

## **LAWTON M. CHILES CENTER FOR FLORIDA HISTORY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Interview with: Robert E. Puterbaugh**

**Interviewer: James M. Denham**

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and Robert E. Puterbaugh**

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**Denham:** I'm with Robert Puterbaugh of the Peterson Myers law firm and we're here to do an oral history to discuss his life and legal career.

**Puterbaugh:** Good morning

**Denham:** Can you tell me when you were born? What year were you born?

**Puterbaugh:** Franklin D. Roosevelt was President, 1944.

**Denham:** You were born in Ohio, is that correct?

**Puterbaugh:** That's correct!

**Denham:** And your parents, tell us a little bit about your parents, and where they were from, and where they were born and how they came to be in Ohio.

**Puterbaugh:** My mother's family, if you trace the roots back to Virginia and Kentucky, her maiden name was Chadwell and she was a direct descendant of David C, Chadwell who served as a Captain in the Revolutionary War and later a member of the Virginia House of Delegates during the same approximate frame as James Madison, James Monroe, John Marshall and various early leaders in this country. So, her history traces back to 18<sup>th</sup> Century Virginia and my father's history is basically Ohio, and they met in Ohio, married, and my father served in World

War II. I was born in Dayton, Ohio but moved to Florida in the 1950s so most of my memories and background are in Florida. Babson Park, here in Polk County.

**Denham:** And so, your family moved to Babson Park. What year was that?

**Puterbaugh:** Oh, I guess around 1957.

**Denham:** So, you are about 12 years old.

**Puterbaugh:** I attended Lake Wales High School.

**Denham:** I guess Babson Park would have been quite a new world for you. At fourteen years old to live on this beautiful lake (Crooked Lake) and to be able to enjoy Florida, which is quite a bit different than Ohio. Can you remember any of those early memories from those days?

**Puterbaugh:** It was like a full-time vacation, living on right on Crooked Lake and growing up on the lake.

**Denham:** So you actually lived pretty close to the lake? Why did your family settle here? What was it that brought your family there?

**Puterbaugh:** My father retired from being an advertising executive, moved to Babson Park and bought a marina on Crooked Lake, so I basically grew up working at the marina during high school, college and law school.

**Denham:** Was there a lot of fishing activity, people coming down from the north and so forth?

**Puterbaugh:** Oh, absolutely, absolutely? There was a lot of fishing, a lot of water skiing, I grew up in the age of Dick Pope, Jr. Alfredo Mendoza, Nancy Rideout, great skiers, who lived in Winter Haven. We did a lot of skiing on Crooked Lake. I mean certainly, in the summertime there wasn't a day that I didn't spend, probably a couple of hours, skiing around the lake itself.

**Denham:** So hum, so you really did not grow up in Lake Wales you grew up in Babson Park.

**Puterbaugh:** When you lived in Babson Park, the high school you went to was Lake Wales High School.

**Denham:** When you were little of course your mother would have told you a lot about your Virginia ancestors. Who are some of the people that you admired the most?

**Puterbaugh:** Well, I was always interested in history and my grandmother in Ohio had grown up with the Wright brothers, so I always, I had heard a lot of stories about the Wright brothers, who lived on the same street as my father's mother. In fact, several years ago, I went back and obtained the census records, and it showed the Wright brothers and my grandmother living on the same street in Dayton, Ohio. I was always interested in history, so I supposed that the people that I looked up to were historical figures. I read a lot of history. I was interested in World War II, certainly Winston Churchill, I think, would be one of the defining historical figures that I greatly admired.

**Denham:** What were some of your favorite subjects at Lake Wales High School and did you play sports? What kind of activities were you involved in there?

**Puterbaugh:** Well, most activities were various sports, skiing. High school in the early 1960's was totally different than it is today in terms of the curriculum. Obviously, I took a lot of mathematics courses and a lot of hands-on-type courses back then. We had what was called shop. Men took shop and women took home-economics. And I also took a course, very interesting because it's served me well over the years and of course not many males took it back in the early sixties and that was typing, so I was able to type and still today obviously type and use computers a lot easier than some of my contemporaries who still write things out handwritten to then be transcribed and so forth.

I don't know why I took it at the time, but it sure, it sure paid off.

**Denham:** Did you have any real favorite subjects in High School?

**Puterbaugh:** Yes, a course that I think today maybe would be called civics. Back then it was called Problems of Democracy, or POD. And that was a very interesting course, and one that also included a field trip in our senior year to Washington, DC. in 1962. This was the first time I had ever been to DC. That was during the Kennedy administration because I remember touring the White House during the Kennedy administration.

**Denham:** What were some of your favorite memories of growing up on Babson Park, some of your favorite memories general or specific.

**Puterbaugh:** The lake, skiing, Webber College, which at that time was all girl's school. And very few of the girls, if any, had cars, so if you were in high school and going out with an older Webber College girl, you had something they didn't have and that was a car and of course they also liked to be on the lake skiing, so that was a good memory.

**Denham:** That was probably hard to leave. So, what are some of your worst memories? Did anything bad happen there that you think of, either in your family; well you don't need to get into

personal things but let's say, difficult memories maybe famous regarding tragedies or local crises that might have happened, or that you perceived to be difficult.

**Puterbaugh:** Well, hurricane Donna in 1960. Donna was, I believe, the strongest hurricane, certainly at that time, to hit central Florida and of course we were without power for a long period of time.

**Denham:** If I recall the hurricane came right up to spine of the state.

**Puterbaugh:** It came inland, as I recall around Fort Myers and it just came right over Polk County and exited ultimately exited Florida and we were without power and it wasn't hours or days then; it was weeks. That's certainly one of my earliest memories. You know, other issues that were festering at that time, especially in the mid-1960's certainly were the Civil Rights Movement and issues of integration and Civil Right Acts, We know Polk County was certainly part of the Jim Crow South in the 1950's and even into the 1960's so there was a lot of tension in that regard.

**Denham:** So, you never would have attended high school with African Americans?

**Puterbaugh:** Well, at no time.

**Denham:** Right, of course. That didn't even begin until the early 1970s, correct?

**Puterbaugh:** That's right in the late 60's.

**Puterbaugh:** Lake Wales was still in the Jim Crow South. I have memories of going into a dry-cleaning establishment seeing Klan robes hanging on the racks. And you know Lake Wales had a very, let's say, active and robust Klan organization during that period.

**Denham:** Did you ever see ugly signs of that other than the robes at the dry cleaners?

**Puterbaugh:** No, not really. The relationship individually between the black community and the white community was pretty good in Babson Park and Lake Wales actually, but it was more the concept of the Civil Rights Act and integration in general that was deemed objectionable. I don't recall we had any of the serious issues, like maybe Mississippi and so forth, in terms of killings or lynchings. We had none of that.

**Denham:** So we were getting through your high school years, and everything is going pretty well. Did you have a sense that you were going to go to college eventually or was that always kind of in the cards?

**Puterbaugh:** It was, it was. I think the teachers I had at Lake Wales High School were all encouraging in terms of college. I wanted to go to a small college, not a large university, and Stetson really worked for me on a lot of levels. Florida Southern College was not Florida Southern it is today, reputational wise, and I did not consider Florida Southern. I applied to Stetson and perhaps a couple of others, maybe Rollins. Stetson was always where I wanted to go because it was a small college and Deland was a lot like Polk County, and I was accepted. So I went!

**Denham:** Well, let's talk about Stetson a little while.

**Puterbaugh:** Yes.

**Denham:** Do you remember any of your professors?

**Puterbaugh:** Sure, when I started out at Stetson in liberal arts, it was a requirement that you take languages and so I signed up for French and after one semester of French, I decided languages were not for me! And so I transferred to the business school, and I majored in Accounting, so my Accounting professors were the ones that I remember the most. Stetson then and now has an absolutely wonderful business school, especially in Accounting. But actually my favorite course at Stetson was ROTC.

**Denham:** Okay, well let's go there! Tell us about your experience there.

**Puterbaugh:** Well at that time, as I recall, every Land-Grant college had to offer ROTC for two years as a required or compulsory course. So, if you were a male student and you went to Stetson you were required to take ROTC for two at least your first two years.

**Denham:** So you entered Stetson in 1962.

**Puterbaugh:** John Kennedy was President and we had to learn to recite the chain of command in ROTC and it ended with John Kennedy.

**Denham:** You established a lot of friendships in the ROTC program and at Stetson. What other kinds of extracurricular activities did you get involved in?

**Puterbaugh:** Well obviously, I was a member of a fraternity and at that point in time fraternities and sororities were extremely important on campus, and I was a Sigma Nu. And we had our own fraternity house, and it was a privilege at that time to be part of the most prestigious fraternity on campus, at least we thought of ourselves as that. So, a lot of my extracurricular time centered around fraternity life and ROTC. And I was a member of Scabbard and Blade. I won't say it's a fraternity but it's an organization, ROTC organization. I was also on the ROTC rifle team. I

remember that I spent a lot of time firing rifles which is something you did when you were in ROTC and especially if you were on the rifle team at that time. My goodness, we fired M1's, which were basically the weapons that soldiers carried during WWII.

**Denham:** Hu, hu. Okay. So, 1962, 1963, 1964. 1965.

**Puterbaugh:** Then we had the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

**Denham:** Yeah, talk about that a little bit, the Cuban Missile Crisis, your impression of things at the time.

**Puterbaugh:** Well, it was interesting because we were told in ROTC (and it's hard to believe that today), but at that time we thought the invasion of Florida might be possible, or even nuclear war, and you know we might have to organize a unit of ROTC soldiers. I remember the Cuban Missile Crisis vividly. We had our ROTC drills on Mondays. I do remember that, and I believe, maybe wrong about this, but I believe Kennedy's famous speech to the nation on the Cuban Missile Crisis occurred on Monday night and I have a memory of that, listening to the speech, still in uniform.

**Denham:** It must have been just absolutely riveting when you look back on it. That broadcast-- those series of broadcasts, that must have just been then incredibly scary.

**Puterbaugh:** Unless you lived through it you just don't really understand how serious and scary it was. I remember vividly, also when Kennedy's assassination took place while I was at Stetson and Lyndon Johnson of course became president when I was in college at Stetson.

**Denham:** So we're getting down to the end of your college career and you did you have a service requirement after your graduation?

**Puterbaugh:** Well, at the end of your two years in ROTC, which was mandatory, you could choose to continue for two more years in ROTC and then be commissioned as an officer into the Army upon graduation. That would also require a six-week summer camp between your junior and senior year, and mine was at Fort Bragg. Six weeks, Fayetteville, North Carolina, Fort Bragg. I remember that because that was interesting. I mean that was you know real life military training, we drove tanks, we fired artillery, we jumped out of jump towers, which convinced me that I never wanted to join an airborne unit. We did a lot of things that very few juniors in college did. So, upon graduation, I was commissioned, as the Second Lieutenant in Army Intelligence. That was my branch. I stayed in Army Intelligence until I graduated from law school, and I did a branch transfer from Army Intelligence to the Judge Advocate General's Corps.

**Denham:** So I'm trying to make sure I get the chronology correct, so you so you were in the Army before you entered law school? Or at the same time?

**Puterbaugh:** Once I graduated from Stetson in DeLand, I was commissioned into the Army, I'm just not on active duty. I'm being promoted, every day goes by it's another day in rank. So, I was actually promoted to First Lieutenant while I was in law school. As I recall my date of rank went back to 1962 when I first joined ROTC. So back then what was important was when your day of rank started to run, how long you have been in. So I was basically in the Army while I was in the Law School, you know receiving information: taking courses, things like that. Although at that time, 1966 to 1969, I don't recall there being anything serious enough that I thought I was going to be called to active duty. Of course, in 1968 Richard Nixon was elected President. And so my ROTC and military years were basically the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon years.

**Denham:** So you're at Stetson Law School. What was that like? How was that different than undergrad?

**Puterbaugh:** Well, first year, a lot more intense. In fact, last night we had an event here at Florida Southern, for the current Dean of Stetson College of Law, Dean Benjamin Barros. I talked to him about how different it was at the time, the theory or admissions policy then would be to admit a lot of first year students knowing that two thirds to three quarters of the first year admissions were not going to be there for the second year and I can recall vividly recall looking at the posted grades after my first semester. They posted grades on the wall. We didn't have computers then and seeing the grades, they didn't have names but they had student numbers, your number and seeing all those D's and F's and being so happy with my C's because I made it through that first semester. So, as I recall, not positive on these numbers, but I think we started out with 80 or 90 people in our first year class in 1966 and less than 40 or so graduated in 1969, or something like that, I don't know the exact numbers but I know it was a small percentage.

**Denham:** I would imagine they're probably all young men.

**Puterbaugh:** Almost, if not, all.

**Denham:** Yeah, there were a lot of young men there that probably should not have been there. I would imagine or at least weren't really capable or maybe their parents forced them to enroll or you know that kind of thing.

**Puterbaugh:** But I remember standing and looking at the grades and one of my Professors, Calvin Kuenzel, was standing there and there was one student that had, I think 3 F's and a D, and professor Kuenzel said: "that's what happens when you spend too much time on one course". So,

when you got there, obviously the first year is survival. The first year was survival. That was the goal.

**Denham:** So at the second year and then the third year, did you begin to hone in on some classes that you really enjoyed and that you wanted to forward your education in, maybe with an idea of doing that when you get out, or will you just concentrate on getting a good general legal education?

**Puterbaugh:** Clearly, your second and third year at Stetson was more enjoyable. You had survived that first year and the intent then at Stetson was not getting rid of you, so you didn't have professors who were trying to weed you out. You had professors that wanted to keep you. And one of the most memorable professor I had was Dean Harold "Tom" Sebring who was just an absolute joy and I had him as my professor for State Constitutional Law. He had been a judge in the Nuremberg trials after World War II.

**Denham:** I would imagine he was an iconic figure that people really looked up to. Tell us a little bit about his background that you knew at the time.

**Puterbaugh:** Well, the background that I knew, that was most interesting, was his involvement as a judge at the Nuremberg trials and he had donated his Nuremberg documents to Stetson Law School. As far as I know, they still exist there in the library. We think of the Nuremberg trials and one big trial. But there were actually numerous trials and that of course was quite an interesting time in history, so very interesting. But he was just a fine elderly gentleman. I took State Constitutional Law under him and was very proud that I got an A in his course because I looked up to him and greatly admired him.

**Denham:** So even though he was Dean he still taught.

**Puterbaugh:** Yes. State Constitutional Law, I remember that course probably as vividly as any course that I took, because it was interesting and because of Dean Sebring.

**Denham:** Now the state of Florida or just States in general?

**Puterbaugh:** State as in relation to Federal Constitutional Law but State of Florida basically.

**Denham:** Okay, the State of Florida.

**Puterbaugh:** See, that was the thing about Stetson, Stetson prepared you, even back then to be a practicing lawyer in Florida. Many of the courses were practical courses. I remember the Florida rules and civil procedure course taught by Judge Victor O. Wehle at the time. The courses were not as esoteric as might be taught in some law schools today. They were



more practical in nature. So, Dean Sebring's course was State Constitutional Law but basically related to the state of Florida.

**Denham:** So he went back to the 1885 state constitution I guess, which was still in place at the time. You know it was obsolete by that time but anyway we can go into that later on.

**Puterbaugh:** Of course, Dean Sebring had also served on the Florida Supreme Court and as its Chief Justice.

**Denham:** Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, that's really, that's really, interesting. And he was elderly at the time, he died not long after.

**Puterbaugh:** He died the next year.

**Denham:** Was Bruce Jacob on the faculty at that time yet?

**Puterbaugh:** No, I just remember Dean Sebring. As a third-year student, I was also involved in the public defender clinic and that was the thing about Stetson. Stetson had a public defender clinic well before other law schools started having practical clinics. We actually could go into court and represent clients. My professor, as I recall, was Professor Paul Barnard and we also visited prisons. It was my first time in a prison. We went to Lowell, north of Ocala, which was the womens' prison, I remember that, and actually remember going into court, so during my third year there was a lot of practical type of courses and of course I was ready to graduate and move into the Army, which I knew I had a commitment at that time.

**Denham:** Another person I want to ask you about is Alexander Paskay. Did you have any classes with him?

**Puterbaugh:** No, no classes.

**Denham:** But you came to know him later, I am sure.

**Puterbaugh:** I came to know Alexander Paskay, "Alexander the Great." I had a great relationship with him.

**Denham:** I'm not sure when he started teaching at Stetson.

**Puterbaugh:** I don't think he was teaching at that time. Certainly, I appeared before Alexander the Great many times. I really liked Judge Paskay. He had a sense of humor that a lot of individuals didn't understand. As you well know, he got in trouble later on with his "Speedy Gonzalez" comments. I mean, give me a break! We don't need to go into that...

**Puterbaugh:** Some people can't, you know, take a joke.

**Denham:** We don't need to go into that! Okay. So, you are in your last year, You're heading towards the finish line.

**Puterbaugh:** I'm heading towards the finish line. You got that right.

**Denham:** So, before we go there though, before we go to the finish line, are there any of your law school friends, colleagues at the time that you really remember vividly and that you still interact with today?

**Puterbaugh:** Well, obviously the number one person would be Jack Brandon. He was in my class and then, we will get into this down the road but after graduation, I'm in Lake Wales clerking at the Woolfolk Myers law firm while studying for the Bar. I recruited him to come to Lake Wales. He was down in Naples.

**Denham:** Besides Mr. Brandon, any others that you that you recall?

**Puterbaugh:** There are so many throughout your career; so many are no longer here. It is sad, I'll be looking at the memorial section of the Florida Bar News and I see so many of my contemporaries are no longer with us. Let's go back up about the parents.

**Denham:** Okay.

**Puterbaugh:** It's a different world today, but my parents took me to Stetson in DeLand my first day and they attended both of my graduation ceremonies in DeLand and St. Petersburg. Other than that, I was on my own.

**Puterbaugh:** You know, I have observed as counsel at Florida Southern College, that today we have so many, they turn into helicopters parents and so forth. I would have been mortified if my parents had involved themselves in any issue which I might have had, not that I did, but if I had at Stetson. I would have wanted to deal with any issues myself. I would not have wanted my parents involved and if they were involved, they would have most likely taken the school's side against me. It's a different world today. When you were out of high school in the 50's and 60's you were pretty much on your own and parents were not involved as they are today with their child's life.

**Denham:** And being legal counsel and your Board of Trustees' involvement, you've witnessed that first-hand at Florida Southern.

**Puterbaugh:** Absolutely, yes, and you know, I think the difference is amazing, absolutely, amazing. You know, many parents, not all but many immediately take their child's side. Many parents seem to want to be involved daily, you know, you have students that they're texting their parents constantly during the day, even while they're in class – “oh, my professor frowned at me and I need to go for counseling” . I mean, you know the maturity of the average high school graduate in the 1950's 1960's was much greater than it is today.

**Denham:** So, walk us through your thoughts as you went through graduation; your thoughts about the future and what you intended to do at that point. You are obviously in the Army so you're thinking in that direction. So, walk us through I guess, the year after you graduate. Where did you go? What did you see?

**Puterbaugh:** Graduation was in May 1969, and so I had to take the Florida Bar exam before I go into the Army. The Bar exam was in the fall, so I spent the summer of 1969, you know studying for the Bar and then obviously passed the Bar and that's another interesting thing, you know, back then when you passed the Bar exam you didn't get a letter or a computer message saying that you passed the Bar exam. You got a telegram, and the telegrams were delivered by a cab company. I still have my telegram that says, you know, you have passed – stop - the date of swearing in - stop.

**Denham:** That's a great memento.

**Puterbaugh:** Yeah, a telegram delivered by a cab company.

**Denham:** So, you passed the bar, and then you decide to enter the Army or was there something in between there?

**Puterbaugh:** Well during the summer while I'm studying for the Bar exam, and my mother worked at Webber College, so I had access to the Webber College library during the summer as a quiet place to study. I also took a job as night auditor at River Ranch Acres which is halfway to nowhere and that was not fun because of the drive and so forth. Not long after it started. It was just a kind of a resort. But I didn't stay there long because I was living in Babson Park and a neighbor was friends with Jane Crews who was the wife of Mike Crews, a lawyer in the Woolfolk Myers law firm and the neighbor said to me, “you know I could talk to Jane Crews and see if they will hire you as a clerk so you don't have to drive back and forth to River Ranch Acres every night”. So, she did and I did. I went in and talked to Clint Curtis who was a senior partner at Woolfolk Myers and at that time they didn't have law clerks. They didn't really understand what a clerk would do but Clint hired me, probably because Mike's wife asked him to do so, and for the princely sum of \$70 a week gross. I spent about three months: September, October, November, December, 4 months as a clerk at the firm. I went into the Army in January 1970, so I spent about four months clerking at the firm, and it was very enjoyable.

**Denham:** Okay and so this was really your first introduction to what you would know about a law firm's day to day activities, correct?

**Puterbaugh:** Absolutely, but as I said before, I think Stetson prepared you to walk into court the day you graduate or pass the Bar a lot better than some schools, so when I'm getting ready to leave in January 1970, the firm asked me if I had any suggestions of who might replace me. I suggested Jack Brandon. He was living in Naples. Jack came up to Lake Wales and the firm hired Jack. They also wanted me to come back after the Army. I had a four-year commitment in the Army and so the firm even kept me on the letterhead, as I recall at some point in time, as being on Military Leave, so that if they hired someone else during the interim, it would be clear where I was, sort to speak, in the hierarchy of the firm.

**Denham:** How many people were there at the time at that firm?

**Puterbaugh:** Well, Clint Curtis, Roy Craig and Mike Crews, as I recall, Walter Woolfolk, a former Solicitor in Polk County, Neal Myers, Clint Curtis, Mike Crews and Robin Gibson, and yes that's basically yes, small law firm in Lake Wales, There were two main law firms, two major law firms in Lake Wales: The Woolfolk Myers law firm and the Bradley Johnson law firm. So very small at that time. So, I was basically involved in the Woolfolk Myers law firm before I went into the army.

**Denham:** Okay, so when you got out of the army after JAG; you knew you didn't have to go on the market you already had a job.

**Puterbaugh:** I did.

**Denham:** And you already kept in touch all that time. So, you know. So, let's go into the JAG, let's go into your military service now is there anything more you'd like to say at this point that we that we've missed?

**Puterbaugh:** Obviously when you go to the JAG Corps, there are two types of way to enter. As I said earlier, I branch transferred from Army Intelligence into JAG, but there are two types of JAGs that come on active duty. There are those who come up through ROTC and then there are lawyers that never had any military training, so, the first thing that happens is you're sent to what we jokingly referred to as Salute School at Fort Lee, near Petersburg, Virginia, in order to teach those who aren't ROTC what the Army was all about.

**Denham:** That's what I was going to ask, are those people that are just coming in, do they have to go through basic and everything or what do they have to do?

**Denham:** They go directly to Salute School?

**Puterbaugh:** That's what we called it, Salute School.

**Denham:** I know, so they didn't have to go to basic training.

**Puterbaugh:** No, but you know if you were ROTC, you really don't need to attend Salute School, so I spent a lot of time in Petersburg, Virginia at the Holiday Inn when I didn't need to go to certain classes. I went to some classes, but very few, so my first indoctrination in the Army was at Fort Lee and then you go from Salute School to the University of Virginia in Charlottesville to the Judge Advocate General's School, and my time at the University of Virginia was very memorable.

**Denham:** That's where things get serious.

**Puterbaugh:** That's when it gets serious and you learn military law because of course, you're under now under the Uniform Military Code of Military Justice, which is a different form of law. There are unique First Amendment issues. There are all kinds of issues in terms of claims against the government, governmental contracts, military justice, court martials, etc. I had to learn all that. I was very fortunate. I was in the 55<sup>th</sup> Basic Class. Two of my instructors actually went on to serve as the Judge Advocate General of the United States Army, Bill Suter and Hugh Overholt. I took then Major Suter for criminal law and then Colonel Overholt for other courses. They both later served as the Judge Advocate General of the United States Army and General Suter went on to be the Clerk of the United States Supreme Court. So those were two of the most memorable individuals from my time at the JAG School.

**Denham:** How many people were in your class, how would you say?

**Puterbaugh:** Maybe thirty, thirty-five. I really don't recall the number.

**Denham:** So you had a cadre of fellas who were in your same situation and yeah, how long did that last?

**Puterbaugh:** Approximately six weeks course.

**Denham:** Six weeks, okay.

**Puterbaugh:** I remember one, one individual from Virginia and his name was, you will understand why he was memorable when I tell you his name, his name was Fitzhugh Lee Godwin, Jr. So, I, do I need to say anything more than his name?

**Denham:** No, you do not need to say anything more, oh brother yeah.

**Puterbaugh:** Yeah, you know that's funny.

**Denham:** He was from Virginia obviously.

**Puterbaugh:** From Virginia. No kidding. I wanted to tell you something about General Overholt, who I had as an instructor at the Judge Advocate General's School, and he had a very distinctive voice, very southern. In fact, I didn't really see him again until years later. I'm in the Army Navy Club in Washington D.C, on Farragut Square, and I'm sitting in the lobby, for some reason. I was staying at the Club, but I don't recall why I was sitting in the lobby, and I hear this voice checking in at the front desk. I said to myself, "oh my God, that's Colonel Overholt" and I turn around and look and it was. I went up to him, and we wound up having dinner that night and catching up about the old times, and of course he had had a very distinguished military career. I had been out of the Army for many many years, but we reminisced about the JAG Corps and 55th Basic Class--all the people that we had known. General Suter and General Overholt were the two most memorable people from the JAG School. Great people.

**Denham:** So, after school, where was your first posting?

**Puterbaugh:** Well, you know, the Army gives you your assignment. You don't have a choice as to where you're sent. There were a lot of places at that time. You might be sent to Vietnam. You could be sent to Korea. You could be sent to Fort Polk in Louisiana, the Presidio in California, Fort Bragg, Fort Benning. You never knew where you could be sent but most of your new JAG lawyers were not sent to Vietnam or Korea initially. They were sent stateside, so it was the luck of the draw. You did not have any input whatsoever. My posting was to Fourth Army Headquarters in San Antonio. Texas, at Fort Sam Houston, a very historical post and quite frankly a very sought after assignment, so I was very lucky. It was a great assignment. You didn't want to get sent to Fort Polk, Louisiana, with the skeeters and alligators and so forth but Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, was a very sought after post, very historical. My gosh, every military leader of the twentieth century and some of the nineteenth century served at and rotated through Fort Sam Houston. At the time, I didn't know anything about Texas. I had never been to Texas, so that was my first time in Texas.

**Denham:** So, tell us what some of your first experiences were. How was the chain of command. How did that work? Who was your boss and your supervisor?

**Puterbaugh:** You know it's really interesting, I later learned that there are kind of two places that are nice to be when you're in the JAG Corps in the Army, either at an Army Headquarters which is kind of the top or at a one or two man JAG post like Fort Huachuca, Arizona, where because if you're at the top nobody is messing with you. If you are at the bottom nobody is

messing with you, so it's a good thing. At an Army Headquarters, you're working for a Three-Star or Four-Star General who commands an Army, and your immediate boss is a full Colonel. My boss was Colonel Warren Taylor, and you're basically at the top where you're at an Army Headquarters that oversees a lot of states, for example, Texas, Arizona, Oklahoma, Kansas, all the states in that area and I did a little of everything for a year at Fourth Army Headquarters in San Antonio.

**Denham:** How many other people were in your level. How many groups of people did your colonel supervise?

**Puterbaugh:** Other Captains, probably about five and then of course you have DAC's, D--A--C, that is Department of the Army Civilian. We had the Department of the Army Civilian in Military Affairs, Department of the Army Civilian in Claims, and then there was a Major above me and a Lieutenant Colonel above me, and of course Colonel Warren Taylor, so I did a little bit of everything that first year. My goodness, I did contracts, I did claims, I did court martials. I did investigation, very much involved with Vietnam issues. At that time, there were many organizations counseling soldiers about how to be a conscientious objector and avoid the Vietnam War and then their attorney would file *habeas corpus* petitions in federal court in Texas when their CO status was denied and that's when I would become involved in federal court, before Judge John "Maximum John" Wood, who was later assassinated by Woody Harrelson's father. And fast forward down the road to Judge George Carr, who went to San Antonio, Texas to take some of Judge Woods's cases after Judge Wood's assassination.

**Denham:** Wow!

**Puterbaugh:** I appeared before Maximum John, Judge John Wood, in Federal Court in Texas on CO's, that's when I met Maury Maverick, Jr. the famous lawyer from the Maverick family in Texas, during my first year at Fort Sam Houston.

**Denham:** We were discussing Maury Maverick. You're at your first interaction with him.

**Puterbaugh:** Yes, Maury Maverick Jr.

**Denham:** And you were getting to know him.

**Puterbaugh:** Incredible!

**Denham:** How old was he at the time?

**Puterbaugh:** Probably, in his late 40s I guess. Maury Maverick Jr. was the son of Maury Maverick Sr., who was mayor of San Antonio and a congressman during the Roosevelt

administration, the New Deal. Obviously, father and son came from the Maverick family in Texas. The word Maverick is named after Samuel Maverick, a 19th century Texas cattleman who refused to brand his cattle for whatever reason and those unbranded cattle were called Mavericks and that's the term that we now hear, a Maverick or Mavericks, based on a very very famous Texas family with ties all the way back to the Revolutionary War and the Texas war for independence from Mexico. And so, I met Maury Maverick Jr. who was an attorney in San Antonio, a very, very well-known attorney. At that time, he was certainly considered part of the liberal anti-military establishment, although Maury wasn't really anti-military but he was very much against the war in Vietnam and was the attorney for the American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization and which is how I met him because he was always representing the soldiers who had applied for conscientious objector status and which were then denied them by the Army. Maury would file a *habeas corpus* petition in federal court before Judge Wood and I'd be involved in that. I remember at times Maury and I would be on the phone together and I'd be talking to him and he'd say, "Bob, we need you to exchange the documents at 5 o'clock, Tuesday night on the Riverwalk", making it sound like we were involved in some clandestine or conspiratorial plot and I'd say things like "God Damm, Maury, don't you know they're listening to this conversation" meaning the 112<sup>th</sup> Military Intelligence, and he'd laugh, and so forth and then one time I remember him saying, "You know, Bob, if you don't grant" what he wanted something, I don't know what it was, he said "if you don't grant that, I'm going to hold a press conference at 5 o'clock this afternoon and announce that you are the finest military officer I've ever been involved with and if that doesn't ruin your career, nothing will." That was just a joke, but he was just a fine, fine human being. He once received a lot of bad press relating to a remark he made in San Antonio during John Kennedy's 1960 campaign. Senator Kennedy had an event at the Alamo and for whatever reason Senator Kennedy said something like: well, we'll leave through the back door and Maury said, for all to hear: "Senator, I'm sorry there is no back door to the Alamo. That's why they were all heroes." And the press picked up on that and ran an article: "Maverick says they were only heroes because there's no back door to the Alamo". It was a big deal because Maury was a very influential individual and wrote columns for the San Antonio paper, just a very historical person.

**Denham:** So LBJ was gone by that time, but I would imagine that he was thick with LBJ correct?

**Puterbaugh:** Oh yeah, they were very close.

**Denham:** Yeah.

**Puterbaugh:** Ralph Yarborough, Homer Thornberry. And Homer Thornberry, who I later appeared before in the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans. There were a lot of historical characters at that time, and of course 1970 when you think about it, that's only seven years out from the Kennedy assassination. It was not that far remote and Johnson was still alive.



That was one of the things that I worked on when I was there. We had what was called Op Plan Missouri and Op Plan Texas. In the Army we have lots of operational plans or Op Plans for all types of contingencies. Op Plan Texas was for the funeral of LBJ when he would die and Op Plan Missouri was the funeral of Harry Truman when he would die and they both died within weeks of each other, Truman at the end of 1972 and LBJ in January 1973, and so the Op Plans involve, among other things, having contracts in place so for example if President Truman would die in the middle of winter, you would need cars with snow tires, everything is planned down to the final detail and of course LBJ wanted more of a state funeral than President Truman did. They died within weeks of each other and President Truman died, I think, in December of 1972 and then LBJ in January 1973, And so I worked on both Op Plans involving both funerals and of course I could have gone to the LBJ Ranch for the memorial service but I didn't at the time and you don't realize until later the historical issues involved, You don't expect two former presidents to die within weeks of each other and be involved in their funerals. Like I said, I was involved in all kinds of things on that first year, claims, *habeas corpus* matters, investigations, going to Corpus Christi, Texas, after a hurricane to help pay claims, reports of surveys. I was there for about a year. Then I received orders to go over to Korea which was basically a thirteen-month tour. It was a thirteen-month tour in Korea, at a time which was not that far removed from the Korean War.

**Denham:** Let's talk a little bit about your career in Korea. What was it like to go there and what were your first impressions of the setting that you came into in Korea? I guess you prepared for it, but nobody's totally prepared, so what were your first experiences?

**Puterbaugh:** It was very interesting because you know how I have thirteen months in Korea, thirteen months ahead of me. Vietnam is only twelve months, and you know you get a combat pay in Vietnam and it's not taxable and at the time I would have rather been assigned there. While there was an Armistice in place in Korea, it was basically still a war zone. We had curfews in Korea, there were still intrusions from the North into the Korean capital of Seoul. One of the Captains that I served with in Fort Sam Houston, Captain John Compere, who stayed in the Army Reserves and later retired as a Brigadier General, but, like me, a Captain at the time, knew someone in Korea. So, he wrote a letter recommending me for assignment to 8th Army Headquarters in Seoul and I was assigned to 8th Army Headquarters in Seoul. Army Headquarters in Korea had tactical nuclear weapons, and it was commanded by General John Michaelis. It was pretty much like serving in a war zone without an active war going on. It's an armistice, but you know you didn't have five American soldiers standing on the corner together; you were told not to congregate as a group so you wouldn't be as much of a target for the North Koreans. As I said we had a curfew and it was a pretty rustic experience in the Seoul, Korea of 1971 which is not the Seoul Korea of today. It was still recovering from the war. I was on Yongsan Compound in the middle of Seoul but there were many sections of Seoul that didn't have running water, you know, no indoor facilities, and it was pretty, pretty rustic at that time.

**Denham:** And you were close to the DMZ.

**Puterbaugh:** Very close to the DMZ, I spent a lot of time at the DMZ. I have a photograph that's very interesting, taken in a conference room at the DMZ where I'm standing on the North Korean side of the conference table and there's a North Korean soldier there, looking in the window, not liking that at all, so I can technically say I've been to North Korea but I spent a lot of time at the DMZ, 38th parallel and Korea was very, very, interesting and rugged; I spent a lot of time flying in helicopters, which I said if I ever get out of this alive I'll never step foot in a helicopter again. I kept my promise to this day, but I enjoyed Korea, I really enjoyed Korea, I was involved in a lot of things. A lot of investigations. I was involved in the Status of Forces Agreement, SOFA, which is an agreement between the United States and countries that host US forces, like Korea. We were a United Nations Command, so we had army, marines, navy, air force members. I remember serving with Admirals and Captains in the Navy. It was quite an experience, and you are pretty much on your own because you're in a location where you're not being commanded directly by the Pentagon. You of course have a Four-Star General there who's in command of an Army; an Army that has nuclear, tactical nuclear capability at the time. So, Korea was just outstanding experience now looking back on it, loved it!

**Denham:** So what were some of the other nations or people of other nations that you interacted with and also how many other people in your situation were there in terms of JAG officers?

**Puterbaugh:** Probably about the same numbers as at Fort Sam Houston, probably six Captains.

**Denham:** You were supervised by a colonel?

**Puterbaugh:** Colonel Charles Taylor and my immediate boss, my overall boss was Colonel Bruce Coggins, who later became a Brigadier General, so it was basically Colonel Coggins. It's kind of interesting because right after I arrived, the wives of the senior commanders had some kind of an organization where they ran a gift shop where they sold various items and so forth and for some reason I don't recall, they had some kind of, I don't know if it was contract issue or what, I don't even remember what it was, but I remember Colonel Coggins called me in and indicating that the, I think the Commanding General at the time or Chief of Staff, his wife was involved heading this up volunteer organization and Colonel Coggins asked me if I could help solve a problem for the General's wife. Whatever the problem was, and I don't even remember what type of problem it was, and it wasn't really a big or important deal (except to the General and his wife) and I was able to quickly resolve it. I guess that made the General happy because I made his wife happy, and first impressions and all, and so it just happened then, whenever the General had something that he needed or that was kind of quirky or he needed to investigate, the General would always ask Colonel Coggins to send me over, because I helped his wife on a minor, probably silly, little issue but it made her and the General happy so I got involved in a lot of things. One was an interesting case, I remember the General called, called me over and that

was during the Army NCO Club scandals and there was a Command Sergeant Major at the DMC who worked for the I Corps Commanding General, for a three-star as I recall and I was assigned to go up to the DMZ and conduct an investigation and recommend whether or not this Sergeant Major would be court martialed. So I get in my helicopter and go up there and when I landed, it was very interesting because the Sergeant Major that I was there to investigate was the person that met me to take me to the General's I Corps Headquarters. Of course, he knew why I was there and the General basically said, you know, "I want you to conduct the investigation and whatever you recommend. Don't skew your investigation because he's my Sergeant Major, I want your honest opinion". So, I conducted the investigation and quite frankly, it was such a minor infraction, if at all, that I wound up recommending that he not be charged and court martialed. As I recall, he had served in the Korean War, he had all these medals for bravery, had a great career and I just didn't feel that it warranted ruining that career for such a minor infraction. I still have the letter that I wrote the Commanding General recommending that he not be court martialed.

**Denham:** But that was Sergeant Major William Wooldridge, correct?

**Puterbaugh:** He was the first Sergeant Major of the Army, he was the highest Sergeant Major in the Army and the highest enlisted Sergeant Major--the highest-ranking enlisted member of the army and he was very much involved in that scandal. I didn't have all the facts in his case. My involvement was investigating a Command Sergeant Major in Korea, not Wooldridge. The Sergeant Major I investigated, as I recall, had been involved with a club scandal in Oklahoma. I recall it was stateside; but I want to mention that to indicate I had a lot of latitude. Even though I was only a Captain, we were again at an Army Headquarters so when I was conducting investigations, I was basically working for the Army Commander, which gave me a lot more...

**Denham:** Cachet?

**Puterbaugh:** Yeah. As opposed somewhere working for a Post Commander or Colonel. So, it allowed me to do a lot of more interesting things that I might otherwise have been able to do, I mean, crazy things like the Rose Society. These were Korean prostitutes basically unionized by the Army. Years later in 2009, the *New York Times* wrote an *expose'* about how terrible it was that the Army controlled the process and enabled sex trade near bases in Korea. But in my opinion, if the Army had not taken control and required health examinations and so forth it would have been much worse because the soldiers were going to, let's say, utilize a Korean prostitute, whether or not they had health checks. So, wasn't it better to have health checks, etc.? By that time the *New York Times* article came out, I was out of the Army. The *expose'* appeared in *New York Times*. This was years later after I'm out of the army and the *New York Times* wrote about how horrible it was in terms of encouraging service men to utilize Korean prostitutes. It wasn't that. We were just trying to control health and safety issues.

**Denham:** Without getting into too many gory details, what legal service did you do the Rose Society?

**Puterbaugh:** I didn't do it for the Society; I did it for the Army. At that time, we had NCO clubs where the girls would come in and so forth and be available. We would require health checks and make sure they didn't have venereal diseases and things like that and require other health issues such as using paper cups for drink-- those kind of things. I probably have the *New York Times* article that said we were running brothels in Korea. We weren't running brothels. Brothels were already there. We were just trying to control the health and safety issues and of course servicemen from time to time would want to marry a Korean girl, so one of the things that I would have to do would be look at or conduct a background investigation on the Korean girls that the serviceman would want to marry.

**Denham:** That would have been quite an experience.

**Puterbaugh:** It was.. And then we would get "Congressionals." Any time a member of Congress would contact the Army for whatever reason, and you would then do what we called a Congressional. You would conduct an investigation so the Army could report back to that member of Congress. I remember one issue when, based on the background investigation, I denied the marriage application because the background of this girl was just horrendous. Well, a congressman contacted the Army to object to the denial. I remember reading the girl's background to someone, I don't remember if it was the Congressman or someone from his office or whatever, and after I read it, he said, "Oh, I totally agree!"

**Denham:** So, so let me make sure I understand. So, the member of Congress for that person is where that person lives, where the GI lived, would get involved in this process.

**Puterbaugh:** Yeah, Congressionals were all kind of different things. So at any time a member of Congress might be contacted by a service member's family or a service member.

**Denham:** For any issue or whatsoever.

**Puterbaugh:** For all kinds of them.

**Denham:** It's interesting. So you knew that when you were dealing with these issues that they might actually end up in some congressman's office.

**Puterbaugh:** Yes, we would deal with what we called "congressionals," where anytime someone contacted a member of Congress, that member would contact someone over at the Pentagon and if it involved your command, you would be asked to investigate so that the Pentagon or whomever was contacted could respond to the congressman. In 1971 congressmen

were a little more respected than they might be today. Today, there are congressmen or congresswomen who would contact the Pentagon, and their request might just go into the trash can. But in 1971, they would forward these to us.

**Denham:** Were there other special investigations that you'd like to talk about?

**Puterbaugh:** There were several, I remember an investigation that was sent to the camp. It was called Camp Humphreys in Korea to conduct a homicide investigation, and I went up to the DMC a couple of times. It was just a really interesting tour because we were at such a high level and of course, we had Korean troops in Vietnam at the time. We had Koreans soldiers who were assigned to us called KATUSA's (Korean Augmentation to the United States Army). I had a driver who was KATUSA. We served with a lot of KATUSAs, who were generally sons of high-ranking Korean Governmental officials. For Korean soldiers, serving with the United States Army was a very prestigious position, so many of the high-ranking Koreans would see that their sons were assigned to the United States Army as a KATUSA and KATUSAs were very well educated. They spoke English and since I didn't speak Korean, they were excellent and reliable translators. I also taught classes at night while I was in Korea at the University of Maryland extension school in Seoul. I taught criminal law and real property to soldiers who wanted college credits from the University of Maryland.

**Denham:** Did you ever get the chance to travel to Vietnam or Japan?

**Puterbaugh:** I didn't travel to Vietnam. I flew to Tokyo to and from Korea. One of the advantages of a 13-month tour is you did get 30 days leave, and I remember flying from Korea to Tokyo, spending the night in Tokyo. flying to Los Angeles then flying on to Mexico City all in one trip which was a lot of flying. I flew all over Korea, and I flew from Korea, Mexico City, and back to the United States. At that time, we flew with Northwest Airlines in and out of Korea. Vietnam had only government planes.

**Denham:** Was it pretty hot in Vietnam at that time?

**Puterbaugh:** Oh absolutely.

**Denham:** Were there echoes of the Vietnam conflict that reverberated in Korea?

**Puterbaugh:** I knew when I came back to the United States from Korea in 1972. That's when it started, prisoners of wars and Op Plan Egress Recap, later named Op Plan Homecoming. The Army had a name for everything. We had operation this, operation that, we would have Operation Golden Flow, which was a urinalysis program. Imagine that, Operation Golden Flow. We had a name for everything,

**Denham:** Can you talk about POW issues a little bit? Were you involved in that?

**Puterbaugh:** There was constant discussion concerning POW issues, in other words a prisoner of war would come back to the United States, and he'd be debriefed and he said he was in the same cell with X and Y and X and Y didn't come back and there were always discussions about that.

**Denham:** Were there still POWs coming back from North Korea from the Korean War about that time?

**Puterbaugh:** There were some POWs who reportedly chose to stay in North Korea,

**Denham:** So would those generally be legitimate or were they just kind of trumped up, what do you think? We always heard about that.

**Puterbaugh:** I am sure that there were some that were legitimate for whatever reason, but we always felt that the Koreans kept back POWs.. Then when they were no longer useful, they disposed of them, so to speak. I think that later in Vietnam also, there were some POW's that were known to be alive when the war ended and never returned. That was always an issue. And another Op Plan, Operation Egress Recap, which was changed to Operation Homecoming.

**Denham:** So were you involved in that?

**Puterbaugh:** I was involved with families of POW's with various issues. I remember when I returned. I went from Korea at Eighth Army Headquarters to Fifth Army Headquarters.. One of the nice things upon returning from Vietnam or Korea as a JAG officer, because they were both short term tours, is you were able to many times choose where you wanted to return. In other words, you were given a lot of latitude to choose. You could say, "I want to return to Washington DC", "I want to go to Germany", etc. I chose to return back to Fort Sam Houston. I loved Fort Sam Houston. I was allowed to return and it was no longer Fourth Army Headquarters, but it was Fifth Army Headquarters, so I was right back in another Army Headquarters, It was the same stateside base that had been Fourth Army when I left but was now Fifth Army.

**Denham:** Do you remember the dates that you came back to Fort Sam Houston?

**Puterbaugh:** I went to Korea in early to mid- 1971 so it would have been mid-1972. When I came back to Fifth Army Headquarters in San Antonio Texas, we were still dealing with a lot of fallout issues from Vietnam and court-martial issues. There was a Lieutenant Colonel on our base in San Antonio, on Fort Sam Houston, who was under investigation for war crimes in Vietnam, and for whatever reason, and to this day I have no idea why, but he asked that I be

assigned to represent him. I had never met him, I have no idea why he asked and so I represented this Lieutenant Colonel who was about to be court martialed for war crimes, and ultimately it didn't go to a court martial, I was able to work out, what we call today a "deal" for him.

**Denham:** Is that the first time that you represented somebody as a public defender?

**Puterbaugh:** When I first went to Fort Sam Houston at Fourth Army Headquarter, I had handled several minor courts martials.

**Denham:** On the defense side?

**Puterbaugh:** On the defense side. But that was because I was trying to gain experience or whatever, but they were not general courts martials. There are different levels of court martial, but this was a general court martial which is the most serious type of court martial because the war crimes issues were very serious crimes. I don't know why I have this in my file, but it was involving the My Lai prosecutions, Lt. Calley and Captain Medina, and this is a document from that file. It's a pleading filed against Stanley Resor, Secretary of the Army, Kenneth Hodson who was Judge Advocate General of the Army and in the chain of command, but I used a lot of the information from these to represent the Lt. Colonel who ultimately was able to avoid the court martial. Very interesting for me, here I am three years out of law school I remember another time, talking with someone at the White House because I would be constantly calling people in Washington, at the Pentagon and so forth. At that point in time and in that era, a Captain in the Judge Advocate General's Corps would be dealing with matters at a lot higher level than you would ever expect for someone two or three years out of law school. I mean, pretty significant issues and I'll tell you that the General Officers that I dealt with in my four years in JAG were some of the brightest, smartest individuals that I've ever known. I mean terrific people, when you got to that level, they were bright individuals and great people to work for and I'm telling you I really enjoyed it.

**Denham:** As you scale down the time of your service to four years commitment, did you consider staying in the army?

**Puterbaugh:** Yes. That's very interesting. When you're commissioned out of ROTC you're a reserve officer but during my service, I was offered a regular Army commission if I would agree to stay in the Army as a career Army officer. And as an inducement I was offered a choice of assignments, including Germany, and even West Point as an instructor. So that was all very attractive, but I already had this position at Woolfolk Myers. I spent four years in the Army. But the Army goes through a cycle and as the Vietnam War was winding down you know, there was what we call the RIF, reduction in force, going on and while being a regular army officer, not a reserve officer, was attractive, I just felt that I spent four years in the Army, I'm ready to come back to Florida. So while I was tempted and had I not had this position with Woolfolk Myers to

come back to, I guarantee you I would have stayed. Now my contemporary John Compere, we were Captains together, like I said, stayed in the reserves and retired later as a Brigadier General, and now lives on a ranch in West Texas. We correspond occasionally. I have visited him a couple times. It was very attractive except that the war was over, the Vietnam War was over. There was a reduction in force. It's a cycle that the Army has been going through, probably ever since the Revolutionary War. That when the war is over, you're not needed anymore and winding down, etc. You know, we've seen it.

**Denham:** Well, between that time and the time you left, an important development occurred in your life and that is you met a young woman who ended up becoming your wife correct? Can you tell us a little bit about that and you getting married and what was her background? I guess we'll switch course a little bit.

**Puterbaugh:** That's okay. I first was in San Antonio, and while Fort Sam Houston was a really wonderful base and had great accommodations, it didn't have a lot of accommodations for junior officers like Captains. So, you were able if you wanted to, to live off base and I chose to rent an apartment at the Georgian Apartments, an extremely nice apartment complex. The cost of living in San Antonio at that time was not high and so I'm living at the Georgian Apartments with a beautiful pool in the courtyard, everything and my future wife, Malena, was visiting a friend of her's who also lived at the Georgian and they had grown up together in Mexico City in Coyoacan, which is a suburb in Mexico City. I met her in July of 1970, and we were married in Mexico City on December 7, 1970, still married today, 55 years later.

**Denham:** So you were married already when you were in Korea then.

**Puterbaugh:** Yes, I was. In a couple of months, I was deployed there.

**Denham:** Did she join you over there?

**Puterbaugh:** Oh no, it was not really an accompanied tour. Some of the officers, especially high-ranking officers, certainly had wives there at their own expenses, and probably I could have, but it was not what was really thought of as an accompanied tour, because living conditions weren't that great, so we decided she would not come to Korea.

**Denham:** So, did you visit when you were dating and all that?

**Puterbaugh:** Well, we met in July of 1970, and we were married in December 1970. I had a very high security clearance when I was in San Antonio, so I had to have permission from the Army to marry because Malena was a citizen of Mexico and needed a very thorough background investigation of her and her family. So, the Army, as I later did in Korea, had to do this very thorough background investigation on her, made more difficult sense we didn't have an Army



presence in Mexico. Fortunately, my boss, Colonel Warren Taylor, was a close friend of the CIA station chief at the American Embassy in Mexico City, and he asked his friend to expedite the investigation. He did so and it wasn't a problem at all. Malena's father was a very prominent attorney and so the background investigation came through perfect and very timely. We had the wedding ceremony in Coyoacan in Mexico City, and the church service was in English, Spanish, and German. We married in December of 1970 and a couple of months later, I went to Korea.

**Denham:** Among some of the interesting experiences that you had in Texas had to do with the border between Mexico and Texas and maybe some things that might have happened that took you down to Mexico. Can you go into some of that?

**Puterbaugh:** Sure, we had an excellent relationship at Fourth and Fifth Army Headquarters with leaders of the Mexican Army and in fact we would have meetings in San Antonio where members, senior members of the Mexican Army would come for conferences and so forth. It wasn't like today. The relationship between the United States and Mexico in the 1970s was totally different than it is today and the country of Mexico was totally different. We didn't have drug cartels. You could walk the streets of border towns without worrying about your safety. I went down to Nuevo Laredo many times. Laredo is in the United States and Nuevo Laredo is across the border in Mexico, and I never feared for safety at all and many times my duties at Fort Sam Houston would take me down to Nuevo Laredo when an American service man might get in trouble in Mexico and be thrown in a Mexican jail and I would go down to basically "bail them out" and bring them back to the United States. We didn't need to do it with formalities or extradition because we had established a good relationship with the Mexican Army and prison officials. I remember having dinner in Nuevo Laredo many times with Mexican officials, at the Cadillac Bar, which was not just a bar it was a nice restaurant. So, we were going down to Mexico and bringing up a prisoner back to the United States who might have had a little too much to drink and committed some type of crime in Mexico, but it was a great relationship between the Americans and the Mexicans. It's just a shame what has happened to that country and the border towns like Nuevo Laredo.

**Denham:** So, of course having a Mexican wife, you would begin to learn a little Spanish I would imagine?

**Puterbaugh:** Actually, I didn't. Like I told you earlier, the reason why I transferred to the business school at Stetson was because I had no aptitude for languages. Some people have it naturally, while some people don't, I don't. So, I never really had, and my wife when I met her, she even taught English in a Mexican School, and her family spoke English. Her father was a Mexican historian as well as a lawyer and very nationalistic. I love San Antonio and Texas history, and the Alamo, William Barrett Travis and Stephen F. Austin and so when my son was born we named him Austin Travis, after Stephen F. Austin and William Barrett Travis, heroes of

the Texas War for Independence, and I remember my wife's father saying; "why didn't you just named him Hitler?"

**Denham:** That's hilarious and that's funny.

**Puterbaugh:** I had a great relationship with her family, and he was a great lawyer in Mexico City representing a lot of important people in the government and so forth. The relationship between the US and the country of Mexico today is not what it was in the 1970's and it's a shame.

**Denham:** Yes, it is a shame. So, coming out of the military, you go back to Lake Wales, and they take you right back?

**Puterbaugh:** Oh yes. Because like I said, I was on military leave.

**Denham:** It was very easy for you to come back and assume civilian practice and be a junior member of the firm and all the things that a brand-new guy would come in, except you had a lot of experience.

**Puterbaugh:** At that point of time, you would be a partner or an associate. I came back as an associate but after a year and a half, I was made a partner not a full partner but a partner.

**Denham:** So had the firm changed since you were gone or was it about the same? What changes would have taken place when you were gone?

**Puterbaugh:** Robin Gibson had been with the firm when I was there in 1969, but he had left to form his own firm in Lake Wales. But it was basically the same firm. Walter Woolfolk had retired. Neal Myers was in charge of the firm. Clint Curtis, Roy Craig, Mike Crews, myself.

**Denham:** And you were still based in Lake Wales?

**Puterbaugh:** Still in Lake Wales, still in the same firm, started in 1948 by Neal Myers and it was Woolfolk and Myers. Walter Woolfolk had been a prominent solicitor in Polk County. The firm had a lot of citrus clients; looking back on the miles and miles and miles of citrus groves in the 50's, 60's and 70's, , you could drive for miles and miles and all you saw were citrus groves and cattle ranches. The Florida of the 1950s and 1960s and even 1970s before Disney, was a totally different State than it is today and it was basically an agricultural and cattle state. There was certainly a lot of tourism at Cypress Gardens, Weeki Wachee Springs, Marineland, those kinds of places and people traveled here for that, but Florida was basically a rural state where you could drive for literally hundreds of miles and not see anything except citrus and cattle ranches.

**Denham:** And that was 1973 that you came, came back, correct?

**Puterbaugh:** Right, about the time Disney World first opened. Of course everything had changed. As you know, Florida pre-Disney and post-Disney are two different States.