had their attorneys and their fiscal advisors; Lealman Brothers were their fiscal advisors. I remember he took us in to meet the people who were going to handle [Tape skips]. I expected it to be this super [Tape skips]. But it wasn't fancy- an old wooden desk-- pretty old looking--, the whole office--. And they did tell us that they were going to remodel and so forth. But I said, "Well, this old desk over here in the corner- it's seen some use." And the man said "Yup." He said, "That old desk over in the corner- we just loaned Philip Morris Company \$50 million across that desk this morning." [Chuckle] So--

PK: *So the goal of the trip was to get bond money? How did all that work? I'm unclear.*

CF: Yeah, the goal of the trip was to arrange to sell bonds to raise the money to construct the library.

PK: *And this is the main library?*

CF: The main library. And then, the basis of the bond issue was supposed to be revenue generated by cigarette taxes, so we can thank cigarette smoking for building this library. [Chuckle] And it did--, it was built with cigarette tax money. And I remember the--. There was much concern over the fact that the government was going to require the manufacturers to print on the packages about cigarette smoking may be injurious to your health. That--. We were concerned about what impact that might have on the sale of cigarettes.

And as a countermeasure to it, Mayor Nuccio had charts drawn presented by Julian Rice, and had them () showing that in England, they had preceded us with these warnings and that the Royal College of Surgeons came out with a report. And it showed that cigarette-taxed smoking had not decreased after their report, which was by way of encouragement that it wasn't going to affect it all that bad. And they did present those charts there.

They-- the Chase Manhattan Bank-- had the meetings with the bond people, the various bond houses. The bond folks were mostly young men, and largely graduates of the Eastern schools-- Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Ivy League-- and sharp young men. And of course, Mayor Nuccio, with his limited sixth-grade education probably, he was right at home with them. And he was a dapper individual. He wore a homburg and smoked a big cigar, and murdered the King's English.

And I () recall, he introduced the people in our party, and his initial comment was--, stands up in front of this highly educated group and says, "Gentlemens," with a lisp, "Gentlemens, we're here today to make this presentation," and so forth. And of course, they cracked up when they hear him talk, you know. And he--, they called him "Uncle Nick." I mean, they--. He said, he said, "Now I'm not going to make this presentation. I have men here with me who are going to do this and they have charts." And they did; they had good charts- excellent presentation.

And the final outcome was that they did sell the bonds at a lower rate of interest than they anticipated, and we were extremely pleased. And later, one of the attorneys handling, Vince Thornton-- who was a lawyer-- he had something to do with the handling of bond issues for Tampa Stadium, initially. And he told us that what they learned from these library bonds' sale was very helpful in the sale of the bonds for the Tampa Stadium, that the format to go through and so forth--. And Patrice, I can talk a little more about them coming down here if you want me to.

PK: Yes, we would love to hear it; that would be great!

CF: It's kind of interesting. The--. Some of this I've told you before, so you know all that. The bond issue was finally arranged, and the formalization of it was to take place. And they would come to Tampa to sign everything. And in those days, Mayor Nuccio had a home-- two-story, white frame house-- on an unpaved street. And I don't remember the exact section of Tampa, but not fancy. He later built a nicer home, but this--, at that point, () home was very ordinary.

So he called me and said, you know, "These people are coming to town." And he always loved the Columbia Restaurant; he said "I'm going to take them all out to the Columbia for dinner, and I'd like to have you come with us." And I told him I would be delighted. And he said, "We'll meet at my house." And I didn't know where he lived or anything else, you know. And I said, "Yes sir, I'll be there." So I went to his home, and I'm thinking, "Now here's this man in here entertaining these people who have been everywhere, and he invites them. He didn't say 'Meet at the University Club or Temple Terrace Hotel for cocktails and then dinner.' He said 'Come by my home,'" which I thought was lovely at the time.

He had a card table in the living room with some bottles of liquor on it, so forth- a bar set-up. And I guess this was his home, and he was happy to have you there, huh. And then we all went out to the Columbia.

Of course, he was a take-charge guy; he ordered--, he usually ordered for you, Mayor Nuccio did. Or he suggested things- certainly drinks. And I remember how close these people were to him, and I remember how fondly they spoke of him. And I really credit him so much with the progress we made. I--. Of course, the other people had a lot to do with the earlier days, but without his initiative, I'm not too sure we would've done as well as we did.

PK: I remember you telling me when we talked about the library- the, the Fendig Library-- that the architect there is somebody local, and that that design--. There was some discussion over what that design would end up looking like. Can you tell us something about that?

CF: Yeah, that was sort of funny. When we first saw it, we didn't--. We weren't too taken with the appearance of it, you know. There is nothing surrounding it. We saw these four separate pods, you know. It sort of looked like it in the drawing. And I remember out on Florida Avenue, there was a brick plant where they made bricks. And it looked like a kiln, you know, like you bake bricks in. And we kind of joked about it; said the thing looks like a brick factory, you know. We weren't that thrilled.

But we, we grew to love it. And I think it's very functional, and the architects were extremely interested in it- they--, more so than just an average project, I thought. And course, they were involved downtown too- same firm.

PK: *And that firm was...?*

CF: It was McElvy and Jennewein. But John MacIntosh was with them, and he was one of the leading architects on that particular job. And we went through a lot of problems. We talk about libraries in general; downtown, the contractor was a company named Burbuce and Company, as I recall. They were a national contractor that had built probably a hundred hospitals and built numerous plants all over the United States. And they, they had a reputation, I learned later, for driving their subcontractors pretty hard. Of course, that's how they got the job by on the lower--, lowest bid.

Unfortunately, you have to deal with the lowest bid. What you do is go at the bid-letting for the downtown deal. I remember when it was awarded to Burbuce, the architects moaned because they knew the troubles we were going to have. And sure enough, we did. And some of the subcontractors did go broke. And the façade up around the top of the downtown library- that contractor went broke, and they had to junk most of it and start over.

And the insurance companies finished the library downtown. They finished the Tampa incinerator, which Burbuce was building. Tampa--, St. Joseph's Hospital he was involved with; they were involved with that. And so there were a lot of legal entanglements before that occurred. And at times, we wondered if it ever would get built. [Chuckle] So nothing's, nothing's simple.

PK: *Now, tell me a little bit about art in the library, because I know we've talked about that in the past. How did it come about that you all got involved in the art that ended up being in the main library downtown?*

CF: Good point. I'm not certain how it started. I think we probably said, "What are we going to put on the walls?" you know. You have to have something in there. And who do we go to; who do we talk to?

And so there again, this group headed by Ms. Levinson, and also by another lady whose name will come to me in a moment- they, they were artistic, and they had some beautiful paintings in their homes. So I talked to them. In fact, that one Kossner painting that we have of Moses in the mountain- she had three main ones, and she had one or two of them. She was instrumental in our going to Sarasota and buying that one. I went to Sarasota with three or four of the ladies one day, and we went to all those various artists down there. And there was a lot of them in Sarasota, once you find out who they are.

And Jim Camp was the head of the art department at the University of South Florida. We got the university to send him to New York to look at some prints for us. And he said he looked at about 5,000 prints on his trip, and picked a couple of hundred to be mailed to Tampa for us to pick and choose from. These were not paintings, but they were prints. And then we were criticized some for picking poster art in some cases, rather than real genuine art. And we thought there was a place for that, too.

I remember the Children's Department; we wanted Tom Sawyer and The Deerslayer and certain pictures that depicted children's books. And then we got into some mobiles, and we learned little by little by talking to--. Testaseca did some work for us- local artist.

And once the word got out that we had a little money to spend, why, they came to see us. And we did. The city gave us, I think, \$25,000, and we used it for that. What one thing on money that I remember telling you about was--. And I know you're going to interview John, and I hope he substantiates this. [Laughter] But I thought it was pretty neat on his part what he did, because he was sincere in what he was doing.

We had a little extra money, as things turned out. And John was idealistic, and he said, "I think more and more communities, when they have this situation, should send it back to Washington and not just spend it." And I think that certainly has merit, but I didn't agree with him. [Laughter] And I said, "Well, Washington has all these beautiful monuments, and they don't go the cheapest route on everything. And why can't we have something pretty

here? Hmm, I'd just as soon us have it as send it back there and have them spend it up there. It's not like they're going to save it." And he said, "If everybody felt that way..." and so forth. And I said, "Well, you're right, of course but..." And it boiled down to a--.

I remember our fountain out front. That was, of course, built in Europe. I remember the fire hoses were ordinary, old, ugly fire hoses. And we could buy them with chromium tips that were real pretty for a little bit extra, you know-ordinary things like that. And so we spent it, [Laughter] and I always thought that maybe we did the right thing.

But I think that the progress you folks have made in recent years is outstanding. Certainly, a business of highly-qualified people like Joe Stines and yourself have added immeasurably to the Tampa library system. Our system didn't--, it was nothing compared to what you all have today. You're so advanced compared to what we had.

PK: *I don't [Tape skips] be here without the work--. Really!*

CF: We did, we did a good job in our time, but you all are so far ahead of us it's hardly comparable.

PK: *I think that when you put what you accomplished in perspective-- to have a discussion with the mayor and say, "Let's go build some libraries"-- you started from the bottom up. And what you accomplished was terrific.*

CF: We really had some interesting times. I honestly think they thought we were going to be a moral force in picking books and so forth, because they had a minister on the board and people from different walks of life, you know.

PK: *That's interesting.*

CF: Yeah. It wasn't--. What are your qualifications? I begin to wonder. There weren't any, except that somebody wants to accomplish something. I guess that was pretty important. Overall, the people that manifested interest were sincere, and they stayed with it. [Pause]

PK: *That persistence paid off.*

CF: Yes. The other lady, who I couldn't think of a moment ago, is Ms. Neuman- Stanford Neuman, Ms. Stanford Neuman. And Elaine Levinson's husband was--, trying to think of her. [Pause] Can't recall. But ()--

PK: () *Levinson.*

CF: () *Levinson, right. What else you want to talk about?*

PK: *Oh, I got a couple more questions for you. You mentioned something about the shovel hanging in the lobby of, lobby of Joe Stines's office. [Laughter] And I think that was used at the groundbreaking of the main library. Tell us about that story.*

CF: Yeah, I happened to see that up in you all's office. Well, we were going to have this groundbreaking, and I'd always seen pictures of bunch of dignitaries with a shovel, you know. And I said, "Well, we should have a fancy shovel [Chuckle], not just an ordinary ol' hardware store shovel." So in those days, automobiles were a lot different. And cars had big chrome bumpers. And when people had automobile accidents, frequently they had the bumpers re-coated- re-plated, actually. It looked like new. So I said, "Well, I'm going to take this shovel down there to the bumper shop and have them coat it." So that's the fancy shovel that's sitting there.

PK: *That's a great story. We would've never known that, except for you walking in there that day and mentioning that.*

CF: Yeah, I just happened to see that there.

PK: *You also mentioned another historic moment that you actually had sitting in the library director's office- something that happened nationally that impacted. You want to tell me about that?*

CF: That's when President Kennedy was assassinated, no doubt you're talking about.

PK: Yes.

CF: I do recall vividly that day, as does everybody, I guess. I remember we had some young librarians there. And I remember two of the girls burst into the office to tell us, and they

were crying and very emotional. And of course, that was an emotional day. And--. But I think that almost everybody who was alive at the time can tell you where they were on that particular day. You're too young to know all these historic things, but--.

PK: *I was in school. I was in grade school, at my desk when that happened.*

CF: You remember the teacher telling you?

PK: *Yes, exactly. It was one of those moments, but it's interesting that that happened to you at the library.*

CF: At the library. You know, there is strange things that happen in your life. I remember when-- this I know is before your time-- when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, almost everybody my age can tell you exactly where they were and, and what their reaction was. That was a great period of American history.

PK: *Do you remember when you got started with the library board? I mean, was it the late '50s, or earlier?*

***I think reading does so much
for so many people.***

CF: Probably.

PK: *Yeah, I was thinking from what I pulled together.*

CF: (), yeah.

PK: *I was wondering if-- we mentioned a couple of the library directors-- can you tell us any more about your dealings with Cecil Beach? He is somebody that is still involved in libraries in the state, and I know that we have talked about him a lot.*

CF: Well, I remember Mr. Meirose, but see, he became more active when I became less active. And I didn't have much dealings with him.

PK: *With Cecil or Meirose?*

CF: With Cecil, I had () with. When Meirose replaced him, I didn't--. I just thought that it was time for me to get out. I thought that, you

know, we need some fresh new leadership, and I think I stayed too long as it was.

PK: *[Chuckle] I don't think so.*

CF: Well, I don't know. I think that sometime you outlive your good, you know, but I enjoyed it. It was real productive years. They were real good years. [Recorder is turned off and then back on] People had a lot of ener--

[END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A]

[START OF TAPE 2, SIDE B]

PK: *OK. We have a couple of more questions. And I thought that as long as I had you here today, I would ask you a couple of questions related in general to libraries- if growing up you had a favorite library memory or story? I didn't know; we've never--. I don't know if we've ever talked about that before. And I didn't know if you were a library-goer at the time or--?*

CF: It's interesting that you bring that up. Really, not to a great extent, because we didn't have anything. We could go downtown, but to go downtown was--, that was a great undertaking. We didn't have cars. I mean, and as young people, of course we didn't. And we didn't have any libraries in the neighborhood. We had a school library, of course, that you could use. And we didn't have much exposure. The library can be such a source of such enjoyment to so many people. I do think I read more when I was young, because I didn't go to the library to get the books. But I bought books, and went, and I bought a lot of condensed books. [Tape skips] But later, my eyes became such that I couldn't do much reading; my power of concentration slacked off.

PK: *[Chuckle]*

CF: But I think reading does so much for so many people. It helps with the vocabulary, helps with spelling, helps you [Tape skips]

elderly people [Tape skips]. I really wished I had had a greater participation with--. I grew up in a Tampa in the midst of the depression, Patrice, and it's hard to visualize how poor this area really, truly was. It's, it's hard to visualize the country, but this is off the subject, of course.

But the thing is, nobody made any money. Nobody had any money. Very few activities amounted to anything because the financing wasn't there to do it. You didn't do a whole lot. As a, as a youngster, your activities were: of course, school; come home; play; study; and go to school the next day, you know. And on Saturdays, you went to a movie and--. But you had all--. You know, you had 25 cents to go downtown. You rode the streetcar, 10 cents for a movie and--. It's hard to realize how ().

PK: *Do you have any book that meant any--, special memories of any certain books or--?*

CF: Yeah, I do. I do- certain books that I've enjoyed. I wished I'd have thought about this before this meeting.

PK: *Oh, that's OK.*

CF: But I have a--, I still have quite a few books, but I've given most of them away, I guess. But I enjoyed the--, well, I enjoyed fiction, but I also enjoyed historical fiction. And I enjoyed, well, so many great stories, so many great books. Now, the real epics, I couldn't read. War and Peace- I could never get through it.

PK: *I haven't read it. [Chuckle]*

CF: It's just too much () more than I could handle. I did read Gone with the Wind, which was--, really was a great, great book. I don't know how it goes down in history, but it's got to be one of the great ones. Don't you think?

PK: *I've never read the book. I've only seen the movie.*

CF: You've never read the book.

PK: *I've never read that.*

CF: Well, the book you should read.

PK: *[Tape skips] Were there series or anything like that?*

CF: Oh yeah, we had series. We had Tom Sawyer, and there's children's books that they invented television and telephones, and all these things that we never dreamed would happen. But my parents encouraged us to read.

PK: *[Tape skips] you wanted to mention--.*

CF: Thank you for having me here. The [Tape skips].

PK: *We would always welcome another opportunity to talk with you again.*

CF: Well, I thank you.

PK: *You shared so many interesting--.*

CF: Well, I'm so honored to be here with you, and of course, with the naming of the Peninsular Branch. Renaming of it is a day that will forever--, will be paramount in my memory, and something that I never dreamed would ever occur. And--.

PK: *That took place just last year, not even a year ago.*

CF: That's right; gave me a thrill that I could never adequately describe. And I had you folks to thank for that.

PK: *Tell us, how did you hear about it? Did--, how were you informed actually that the library was going to be named in your honor?*

CF: It's, it is rather strange because--, I thought it was strange, anyway. A friend of mine called me, and he said, "They're going to name that branch..." I said, "Aw, go on." I said, "Where'd you hear that?" He said, "Well I heard that." I said, "Well I haven't heard it." He said, "Well, I'm sorry I leaked it to you," you know. But then I'd heard that through an individual that Chris Hart, who really had a lot to do with it--. So I called him and asked him. I said, "You know, I'm getting just rumors. Anything to the rumors?" He said, "Oh yeah, I want you to watch [Tape skips]."

PK: *--and your hard work, and he knew your history with the library.*

CF: Yeah, well, he was nice to do that, of course. He--. But it's been an interesting ride, I'll tell you.

PK: *Well, thank you for sharing it. We appreciate it, and--.*

CF: I'm sure that there are so many things that have occurred, but you have a little, general idea. Discussion has been pretty good.

PK: *This is wonderful. So thank you. I'm going to turn this off now, and we can relax.*

CF: Well, thank you for ().

PK: *Thank you.*

[END OF TAPE 2, SIDE B]

[END OF INTERVIEW]