INTERVIEW I

DATE: May 15, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: IVAN ALLEN, JR.

INTERVIEWER: THOMAS HARRISON BAKER

PLACE: His office, City Hall, Atlanta, Georgia

Tape 1 of 1

B: This is the interview with Mayor Ivan Allen of Atlanta. Sir, did you have any acquaintanceship with Mr. Johnson before he became vice president, in the senatorial years?

A: Only an occasional opportunity to see him very briefly. I would not say that it was a real friendship or was in anyway an intimate association.

B: Had you, in those days, classified him by political philosophy or conviction?

A: Yes, I would have looked on Mr. Johnson in those days as part of the New Deal, a young man that came up during the Roosevelt days that had been liberal and progressive in his thoughts. Of course he came from what we call the rural South, in Texas, with its very strong views, which are sometimes reactionary. And it's difficult to exactly associate Mr. Johnson's position in the Congress and in the government of the United States with some of the views that his constituents held back home. But generally speaking, it's been my experience that the longer a man is in political life, the more generous and more liberal his views become.

B: You might well have been describing yourself.

A: Yes, I certainly very definitely have become more and more concerned with the welfare of the people of Atlanta as I have learned more and more of the deprivations that many of them, particularly the poor and those --

B: For background purposes, sir, were you in these years, the sixties, active in national Democratic politics?

A: Yes, the position as mayor of Atlanta, and really my period as mayor of Atlanta extends from--although I came into office in 1962, 1961 was a campaigning year and an election year, and then I was very active in business and civic affairs in 1960. And all during the fifties I had an association with the state government and served as head of the executive staff of the state government at one time and attended, I think, nearly all of the Democratic conventions from the time of 1936 on, either as an associate delegate or a full delegate.

B: At the 1960 convention, were you active in the fight between Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Johnson for the nomination?

A: No, I was not present at the 1960 convention.

B: Then, sir, during the years of Mr. Kennedy's presidency when Mr. Johnson was vice president, did you have any contact with him then in connection with, say, the Equal Opportunity Council that he headed, or anything else?

A: I don't recall any direct contacts during the time that Mr. Johnson was vice president.

B: This may not be directly related to Mr. Johnson, sir, but I think it ought to be on the record. In 1963 you testified in favor of Mr. Kennedy's civil rights proposals; I believe I have the date correct.

A: That's correct.

B: May I ask, sir, was that at your own initiative, or were you invited or encouraged by the administration to do that?

A: President Kennedy apparently sent Morris Abrams who had been a prominent young lawyer here in Atlanta, who had then gone to New York, who was a great champion of civil rights for the Negro people of America. Morris of course now is president of Brandeis University. President Kennedy apparently had sent Mr. Abrams directly to see me as mayor of Atlanta. Morris had been a leader in my campaign before he went to New York and had been very active in my election, and he came to see me and said that President Kennedy insisted that he had to have support from some elected officials in the South. He asked me on behalf of the President to testify on behalf of the Civil Rights Bill. And my reply to Morris at that time was that I would respond to any request that the President made on me, that I hoped he would explain to the President that it meant that I could not be re-elected--at that point it was considered absolutely annihilation in the political world in the South to testify on behalf of civil rights--but that if it would pass the bill or help in passing it, I would do whatever the President requested. Subsequently, the President called me and asked me to testify on behalf of the Civil Rights Bill.

B: Did you mention again to Mr. Kennedy personally that it might ruin your--

A: I told the President that I hoped he realized that I could not be re-elected, and he said he realized that it was very hazardous, but that it was beyond and above a political decision of that type and hoped that I would go. And I agreed to go. In 1963 this was almost heresy in many respects. But my position had become so deeply involved at that time; I had suffered through about five years of trying to resolve civil rights problems in the city of Atlanta. I had been in the middle, both before I came into office, and as mayor, in trying to resolve the sit-ins and demonstrations concerning department, variety, and chain stores, the integration of hotels, the integration of restaurants, the integration of parks, of swimming pools, of theaters. All of these were a continuous series of trying to solve these problems at a local level, and there was no chance of solving them at a local level. It was a national problem.

And so I had very strong feelings that were perhaps as much pragmatic as they were moral on this issue; perhaps they were both. So I had some very strong desires to back the President up and the administration, and of course Vice President Johnson was taking a very active part in the whole matter, and I recognized his position in it.

B: Your fears apparently were groundless. You were re-elected. What happened?

A: Well, I went and testified, and I would say of the eight years that I have been in office, it was the best testimony or statement that I made on anything. I think I can truthfully say that I was probably the only person that appeared before the committee that had actual experience on the local level of trying to solve these problems. Many people spoke on constitutional law, and they warped the ideas of the Constitution into all types of degrees in order to say that American citizens should be deprived of certain inalienable rights. But my testimony was based on actual experience. I testified on a Friday, and the national news media carried rather extensive coverage for a local mayor over the balance of the weekend because there was quite a famous verbal battle there between Senator Strom Thurmond and [John O.] Pastore of Rhode Island. And Senator Pastore defended me very vigorously. And for a local official of my stature it was quite an experience that I never had been through, being the center of this major controversy over national television.

And if I became somewhat of a national celebrity on this brief occasion, I came home to almost universal dissent on the part of the white community. Of course, the Negro community had asked me not to go and testify because they had said that I couldn't be re-elected and that they didn't want to lose me. But having rendered the testimony, they were tremendously pleased and I would say proud of the position that I had taken. But I came home to probably the most extensive amount of opposition in the white community that anyone has ever had. I was through, there wasn't any doubt about that. I

think most of us realized that I didn't even have the support of the Atlanta papers on this issue. They had not yet supported the Civil Rights Bill, even Gene Patterson who was the great leader. McGill supported it, but Patterson had not supported it. And I came home to an impossible situation.

And then I would say there was a series of things that happened. First thing, The New York Times, which of course is greatly respected over the nation, came out with a very fine editorial, and this broke a little ground. And then the Atlanta papers published my testimony and Governor [Carl] Sanders' testimony side by side. And Governor Sanders--who is a very able man, and I hold him in high regard--was still trying to hide behind the constitutionality of the law. And of course you couldn't sustain that position, because the whole effort of segregation was unconstitutional, and we knew that. But when you put his testimony on one page and mine on the other, people that read the papers could see the difference of the positions.

And then the Constitution changed its position, our morning newspaper, and began to advocate it. And then people began to say that, "Well, maybe Ivan was right," and one of those very odd things that you can't account for in public office [occurred]--what was sure defeat in June of 1963, by December of 1963 was universally acclaimed here amongst most white people, that I had done the right thing. And this gave me probably the strongest position of popular support that I had ever had up until that point, so it went completely opposite of what I expected it to. But it maybe demonstrates

that you can do what appears to be the wrong thing in political life and come out on the best end of it.

B: Did you get any support from the administration, moral support or otherwise?

A: Yes, I had a wonderful letter from President Kennedy. It hangs on the wall out here now. A very gracious letter of appreciation. I won't say that I got a lot of other support from the administration other than a very kind letter from the President for having rendered the testimony.

B: They, after all, had in effect forced you into that position.

A: That's right.

B: Then, sir, in 1963 of course President Kennedy was assassinated, and Mr. Johnson became president. Did you see Mr. Johnson at that time or shortly afterwards?

A: I don't recall the exact next time that we had the opportunity to meet with President Johnson. I'd have to look back into our files and determine that date. I think I could best answer your question by saying that President Johnson and Vice President Humphrey apparently created an entirely different atmosphere at the White House level than mayors had ever been entitled to before. President Johnson became acutely aware of the fact that the grave problems of the nation on a domestic front were in the cities, and that the mayors had not been properly represented at the Executive Branch. And he apparently assigned this responsibility to the Vice President, who began to build up a cadre of mayors from all over the nation

whom he periodically brought into Washington. We would spend a half a day or day with the Vice President and various Cabinet heads and department heads and go from there to a briefing or interview session with the President at the White House, generally around four o'clock in the afternoon.

And it didn't take long for certain firm opinions to begin to come forth in my mind. One of the things that impressed me tremendously about President Johnson was that he not only knew more about the cities of America, but he knew more about my city of Atlanta than the Mayor of Atlanta knew on many instances. And I say this with all sincerity. And he knew this about the other cities. We mayors, of course, live at a local level close to our problems and think that we have some knowledge of what's going on, but the President had an intense knowledge of the problems of the cities and what was happening in each city. And this gave a personal touch and assurance to the mayors.

He built great support from the mayors of America. Of course, Vice President Humphrey carried every major city in America. Whether it was a Democratic or Republican mayor, to a man we recognized the fact that the Johnson Administration had for the first time taken on and [was] trying to do something about these problems in the cities.

B: How do you suppose he got that information?

A: I don't know; I have no idea. His sources of information must have been vast, and his capability to absorb it and retain it must have

been based on very broad foundations of knowledge of the country. You couldn't do that on a superficial basis.

B: Did Mr. Johnson and Mr. Humphrey listen to your problems in these conferences?

A: Yes, the Vice President, of course, spent long hours with us and had more time for us than the President had. And President Johnson was prone to talk a great deal because he was a talkative man. But he apparently had unlimited time. Our sessions were scheduled for an hour, and they frequently stretched out into hour after hour after hour, as he talked at great length about the multiple number of problems that we had, as well as the specific problems that we had in each individual city. He apparently had unlimited time to try to solve these problems.

B: Would he also talk to you about things beyond the problems of the cities, Vietnam and his other activities?

A: Well, [in] one of our first visits to the White House after he came into office--I don't know that it was the first, but he called in about thirty or forty larger city mayors from all over the nation--the President, along with five or six members of the Cabinet, briefed us for three hours on the Vietnam situation and the international problems that they were confronted with. They had invited our wives with us, and they were entertained by Mrs. Johnson and a tour of the White House. And then we all met later for dinner and had a very delightful evening. Yes, he used us as a sounding board to keep abreast of what was going on in the country.

B: Did these conversations with the mayors have direct bearing on legislation? For example, did you participate in, say, the origins of the Model Cities proposal?

A: No, not except what information they gleaned out of us as to the needs of the cities. I would say that the big programs of the federal government, of which I strongly support and am a great admirer, came more from philosophical thinking directed to specific needs and came out of Washington more than they actually developed. The mayors are the pick and shovel people of the nation. We're so close to the problem and we're so beset with unstopping today's sewer that we really don't have a chance to do the thinking that is required. And I'm not sure that when you're right up against a problem every day that you can be objective enough to think it out years ahead of time.

What I'm trying to say is, I think, based on the experience of the past twenty-five years, that the major programs of this type have to be developed off in some quiet solitude where thinking people like the Congress have an opportunity to do it without being exposed to the everyday pressures that a mayor's office is confronted with.

B: This interest in the problem of the cities that you say Mr. Johnson and Mr. Humphrey had, did this go down to the rest of the federal government to those Cabinet officers and other agency chiefs who implement these programs? Did you find them . . . ?

A: I would think that that is a question in which the action and accomplishments would answer it. The Department of Urban Affairs, and the creation of additional facilities in transportation, and development of HEW and all of these were basically a need to meet the problems of the cities. HUD came about entirely during the Johnson Administration, as I recall it. Of course, HEW was there ahead of time, but the big development of it has come along. Yes, I would say that very much so.

B: The individuals who headed these programs were accessible to you and willing to listen to your problems?

A: Very much so. We had direct liaison with the Vice President's office and of course close association with Bob Weaver and Dr. John Gardner and a number of people, a number of the secretaries.

B: Did the fact that your city here is the headquarters for several of the civil rights organizations like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee place you in a special relationship to the administration in civil rights activity? Did they come to you for advice on what was going on and what to do about it?

A: Well, I'm trying to think of the various instances through the years, and I can't relate any specific instances where other than general conversation [took place] in these various meetings. I don't think that the White House ever called me specifically about a problem of that type, no.

B: But it was generally discussed with the other mayors?

A: Generally discussed, yes.

B: Were you asked to testify again before Congress on the civil rights proposals of the Johnson years?

A: No. After the Civil Rights Bill, I was not called on to testify either on the Voting Rights Bill of 1966 or on Fair Housing of 1968, although I was repeatedly being called back to Washington to testify on various programs of the cities, conditions of the cities. I'd have to go back and look up the records of what all the many committees are that I appeared before, either on behalf of the National League of Cities or the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Senator Kennedy had me there on his ghetto housing bill that he proposed around 1966 or 1967.

B: That would be Senator Robert Kennedy.

A: Senator Robert Kennedy. And I became, more or less, a pretty constant visitor to Washington, being a big supporter of federal programs with an appreciation for what we were getting out of Washington. I had the obligation to go when I was called, and I was frequently called by department heads, secretaries, for various testimony on various things: water, sewers, housing.

B: Mr. Johnson visited Atlanta in 1964, didn't he?

A: He came here, I guess it was in his campaign tour, and it was a tremendous occasion. Mr. Sanders was governor, and a very young and excellent governor and was a great supporter of President Johnson's, and he had a tremendous stay, yes. [There was] a wonderful dinner

that evening at the old Dinkler Hotel here in Atlanta--before all our new hotels had been built. Mr. Johnson was favorably received, and I don't recall the exact sequence, whether we went from here to Gainesville, Georgia, or whether we went from here to Macon, Georgia, or whether these were separate trips. But there were several. I know that the President during that campaign visited Atlanta and Macon, Georgia.

B: I was just looking in your outer office at the pictures of you receiving what appear to be tiger cubs. When did that occur?

A: Well, President and Mrs. Johnson were here that night and there had been a pair of beautiful tiger cubs just born at the Atlanta Zoo. And we secured authority from the Secret Service to present those, not as a gift to the President that night, but to name them Lyndon and Lady Bird. And they were brought into just part of the pleasant part of the evening which we went through with, and he was most receptive and couldn't have been more genuine in his feelings.

B: He was right pleased to have, as his namesake, a tiger?

A: Yes, sir, he seemed to like Lyndon and Lady Bird very well.

B: Are Lyndon and Lady Bird still here at the zoo?

A: They're here at the zoo now. Of course they're big six hundred pound tigers now, or seven or eight hundred pounds; they are huge animals. But they're still Lyndon and Lady Bird, and so designated.

B: In1964, did you do any campaigning for Mr. Johnson?

A: Yes, sir, wherever I was called upon I participated in the Democratic activities of the state, mostly here in Atlanta.

B: Sir, by this time, Atlanta is beginning to have demonstrations itself. I believe you had a series of sit-ins over the winter of 1963, and 1964, led I think by Dr. King. Did that create any special problems for you?

A: No. Those demonstrations of 1963 and 1964 I don't think were led by Dr. King. I think they were led by James Forman of the--well, it was SNCC, but SNCC was beginning to change its character very rapidly along in this time. And they were the last throes of demonstrations of that type that Atlanta has really gone through with. I mean I think we've reached a point in the race situation here where we're not confronted with that type of problem anymore. That's not to say that there are not occasional demonstrations.

But those were demonstrations that were levied against certain businesses downtown. They were hazardous moments and they were part of the civil rights issue, and of course by this time I was a right full supporter of the civil rights cause. But we never did feel these particular demonstrations were really a true reflection. We felt like they were pretty well trumped up for some personal reasons.

B: Personal reasons of--

A: Of Forman and that crowd, yes sir.

B: How did you get along with Dr. King, or perhaps I should say, Dr. King, Jr.?

A: Well, I couldn't have had a more pleasant or intimate or fine friendship than Martin, Jr. I was a little older than he was, and

his father, of course, was older than I am. And my number one supporter in the Negro community, and I might say one of my number one supporters in Atlanta when I originally ran, was Dr. Martin Luther King, Sr. So I've had a very close and intimate association with the King family, and a very pleasant and good relationship with them.

Martin, Jr., Dr. King, who was assassinated, and I frequently met. I say frequently, two or three times a year we were generally together for a sufficient period of time where we could have a complete exchange of views. Martin had the national picture, which he saw very clearly; my information was of a local nature. But we could blend these together and learn from each other because we were looking at the problem objectively from different positions.

Of course my relationship with the King family is fairly well known. Mrs. Allen and I were the first persons to Mrs. King, practically the first persons [after Dr. King was shot]. Dr. King was still alive, but we got to Mrs. King almost immediately, [it was] twenty-five minutes from home to Mrs. King's house. I had already arranged for Mrs. King to be taken to Memphis. We were holding a flight at the Atlanta airport, and we drove Mrs. King to the airport from her home on Sunset. It was at the airport when Eastern Airlines advised me that Dr. King was dead, and Mrs. Allen and I, along with Dr. King's secretary, had the very difficult task of passing this information on to Coretta King that evening.

B: How did Mrs. King take the information?

A: Well, Mrs. King is a great lady and is developing into a very strong spiritual leader. I don't want to use the work "spiritual" in the wrong reflection, I don't mean a religious leader, but she is a leader of the spirit of the Negro people, just like Martin King was. And she is a very wonderful person, and her poise and her reactions under these difficult circumstances were about as remarkable and as fine as it could have been.

First, there really is no way you tell a person that their husband has been assassinated. I was fortunate enough to have Mrs. Allen with me, and that helped me immeasurably because the rough position of a man can be greatly softened by his wife's demeanor. Mrs. King was obviously in shock and grief, but her first reaction was for her children and the first decision we had to make after being notified that Dr. King [was dead], and this was minutes later, was to where Mrs. King would go from there. We were holding a plane at the airport. We were there in one room, just the four or us, and I had to force the question because I was holding an Eastern Airlines plane with a hundred passengers waiting on it, patiently and no objection to waiting, but I mean out of propriety we had to do something. I asked Mrs. King what were her wishes, and she said her place was at home with her children, which is exactly where it was. We went back to the King home there on Sunset immediately from the airport. I imagine we arrived there around ten-thirty or eleven o'clock. I didn't keep an exact diary of the time schedule although I probably should have.

The first call that Mrs. King got after she got back, incidentally, was from President Johnson. The President called her immediately; he reached her just after his magnificent statement had been televised over the nation. And although Mrs. King was in her personal bedroom at that time, we know that he talked to her for a lengthy period of time.

Then, of course, that night the nation was blowing up, as you know, and we had a very difficult situation here in Atlanta to maintain things in proper order. I came back to the office after we'd been over at Mrs. King's until possibly eleven-thirty. And we were beginning to get the wheels in motion for the tremendous task that lay ahead of the city, because this whole funeral focused on Atlanta from this point on, as soon as the body was returned from Memphis. And when I came back to the office we began to get radio reports from all over the nation that Baltimore, Washington, and various cities were exploding. We were being favored with a heavy rain in Atlanta that night, which we know helped us. But there were other factors involved too. The attitude of our people here was the main factor.

And we sat around here and, well, we began to take action. I won't say we "sat around." The police chief was here, and as the night wore on and we saw what was happening, we made the decision that we would hold over the next shift change of the police department and then go on to what you call a twelve hour day, which doubles your force of the police department. This is a very

expensive decision that a city has to make in which the mayor and the chairman of the finance committee have to bear the responsibility.

I guess about one o'clock in the morning, [because of] some strange compulsion under heavy emotions that we'd been through the evening, I asked for a call to be put through to the White House. I wanted to talk to the President. I'm sure every man in America couldn't call him up at night, and much to my surprise the President responded immediately. And I talked to him, thanked him for the wonderful message that he had sent. We discussed--I won't say I explained to him, because here again he knew what the problem was as well as I did--the problem Atlanta was confronted with. And he gave me some very solid information and solid advice as to what we should do and how I should try to carry out my own responsibilities and assured me of whatever support was required during the intervening four or five days if he could spare it. Of course, he was under heavy pressure in a dozen points in the nation that night--I guess at one o'clock in the morning he was probably in his bedroom. I don't know where he was.

When we finished the conversation Mrs. Johnson took over, and I had a very pleasant chat with Mrs. Johnson, who was a charming and gracious lady in every way.

B: Was she asking about Mrs. King?

A: Yes, she was asking about Mrs. King naturally, and about the King family. But when we had finished that discussion [she showed] her

deep concern for the city and her knowledge of it and her continuous appreciation for the several courtesies that we had been able to extend on her visits here in the past. [This was] just one of those heart-warming experiences that you get from people that are real people, that's all, in the middle of the night under very strong emotional stresses.

So from then we went on, of course, into the sleepless hours of the night. The big university system here which is predominantly Negro, Atlanta University, was under great turmoil and strife out there, and whether it would break out into a riot. It was touch and go the whole night. These were the students, the alumni of Dr. King's college, Morehouse, and of course obviously we were in constant communication all night with the various presidents out there.

The next four or five days were the most difficult days that Atlanta people ever faced, getting ready for what we thought would be 5,000 people at a funeral, and then 10,000; and then we raised our estimates on Saturday to 25,000, and on Sunday we raised it to 50,000, and as the reports began to filter in on Monday we raised it to 150,000. And of course there were a quarter of a million people in Atlanta for the funeral.

B: Did the question ever come up of whether or not Mr. Johnson would attend?

A: Not directly with me. I was notified by the White House that Vice President Humphrey would be here and represent the President. And

Vice President and Mrs. Humphrey did come and that was the only information I ever had.

B: Sir, to go back a little further in time, had the thought occurred to you, say, in 1965 when the Watts riot occurred in Los Angeles, that such a thing might happen in Atlanta? And did you begin to make some kind of preparations for such disturbances?

A: Yes, sir. Was it 1965 at Watts, or was it 1966?

B: 1965 was Watts.

A: 1965 was Watts. Well, we worried about it constantly. I, and our administration, had been the leaders in the South in the civil rights crusade and had very deep feelings that we must be responsible for what we had participated in which was this effort. We had realized that Atlanta was a ripe spot for problems of this type. With its large Negro population, there wasn't any question about that. A great deal of the Negro leadership, as you know, has come out of Atlanta: Martin Luther King, Whitney Young; also, on the other side of the fence, Rap Brown, Stokely Carmichael; on the good side of the fence, young men like Lonnie King and Horace Ward and Senator [Leroy R.] Johnson. And a great number of national leaders of the Negro movement have come out of Atlanta and been educated in these institutions here.

The Watts thing worried me for months because our police department, from a viewpoint of force and training, was adequately prepared for anything that you are accustomed to, but a police force is nothing but an inhibitory force. Any mayor knows that a

full-scale breakout cannot be handled by the few hundred men that make up a police department. Atlanta had been exceptionally well trained in attitudes towards Negro people. Chief Jenkins is liberal by nature, has a distinguished record and has been through the whole civil rights movement and is highly regarded as a compassionate man, a stern fisted disciplinarian but with deep compassion, which is a pretty good combination. We had worried about the Watts thing, and I had marked down the actions of what had happened. I had seen [Mayor Sam] Yorty fail to assert his personal individuality into the situation, and I had come to certain firm conclusions of my own. I'm not sure where you make these decisions, but one decision that I had made was, over and beyond police preparation, including fire department, uniformed forces and other task forces of the city, all of which are totally inadequate for a full-scale breakout, but can be used to stop something like this.

I had made up my mind that if we got into an involvement of this type there were two or three things that we had to change. One was, we had to have the voice of the Negro leadership there to see what was going on. We had prepared a list of the top twenty-five Negro ministers in Atlanta, and our agreement was that they would be brought to me, [and] would go to the location as soon as it was humanly possible for them to be picked up by police escort and brought into the disturbed area. And there were many reasons for this. One was that we were anxious for them to see that it was not a question of police brutality, because this charge had

frequently been bandied about. Many times it was right, I'm sure, but many times it was wrong too. I knew that the Atlanta Police Department would respond properly, but I wanted to be sure that people knew of their proper response. And this had to be through the voice of the Negro community, which was the Negro minister.

I had made up my own mind that the best justification I could have of my own actions was to put myself in the forefront of the efforts to resist any breakout or riot of this type. So we had this, only major one that we ever had in Atlanta, confrontation, which was at Capitol and Almond, which was a couple of thousand Negro people under Stokely Carmichael's prodding after he had been in the mayor's office that morning and insulted everyone in here by his action and then tried to illegally block the door to the mayor's office. And we had moved him aside, Captain Royal and I had moved him aside. He then found an incident that afternoon in this area, [an] unfortunate instance which happens in any big city. A white detective had shot and wounded a young Negro boy who was under arrest and who was trying to run away. It's this gray area you never know what's exactly right and what's exactly wrong. This was a known thief convicted of automobile thievery, under charge, and he was the culprit. But you never know whether that shooting is right or justified or not.

The shooting precipitated a major riot, and from there we moved straight into it. I brought the Negro ministry in, and fortunately we assumed the posture which we had made up our minds to, and that

was that the constituted authority of the city would be more evident than the normal display of news media that followed Mr. Carmichael and some of his crowd around. I went in there to take the play away, to do two or three things. One, to be certain that the police department's response was proper, propriety. Two, that the Negro ministry of the city saw what was happening so that they could understand the dilemma that a police department was in. And three, to actually take the play away from Carmichael and his crowd.

He fled. He ran out, and he left Forman and that crowd in charge. Of course, before it was over, it was all a matter of an hour and a half, it reached right drastic proportions. We were under rather heavy attack, bricks and bottles, and then finally had to resort to tear gas to clear it out. But it was all over within an hour and a half. The crowd was finally dispersed, [and] other than the wreckage of three or four police cars, which they had turned over and burned, why, we got out pretty light in the whole thing. But we did prove, I think, that if you assemble the proper force, made every effort to solve it in a compassionate way in the beginning, a constituted authority presented itself properly and made themselves available.

And that I did. For forty-five minutes I walked directly back and forth through this mob and finally tried to lead the mob six blocks up the street to the Atlanta stadium to get them to try to sit down and talk. And I almost succeeded when the SNCC boys found out what I was doing and pulled them off of me. Then I made the

tactical mistake of trying to get up on a police car in the middle of the crowd and talk to them. And this was a tactical error because this brought the whole mob around me, and then they tried to turn the car over and either threw me off or I jumped off, I never have understood exactly which. But we got off of it, and then tried to quiet it. We moved back into a half dozen major fracases and straightened them out, and there never was a hand laid on us. All the time we were holding it we were containing it pretty well. But what we were doing was gaining breathing time until we could get enough force in there to where when the time came to disperse it, we had the force there to disperse it with and to contain it. And these are the things that we had to learn as we went through these problems.

B: Most people at the time gave you personally a good deal of credit for averting that. Your bravery of action of going into the area.

A: Well, I don't know about bravery; it was a responsibility. I've often looked back on it. It was probably the most amazing experience that I ever went through with. I mean being in the middle of the street almost by yourself except the police officers that are with you, and having hundreds of half bricks and bottles being thrown at you from behind houses and thirty-five or forty bottles splashing around you on the street into a thousand pieces of glass. You begin to realize that you're not under rifle fire, but you're under pretty .... Of course, there were one or two reporters pretty badly injured in the thing that were hit by these flying objects, whatever

they were. You finally reached the position, I guess the adrenalin begins to move so fast that the original apprehension or fear--and I think all men have a certain fear of moving into unknown situations. I certainly had it when I went down that street with one police officer to try to go into this crowd. A young man who is now here in the office with me, Captain [Morris] Redding, he was a lieutenant then, and his car had been turned over and he had come out of the mob and met me. He and I walked through it.

And I was completely frustrated, if that is the right word. I mean I was fearful. You've got this situation. What can you do with it? These were people that we had tried in every way to provide for in this city and that I was deeply involved in, and I knew this was not going to accomplish anything. This was not the way to accomplish things. And yet, how do you stop it? Because you've got the established situation right there on top of you. Really, I didn't know what I was doing, because you don't have any book. There was no textbook to tell me what to do. None of us ever had any textbook on advices on the civil rights movement.

And Redding said to me, "What are you going to do, Mr. Allen?" And I said, "We're going to walk through the thing." I may have said it a little stronger than that, and we did walk through it, never a hand laid on us although dozens of people planted themselves right in front of us and refused to let us move. And we'd walk right on into them and calmly and politely ask them to move

aside, and we got through. And then after we got through them, they wouldn't follow us up the street. Then what do you do? Well, we turned back and walked through them again. We did this a dozen times, about six trips each way, and of course the grapevine was running. You could hear the muttering "That's the Mayor;" they said, "that's the Mayor." And most of these people are from out of the rural South. They didn't know who a mayor or a president or a governor or anything else was. But they knew this was some poor, old gray-haired fellow that represented some authority.

I'm getting way off the subject, but Jenkins, the police chief, when he got there--they couldn't get him there immediately, and he could have handled the thing far better than I did--said to me, "Mr. Mayor, I want you to put on a crash helmet as long as you're in here." And I said, "Look, Herbert, I've got every television camera in America on me and my gray hair," and I said, "I've got no idea of putting on a crash helmet." I mean this was all part of it, we had to take the play away from Carmichael and that crowd in the field of showing to the nation what this situation was. And so it was quite an experience.

B: And you did something similar again the next year in 1967, [the] outbreak at the Dixie Hills.

A: Well, that never amounted to anything. That was a two-bit incident. We watched it very closely. There never was any likelihood of it blowing up into a real full-scale incident. That was more a news media incident than it was anything else.

B: Then I believe in1968, after Dr. King's assassination, that night and weekend you were also out on the scene, weren't you?

A: That's right, that's right. Well, that's part of a mayor's duty is to be on the ground where the trouble is.

B: Sir, in this kind of thing, did you get any assistance from the Justice Department, from either of its own staff members or the Federal Community Relations Service?

A: Yes, Federal Community Relations Service has been available at times. I can't recall the specific instances, but it has been very helpful. And of course at the time of the King funeral I was in daily telephone conversation with the Attorney General Clark, and he offered me the full help of the federal establishment. And he turned over the Third Army facilities to provide bedding and those kind of things, and furnished me some real good hard-fashioned advice as to how to get through that weekend, told me some of the things that he knew that the city was going to be confronted with. Yes, we had great response.

B: Has the white power structure, if that's the appropriate term, come around to your position now?

A: Well, let me put it this way. They support my position. I don't know that they are as liberal in their views. I would say that they are not as liberal in their views as I am. Their attitude is, "A lot of the things that you've done we don't like, but we don't know any better answer to it, and, therefore, since we can't tell you a better way to do it, we support it, but some of it is with

reluctance." Now this is a general statement that I'm making, I would say a good part of the business community is extremely liberal in the civil rights issue. Atlanta is way, way ahead of most cities in this respect, and we faced up to the issue and resolved most of it here.

B: I understand that there was some preliminary debate as to whether or not Atlanta should formally honor Dr. King after he received the Nobel Prize.

A: Yes, I don't remember what year that was? What year was that, 1964?

B: 1965.

A: 1965, was it that late? Yes, there was a great deal of talk and there were several meetings held. And you have to kind of sit and watch things like that. I knew we were going to show the proper recognition of Dr. King. I knew that it would come but you have to go through the throes of letting people . . . . It's easy enough to say, "We're not going to do it," and that doesn't resolve the question though, because the need for proper demonstration of respect in those type of cases has to be demonstrated. There was some of the old resistance, and some people wouldn't participate in it. Just like I told them, "Yes, you all sit around here and talk, but when you get through talking every one of you are going to, out in the public, support this thing. And every time you get out of town you're going to hear great praise about how Atlanta handled it, and you'll beat your chest about what a great hero you are. And you'll all buy tickets but I don't know how many of you will be at the

dinner, but you'll put the best foot forward." And that's about what happens with the business community, they come around. Some of them are conveniently out of town when you need them, but generally speaking you can count on them to do the right thing.

B: You know you hear a lot of talk about federal-state relations. It occurs to me that maybe a bigger problem might be state and city relations. For example, what's generally regarded as progressive Atlanta and Governor Lester Maddox of Georgia.

A: Well, this is an entirely other subject. There are no state-city relations. They don't understand the cities. The southern legislatures are basically rural, although they are changing some now. Their concern has always been with trying to perpetuate a dying rural setup, and therefore they have been antagonistic to the cities. They look on them only as a place to raise taxes. There's not a single program that has been devised by the state of Georgia to help the urban centers of Georgia that are absorbing all of the growth and have all of the problems that come from growth.

You see, we've inherited all of the poor of rural Georgia, all the poor Negro and poor white have moved into our cities, but we've had no state programs at all. There's not a single state program that has been adopted or created to try to help the cities. And this is just the exact opposite of the federal programs. The state governments have been completely bypassed. In fact, if I were a prophet, which I am not, I would say that twenty-five or fifty years from now, as we become a more educated country and as

we demand greater efficiency of operation, we will eliminate two levels of the four levels of government that we now have. We'll end up with a national government and an urban/county government. We won't have municipal and state governments.

B: Sir, I know you have to go here in just a moment. Is there anything else about your relationships with Mr. Johnson that you feel ought to be covered in this kind of record?

A: Yes, I'd like to be on the record as saying I'm a great admirer of President Johnson. I watched him carry the grievous burdens of a foreign war, which he didn't create, and the tremendous job he did of passing the necessary social change legislation that this country had to have. I saw him rise above all pettiness in his civil rights effort, and he amazed me, his staunchness in this respect, how he held it up. I saw him lose great popularity in the country, not everyone stuck by him, not everyone realized his problems. The mayors stuck by him because they realized the nature of the problems we had and how much he had done. My guess is that he will go down in history as one of the great presidents of the country.

B: Anything else you'd like to add?

A: Not a thing.

B: Thank you very much.

A: Yes, sir.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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