INTERVIEW I

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INTERVIEWEE: LeROY COLLINS

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

PLACE: Mr. Collins' office in Tallahassee, Florida

Tape 1 of 1

F: Governor, when did you first get any sort of an association with Lyndon Johnson? I know with your interests in things political you must have been aware of him for a long time.

C: Yes, I was aware of him quite well because of his Senate career particularly, congressional career, and his early days with the New Deal. I was just starting practicing law at that time, and I was a great New Dealer in my own thinking, not with any government association although I did do a little WPA project at one time. But Johnson, when he got involved with the youth--

F: National Youth Administration.

C: National Youth Administration, that interested me, and I felt an identification in spirit with him then. But more and more as the years went by I followed his congressional career, and I felt he made a tremendously competent and effective majority leader of the Senate.

F: You and he were sort of a new breed of southern politician. Did that ever bring you into contact?

C: We never did have any real contact until while I was governor

we started getting some real problems in the states with regard to the desegregation program mandated by the Supreme Court. I came up with a plan or an idea that I thought would have great national interest and effect. I thought it had great potential, and I felt like I wanted to talk this over with then-Senator Johnson and get his views about it. So I called him and asked if I could come to Washington to see him.

F: This would probably be 1955 or 1956?

C: Right in there, yes. Maybe 1957. He welcomed me there, told me to come on up and he would spend some time with me on a given morning. So I went to Washington. I was met by Bobby Baker, who was then working for him, and he took me out to Senator Johnson's home. Lady Bird was there, too. So we started in a conference that I thought would last maybe an hour, and we wound up late in the afternoon before we terminated it because he was intensely interested in what I was interested in. We were both trying to find some practical ways to see if the idea could be implemented.

What I had in mind was the creation in the states, by federal act, of commissions that would be local, and then with each state having a statewide commission also that would have certain power given it by Congress to make certain decisions that would control just what was done and what was not done so far as the integration of the schools was concerned. Commission members would be selected by the local governor, but they would have to be subject to the

approval of the president of the United States. There was some federal approval there. They would be given, of course, by the congressional act, guidelines that they would be required to follow. But there was allowed a certain amount of discretion and judgment in particular instances where forcing a desegregation effort would likely produce more harm than good. In other words, these commissions would be tools to accomplish, in a deliberate manner with local people, the adjustments that we all felt should be made to conform with the obligations of the Supreme Court decision--Brown v. Board.

F: I suppose you advocated presidential approval so as to keep some extreme governor from stacking a state committee.

C: Right. That's the sort of thing we talked about, the necessity for that. But I had had the legal aspects of this worked out pretty carefully. He was quite interested in it because he did not seem to realize at the start of our conversation that the Congress would have the control over the jurisdiction of the federal courts that it actually does exert or may exert. We were taking some of this away from the courts and investing it in these commissions, leaving always, of course, the court to decide the constitutional rights of individuals involved. But we were giving to the courts, in effect, a tool to use that could produce the kind of help in statistical information and other local information that they needed. I felt that these commissions could serve a purpose of this kind better than the court, when parties were warring to start with. The courts

did not have the research facilities often to get the information that they might need to render judgments, so this commission would stand as sort of a buffer between the school authorities and the people and the courts and help both ways.

F: Did you get the feeling that the Senator had given much thought to this problem at this time?

C: He was very interested in it; yes, he was very interested in it. He wanted to know what senators and congressmen I had contacted. I told him I just had a dilemma, because the liberal senators, the ones who wanted to hasten the process of desegregation, didn't like this because they thought it would be used as an instrument to slow it down. On the other hand, the radical holdouts, who at that point in history for every possible way to block desegregation, didn't like the prospect of having an agency that, as they saw it, would aid the process for integration. So I was caught there with both groups opposed to my idea. But nevertheless, I felt the idea had very substantial merit to meet the needs of the country at that time [and] that this is the way we could best go.

He couldn't have been nicer, and we talked over this a long time and stayed there for lunch. He didn't even go to the office that day. He spent the whole day with me. He wanted me to talk to some other senators, and he was going to talk to some, too. He also suggested that I contact some people down in Miami Beach that he knew would be interested in this subject. But the idea never got any further for the reason I pointed out. We just simply

couldn't get Senate sponsorship or enough strength there to give us any chance of succeeding. The lines were too clearly drawn at that time, and nobody was interested in the middle ground, the area of moderation where I thought I could be produced some great good for the country.

F: This is intriguing, Governor, in view of Johnson's role in the passage of the civil rights act in 1957. Did you get the feeling at this time that the Senator was committed to a civil rights advance?

C: Yes. I've always felt that. I felt that day and I've felt since that he was deeply committed to progress in civil rights, and that he knew and understood that this two-class society that he and I had grown up in had to become a thing of the past if we were to have a life in this country that was really patterned under the Constitution.

F: To be introspective for a moment, how does Florida produce--going back to the period--a moderate like you, that is, what made you moderate and how did you get political success in a period that wasn't slanted toward such moderateness?

C: I grew up in a family of very modest circumstances. We were poor though we didn't think in terms of being poor at the time.

F: You didn't know you were poor?

C: We didn't think in those terms. Most of the other people we knew were in the same shape. In those days that was just sort of an accepted way of life. But as I grew and became aware politically

and became interested in government, I came along with an attitude of being a reformer. The New Deal helped to stir this. I knew things needed to be changed, and the New Deal in the early days of Franklin D. Roosevelt was a symbol of progress and change. I grew up very close to the church and Sunday school and was imbued with ideas of right and wrong and justice. Eager as I was to succeed and to get along, well, this just became a part of my passion and interest in life. Now, I was not a beginning desegregationist. In my early political days in the state legislature, for example, I wasn't trying to change the law and give the Negro equal rights and tear down the barriers that my society had developed that in fact cruelly discriminated against them.

F: In our defense, it was unconscious. We didn't know there was any sort of different life.

C: That's right. But after I became governor really, my concept of obligation changed substantially. I really felt very deeply that every citizen of the state was part of my responsibility to be that person's governor. Once you get that feeling that you are obligated to every one of those people out there, whatever their color or whatever their station in life, then there develops in you, certainly there did in me, a feeling that there were an awful lot of wrongs that needed to be righted. And that grew.

For example, we're laboring right now in this state in regard to what me may do about capital punishment. I don't favor that.

I'm very much opposed to capital punishment, and I grew that way not when the Supreme Court said what it did more recently, but back in those days. Because I saw as governor how terribly freakish and how wrong and discriminating the administration of that penalty was. It was a penalty that was exacted from the helpless and the hopeless and the hated and not administered in any sense of fairness or justice, as I could see it. While I signed death warrants for twenty-nine executions in my six years as governor, it hurt me to do that. I couldn't put myself above the law, but I thought the law was wrong and I asked the legislature in my time in a formal message to abolish capital punishment in our state. They didn't follow my recommendation, but nevertheless that was my feeling back them and it has continued that way since. But this was not so much a feeling that maybe taking a person's life under certain circumstances wouldn't be justified, but largely because of the deep wrongs that existed in the system of administration of it. And I didn't think we could ever have a system that would otherwise be administered.

So with the fundamental foundation and ambition for trying to follow the right course, and anxious to provide new ways and new opportunities for people that had been cut off from opportunities, this black movement that came along created in me more and more sympathy, and more and more involvement, and more and more determination that our state face up to the necessity for change. Now I didn't just flail right out. I tried a moderate course

because I felt that if I just came out as an avowed desegregationist all the way, I would destroy my capacity of leadership in so many other areas of state progress.

F: Still have to work with what's possible.

C: Right. I had a lot of things I wanted to do in Florida, and a lot of things we did do in Florida, so I sought gradually to mold public opinion to a more moderate course. I always stood from the very beginning for law, and for order under the law, and for justice under the law. I told our people that in no way were we going to have violence and disorder over this issue if I could avoid it; that the Supreme Court's decisions and interpretations of the Constitution were the law of the land; that if we could find legal ways to change those, that was everybody's right; but in the end, we had to do what the law required. Of course, it took a good long time in that period for the law to be completely and finally settled. It took more than those original Supreme Court decisions. There were a long series of them. It took the 1964 civil rights act, you know, to really sew it up and tie it down.

Now as to President Johnson's views, I had the feeling that he and I came along in the same pattern of that kind of thinking. I think we realized before most southerners what was inevitable, and I think we were anxious to see the change develop. But I think he and I recognized that we had a lot of other things to take care of, too, and that we couldn't destroy our strength completely by a futile effort to go beyond where it was possible to go.

Now, we didn't get any concrete results from that conference in Washington, so far as the passage of the law I had in mind was concerned. It was considered by quite a few people, and it was just felt by too many of the leaders there in the Senate that it would be the victim of opposition from both conservatives and liberals and there was not enough people in the middle to make it a viable proposal. We got a lot of wonderful newspaper editorial endorsements from all over the country, many in the North, on this approach. But we couldn't get any support from the hard-core driving force for advancing [de]segregation as fast as possible, nor could we get any support from any of the massive resistance people. So there was just not enough room in between for us to do anything with it.

F: Did Johnson contact you at all when he was seeing that Civil Rights Act of 1957 through the Senate?

C: No. I don't know that we had any contact. I don't recall that we had any contact at that time. But I saw in that, of course, some of the thinking that I knew he had and felt. I came back from our conference and reported to a meeting of our state cabinet after that. The press carried the story. I don't have the clippings from it. I said at that time some very strong things about him and the quality of his leadership in the Senate, the fact that he should figure prominently in the future of the country as a presidential possibility. But we didn't carry on any close relationship after that while I was governor.

F: Were you a delegate to the 1956 convention?

C: I went. I wasn't a delegate, but I spoke briefly. Let's see, I was chairman of one of the committees and made a report from the committee in the 1956 convention.

F: Were you privy to any of what to a lot of people was a surprise when the Texas delegation went for Kennedy instead of Kefauver?

C: No, I wasn't. That's on the vice presidency. I was a big Stevenson supporter, too. I believed in Adlai Stevenson. He, I think, has had a profound influence on my life and thinking.

The first I saw of Jack Kennedy was up at that convention. I was the governor at that time, and I was nominated as a favorite son candidate for president, just one of those gesture things. But I didn't have any direct association there with Johnson.

F: The Florida delegation had no great interest in Johnson at that time as an antidote to Stevenson?

C: I don't think so.

F: You know the favorite ploy of southern delegations is looking for some southerner they can use as against a so-called national figure.

C: Wasn't Alben Barkley in that? Wasn't he a candidate?

F: Yes. Barkley was talked about, but he was really out of the thing. Stevenson pretty well had it wrapped up, but he threw the vice presidential nomination open and then you had the horse race between Kennedy and Kefauver.

C: I think Florida voted mostly for Kefauver; it was divided. The vote wasn't solid.

F: You may have just been chairman of--

C: I know I didn't sit down with the delegation.

F: When you came on toward 1960, did you have an idea that you were going to get involved in that national convention in Los Angeles?

C: Yes.

F: Where did the impetus for that come from?

C: Paul Butler, who was then chairman of the Democratic committee, I had known favorably for some time. Bill Baggs, who at that time was the editor of the Miami Daily News, was a close friend of mine and a great believer in me and one of my closest collaborators about politics or anything else for that matter. He became very interested first in me being a keynote speaker. So he talked to Butler and some of the others about that, and he interested people like Ralph McGill and Harry Ashmore and some others in becoming interested in helping project me in that way. Paul Butler--it was his idea. He had the arrangements committee appointed. There was a man here in Louisiana named Camille Gravell, do you know anything about him?

F: I just know the name.

C: Well, he was quite active in the party at that time. I think he's had some troubles. He's been one of these up and down men. But he was a very good friend and strong supporter. He was very active in the arrangements committee. Paul Butler, I think, engineered the idea of my being permanent chairman rather than keynote speaker.

F: Was Mr. Sam's decision, as far as you know, to step down as the chairman a result of his closeness to Johnson?

C: Yes.

F: It wasn't sort of enforced from the outside?

C: No, I don't think so. I think he really wanted to be free of this responsibility. I went up and talked to him about it, and he told me he wanted to be active for Senator Johnson.

F: Did you get the impression from him that he thought Johnson just might make it?

C: Yes, and he wanted to help. Now, Butler and Johnson were not on very good terms at that time, and one of the reasons for that I think was that Butler had been the prime force in organizing this Democratic Advisory Council. It was Butler's idea that the Democrats ought to have an agency that would develop policy and be critical of the administration, a kind of loyal opposition, and have staff and really have a central voice and strength to reflect the opposition's view. Johnson took the position that this was the traditional role of the speaker of the House and the majority leader of the Senate and the congressional leadership of the party, when we had the congressional majority. Johnson kind of resented that. He was invited to be on it but declined. But there were a lot of them on it; Kennedy was there, and the party needed that. That's one of the places that maybe I took a step toward the later development of my position in the convention, because I got with quite a few of the strong party leaders that were around Butler in connection with the Democratic Advisory Council effort, which is since dying. Frankly, I thought it was a pretty good thing, and I still think so. I didn't agree with Johnson's position with respect to that.

F: Did you ever talk to Johnson about being the chairman of the convention?

C: I went by to see him and talked to him after my selection by the committee. I talked with him in Washington. I went to see every potential candidate to talk with each of them about the job I would do. I wanted to be impartial and I sought their advice and concerns.

F: You weren't sponsoring anybody?

C: No, no, I was leaning over backwards not to. It would not be appropriate in that position.

F: Did any of them ever talk to you about being vice president?

C: Well, there was talk out there after the convention got well under way about it. I think that was stimulated largely because they felt that there was a favorable reaction across the land to the job I was doing. But I wasn't a candidate. I didn't even have the support of the Florida delegation. I was a lame duck governor at that time. My successor had been nominated, and in those days in Florida the nomination was tantamount to election. The delegation that was out there was friendly to my successor-to-be, so it was easy for me to be above the fray and be the judicious chairman of that convention. That's what I was concentrating on doing.

F: I suppose I should interject for the record that you, like Coolidge, had chosen not to run again.

C: I couldn't run again. You see, the constitution of Florida at that time forbade a governor from being re-elected. I had had six years. I had had a part term that I had been elected to as an unexpired

term in 1954, and the constitution was construed then by the court not to prohibit a man from seeking re-election to a full term. So I did seek a four-year term and was elected to that and was ending that in 1960. I was not eligible to run again, even if I had wanted to.

F: Did your selection bring you into any particular conflict with people like Hale Boggs or Congressman Bolling or Senator Metcalf?

C: They had been suggested as logical holders of that position, but it never created any problem so far as my feelings toward them, nor them toward me that I could ever discern. In fact, I got to be quite a good friend, I think, of Hale Boggs, and he was perhaps the one most prominently identified there. But I think they wanted a governor. They liked the prospect of a southern governor and a non-Catholic governor, and I fitted all those things. Boggs was Catholic. He was a southerner, but he was from Congress, and so much of the leadership of the party was coming out of Congress. All the candidates were United States senators. Butler and his friends felt that one of the top roles ought to be performed by a governor. I think he wanted me to be the chairman.

F: Were you beginning to get the feeling before the convention met that this would be Kennedy's year?

C: Yes, I had the feeling in the convention that Kennedy had the votes before the convention.

F: Were you much perturbed about a southern walkout if he got it?

C: No, I didn't resent the prospect that Kennedy would be nominated.

I wasn't a Johnson advocate. I liked him, but I wasn't an advocate of his at that time. I visited with him some out there. I never will forget when I went by his room one time the man in charge of it was Governor John Connally. At that time he was a friend of Johnson's, out there helping him. He was kind of heading up his efforts out there, I think. And I got to know him there for the first time.

My delegation from Florida largely was pro-Johnson and anti-Kennedy. As I recall, though, there were about nine votes in the delegation for Kennedy, seventeen or so for Johnson.

F: In your position as chairman, you didn't try to solicit votes?

C: No, not at all for anybody. No, I sure didn't. In fact, George Smathers was the dominant force in that delegation, and he was supporting Johnson. Smathers and I never were really close political associates. We have always been friendly personally, but I don't think he felt that I was quite the same breed of politician that he was, and I didn't think so either. He's a much more pragmatic person, I think, than I have been. I don't mean this to be unfair to him, but I don't think he had the idealism that I have wanted to have.

So when we came back from that convention it was the Johnson people who were sought to be pulled together, really, to form support for Jack Kennedy in the campaign.

F: Did you get any feeling at Los Angeles when it was evidently going to be Kennedy that Johnson would be asked to be vice president?

Do you need to go [to lunch]?

C: Yes, I do.

(Interruption)

F: Before we quit for lunch I'd just asked you whether you had any idea at the Los Angeles convention that Johnson was being considered for vice president.

C: No, I did not have.

F: How did you get the news?

C: After the presidential nomination, the news came pretty quick that he was President Kennedy's choice. There wasn't much lag of time there. But Johnson had always taken the position before the nomination of Kennedy that he would not be interested in it, so I just never thought in those terms.

F: You weren't in any position to observe the sort of pros and cons of Johnson being named vice president or his acceptance either?

C: No, I really wasn't. But it's interesting that you would ask, because when I went to Washington when Johnson was vice president I went to a party one evening out at Liz Carpenter's house. I had not long before read Ted White's book, The Making of a President, 1960, and he has in there a version of how the Johnson selection as vice president came about. I asked President Johnson if he had read the book. He said he had read some of it. I asked him if he had read that account, and he said he had. I asked him if it was [an] accurate account. He said, "Not very accurate, but if you want to know just what happened, you come on in here." He led me into a

bedroom there, and we sat down on the bed and he told me his version of what happened. This was while he was vice president. It had some variance from White's version, as I recall. I don't remember precisely the details of what he said, but I went home that night and made notes of it. I've got it written down somewhere--I could put my hands on it--of what Johnson told me that night.

F: I'd love to see it.

C: Okay. I'll get it for you and send it to you, and then you can insert it in this text at this point.

F: Good. During the convention Johnson charged the gallery seats were improperly allocated. That didn't come under your purview, did it?

C: No, I had no knowledge of that. I never did see anything that would indicate that was the case, but then that wasn't part of my responsibility.

F: Did the civil rights plank give you much trouble? You know there was a hassle over the minority report on civil rights.

C: I remember that, and of course I was at that point--

(Interruption by phone)

What were we talking about?

F: We were talking about the minority plank on civil rights.

C: Oh, I just assumed that the majority plank would be approved. I knew it would be the subject of a lot of controversy in the South, but I just accepted it as being kind of in the nature of the way things would be and it was just a question of time before we would make adjustments to that philosophy and that feeling.

F: Right. Now I remember you drove back to Florida after the convention with your family. You stopped off in Austin and stayed at the Ramada Inn and just came in as a private citizen, and someone recognized you in the dining room that night.

C: Right. They recognized me and spoke to me, and then it wasn't an hour before I had a telephone call from vice presidential nominee Johnson over at the Ranch. He insisted that we come on over there. We had a couple of our children, but that didn't seem to make any difference. He sent a plane to pick us up, and so we went on over there and stayed at the Ranch with him and thoroughly enjoyed it. It was one of the nicest experiences I've ever had.

F: What did you do, stay just overnight and leave the next day?

C: Yes.

F: What did he do, fly you back into Austin to pick up your car?

C: Yes. Right.

F: Did he seem pretty well satisfied with his role in the forthcoming campaign as far as you could tell?

C: Yes, I think he was well adjusted to the idea that he was simply a team man and this was the role he was going to play. He would rather have been quarterback, but when they made a wide receiver or tackle out of him or a blocker, well, he was ready to do that. He was just that kind of fellow, that kind of man, that kind of spirit.

F: What did you do during the campaign?

C: I didn't take a very active part in Florida in the campaign, but they asked me to be chairman of the national speakers bureau. I went to

Washington to the committee headquarters, and we set up a little staff there and operated that service during the campaign. I personally made some speeches around over the country, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Virginia, and Kentucky. I remember those particularly right offhand.

It was a little awkward for me in Florida because of the way the campaign was set up here. It was set up here with many of the people who had opposed me and what I was trying to do in the state legislature. This didn't create too good a feeling for me toward the management of the campaign. I didn't think it was wise either, because I knew that this would probably alienate the support of much of the press that would have been important to have had working with us in that campaign. We called these people "pork-choppers." I don't know whether you've heard that expression before, but this term was applied to the long dominant force in the state legislature here. This was one of the worst apportioned legislatures in the country. It was almost totally rural dominated, and it was not in line with the growing need of urban representation. My effort in Florida as governor had been a continuing war with the "pork-choppers." I was trying to break that block that had a lock on politics in the state.

F: Were they called "pork-choppers" because they lived off fatback and pork?

C: No, that really wasn't the origin of it. It's kind of lost in obscurity. But one of the newspapers referred to them as

"pork-choppers." I guess the main reason was that they just believed in kind of pork and pie politics. Some of them are wonderful people, wonderful public servants, but still the essential control was insidious. They were very close to the special interests for the reason that they were immune to injury from the big press of the state--the control of the legislature was. So one of these legislators from a rural county with only eleven thousand people couldn't care less what the Miami Herald would say about him. The uglier things they said, probably, the stronger it made his position in the little domain that he came from. We had Dade County down there with one senator and three representatives, and then we had counties all over north Florida with twelve, fifteen, twenty thousand with at least one representative, and many with two. It was totally out of proportion to the people.

I carried on a continual battle over my whole period of time for reapportionment. This was before the Supreme Court rules. Of course, this was asking the legislators to just abolish their own positions, and it's almost [an] impossible task to achieve. We found it that way. We had special session after special session. In this fight the people who opposed reapportionment, the so-called "pork-chop" group, though, were very close to Senator Smathers and to Congressman Sikes and some of these other leaders in Florida. So when they put the Kennedy campaign together they really centered it into this element of leadership, and they alienated the Tampa Tribune, the Miami papers--not the Orlando paper, because Lyndon

Johnson got the Orlando paper for them because the man who owned and ran that one was a very close friend of his from old Texas days, Martin Anderson. So that was an exception. It's very much Republican at the present time. Anderson has sold it.

I counseled with them about this and about trying to get these papers and the importance of it, but here again, see, I was out of the picture really. I didn't have a power base to work from at that point.

F: There wasn't anything you were going to do for them next January.

C: No. But I could have helped them with the papers. If they had gotten a little different leadership and all in it--but they were determined to go in that direction, they went in that direction, and they lost the state!

F: Did you work with Johnson any in trying to--

C: I did most of my work outside. I went to a conference with Johnson that the governor of Tennessee had at his house.

F: Was that [Buford] Ellington?

C: Ellington. Soon after the convention. We had quite a few governors there and had a great big rally outside of Nashville, a political gathering, and Johnson spoke, as I recall it.

F: Did you find that Johnson did tend to ameliorate the intensive feeling against Kennedy's Catholicism, or did he play any role in that?

C: Oh, I think he played a very significant role in it. We lost some of the states in the South, including Florida, but Texas was the biggest one that I think he's given credit for saving. It could have made

the difference whether Kennedy won or lost the campaign. And there were some others. But regardless of what the majority vote was, I know that Johnson's influence was strong in helping the ticket. No question about that.

F: Now that fall, before the election even, you went with the National Association of Broadcasters?

C: No, it wasn't before the election, it was after my term expired as governor, which was the first part of January following the election.

F: Did you ever consider any position in the Kennedy Administration?

C: Not until after I was up there, but I had a fairly close liaison with President Kennedy. I went up there the day after I left the governorship. I was anxious to have this job for two basic reasons: one, the attitude that the broadcasters had in asking me to serve. They said they wanted their image to be more closely oriented to the public interest and more identified with public concerns. They thought I could help give them that and that in the long run this really should be the direction of the future. The committee had talked to me about it. I felt very strongly about this medium and what it could mean, and I kind of liked that concept. After I got up there and got going, I laid out several [proposals] in some speeches right away about what we were going to do with broadcasting. It created a lot of antagonism from some people in the industry who just felt like the broadcaster should be free to do what he pleased and make as much money as he could. I was trying to get them to see that in the long range a close identification with the public interest

would be to their best economic interest even, but that was hard for some to see.

President Kennedy called me one day--I hadn't been up there in thirty days--and asked me if I would take the ambassadorship to Canada. I told him very frankly that while I appreciated it I could not accept it because I felt an obligation to the broadcasters. I had just started in their work, and besides, they were paying me rather handsomely and I needed to get some of my personal finances straightened out. I owed that to my family and myself.

F: Recover from being governor.

C: Right. I was pretty badly in debt at that point, and the broadcasters paid me real well in that job.

F: Does the NAB have much influence on the FCC?

C: It has had. Now I don't know what it has now because the NAB is quite a different organization now than it was then. I had the whole power of the presidency. Now they have since got a sort of a double-headed arrangement. They've got the board chairman, who is a broadcaster staying in Washington half time or full time, and they pay him as much as they do the president. They have a dual leadership there. When I left them, they were anxious to keep it closer in the family of broadcasters.

F: They got a feeling that they had lost just a little bit of control.

C: Right, and they had. There isn't any doubt about that. Some of them didn't want anybody leading them. They wanted somebody following what was to their best short range advantage. Now I testified before

those committees up there, and I think we did a rather remarkably strong job, really, in influencing FCC and government policy. But, of course, that was a time when Newton Minow was chairman of the FCC. He was a crusader. My feelings and his were very close together, and we didn't hesitate to say so. He said so and I said so. The broadcasters, a lot of them, felt that he just had horns, that he was about the worst possible thing that could happen to broadcasting. I didn't think that. I thought Newt Minow was a great man and that he was trying to help us go in a good direction.

So when I was there in charge I think we were influential in what was being done in the government. Senator Pastore, when we had a lot of problems in respect to our codes--you see, we developed the codes for good conduct and good broadcasting while I was there. This was part of our program, and the government liked this. They liked the prospect of self-regulation, but they were determined that it be effective and I was, too, and that's where the rub would come in. [They did not see it] as some broadcasters were desirous of seeing it, as just a pretense, sort of a facade, an appearance of something that wasn't genuine and true. This is where I got into problems with some of the broadcasters--not all of them by any means. The great majority of broadcasters supported me very well, but it did get to be a rather agonizing experience when Broadcasting Magazine every week was trying to tear up what we were trying to do. They were succeeding in stimulating a lot of backlash and difficulties for me.

F: I remember you had a little controversy after the Kennedy assassination.

C: Yes, with a speech.

F: Was that at Florence?

C: No, it was at the capital, Columbia, South Carolina. Have you read that speech? It reads pretty good now. There's nothing wrong with that, but you see, that was part a mistake. They had invited me to come down and were expecting me to speak about broadcasting.

F: Well, an honest mistake.

C: I don't count it a mistake on my part, but I mean a misunderstanding. They invited me to come down and talk on any subject I wanted to talk about. On the other hand, down in South Carolina they passed the word to all the broadcasters that I was going to be making a pro-broadcasting speech. They anticipated a speech that I was going to laud and magnify the glories of broadcasters, and so they had tied up all the radio networks and television. It was part because of the mood that the Kennedy assassination caused. I'd been thinking about some things I had wanted to say about the need for strong efforts for the South to get its best foot forward, you know, and get away from demagoguery and the Claghorns, and I talked of this in that speech, speaking up for the South.

But let me tell you something rather strange about that. My host for that visit was a broadcaster who was a close friend of Jimmy Byrnes. Their homes were just across the street from each other out in a beautiful area of Columbia. He had been talking to Jimmy Byrnes, and Jimmy Byrnes had agreed to give me a specially autographed copy of his new autobiographical book that he had written.

He wasn't physically able to go to the meeting that night, but he was going to listen to my speech on the radio and then he was going to present me this book at breakfast. He was coming over across the street and have breakfast with us there the next morning. I knew the speech was going to be controversial, but I didn't figure I should say anything in advance to Governor Byrnes about it. I did go to the governor who was going to introduce me, the governor of South Carolina, they had made those arrangements, and I told him he ought to be aware of the fact that I was going to make this kind of a speech. I left him a copy and I said, "I just didn't want to put you in an embarrassing political position. This will likely be unpopular in some areas. So you just make my introduction as short as you want to." He read the speech, and when I got to the meeting he said, "It's going to be controversial all right!"

When I got home that night Jimmy Byrnes had sent word that he had listened to the speech and that he decided that he could not come to breakfast. He had decided also that he wouldn't have the book for me. And you know what the title of his book was?

F: No.

C: Frankly Speaking. (Laughter) So I never did get my copy of Governor Byrnes' book, which I wish I had but I don't have. But I understand.

We better get along in some other areas now. I told Kennedy that I couldn't leave the broadcasting job that soon. He said that he didn't have in mind me stopping there, but he didn't know what that might lead toward in the State Department or in other fields.

He was worried about growing anti-American feelings in Canada. He thought that I could do a good job in meeting needs at that time.

F: Did you see anything of Vice President Johnson during those vice presidential years?

C: I saw him at that party, and I just saw him at social meetings that the broadcasters would have--a dinner; or some broadcast organization would have dinners, and he would often come to those. I went to many meetings where the President and Vice President were there, annual meetings of various societies and groups of that kind. I never did have any sitdown talk with him about the business of the government or about politics.

F: You made a talk in 1963 in which you urged some sort of federal-state conference to ease tensions, particularly civic tensions.

C: Civil rights tensions.

F: Yes. Were you beginning to get some concern about federal-state relationships in this?

C: Yes. The wounds and the frictions and the antagonisms felt by so many people, particularly in the South, and it was growing in the other parts of the country, too, about Negro advancement and improvement and assimilation into the society on a basis of equality. This was not going away, it was getting strong. I sensed that it would be very damaging to the party, and if we could possibly find some ways to get a better adaptation or acceptance of things, we ought to not just try to keep sweeping it under the rug. It wasn't just going away. We ought to try to get it out and find some better ways

to meet the needs. I remember suggesting we might have a conference on that. Nothing materialized from it.

F: Did the new President, after the assassination, contact you any time soon? Or did you contact him after the assassination?

C: Not in any way of sitting down for any conference or any long discussions or anything. I'd run into him different places, and he was always friendly and knew me. We had some pleasant associations, but not any planning sessions or anything of this sort.

F: Was it a matter of any concern to the National Association of Broadcasters that Station KTBC in Austin was the only TV outlet there for so long?

C: Well--

F: Do you have any insights on how this happened, or why this happened?

C: The general feeling was that the Johnson family did have quite a monopoly advantage there, and that it wouldn't last forever, but it was going to last as long as some of President Johnson's friends could hold it that way. I always got the impression that President Johnson and Frank Stanton were very close friends. That was a CBS affiliate, wasn't it?

F: Yes.

C: I knew Stanton was a man of enormous power in the broadcasting field, and political power, too, I think. We just kind of accepted the idea that it would hold on for a while, but yet that it was destined ultimately to be changed. It was just a question of when something would fall and it would have to be changed.

F: You didn't think there was any sort of collusion between the President and the government on that?

C: No, I don't think there was. It was one of those things that I'm sure the FCC was aware of what the situation was. They certainly knew, but I think it was one of those things that nobody wanted to stir and create any problems for Johnson in respect to it. They just kind of wanted to let a sleeping dog lie as long as it would stay sleeping.

F: As the summer of 1964 wears on now President Johnson is pushing for another civil rights act, and there begin to be rumors that you are going to head the Community Relations Service. How did that come about?

C: Well, the 1964 Civil Rights Act was close to being passed. Luther Hodges had been my close friend when he was governor of North Carolina, and I'd seen him quite often there in Washington where he was secretary of commerce under President Kennedy's appointment, a role he continued under the presidency of Johnson after Kennedy's assassination. He was responsible really for starting the idea that if I could be persuaded to leave broadcasting and take that assignment it would be a good thing. He doubtless talked to the President about it, or the President talked to him about it, and then he came over and talked at great length with me about it. I think had everything been smooth between me and the broadcasters at the time I would have been reluctant to have changed. I knew this would involve a tremendous undertaking that would have its unpopular reactions.

F: I was going to say, from a popularity standpoint, there's no way you could win.

C: No, no, I realized that from the beginning. But at the same time I wasn't happy where I was. I wanted to make a change.

F: It would be a pretty severe financial loss between government service and NAB.

C: Yes, tremendous. But of course that was partially offset by the fact that the broadcasters were willing to pay me most of my salary for the rest of that year, sort of a six-months' salary prepayment arrangement. It was credited to my account over the six months, so this helped on that. The broadcasters were willing to do that because they felt that was part of their public contribution. I imagine some of them were kind of glad to make a change there, too, to be perfectly frank, because some of them didn't like the way I did things, didn't like how I ran the store.

But after Hodges talked to me the President called me and asked me if I could come over to the White House, he wanted to talk to me about it. I didn't tell Hodges I would or wouldn't. I went over there, and you know how persuasive he could be. He said he wasn't asking me to undertake that as a matter of political effort, that he was simply calling on me to do this for the country, and that he had inquired around with a lot of people and almost everyone he had run into felt that if he could get me to do this that I could do the best job of anybody in the country. So he used this analogy, he said, "I'm representing the country in calling on you to do this."

I told him I would seriously see if I could work it out. The bill hadn't passed the Congress then, but it was about to pass. He knew it was. I took the law home and read over it and thought about it, and went down then to Luther Hodges' office. They had a little tiny beginning staff already put together down there to begin the original planning. And to kind of shorten the story, I talked to my wife and a few other people and decided that I would go on with it, well realizing that it would create some real problems for me if I ever expected to pursue any further political career or any other political position. So I did, and it has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life, really, and I'm glad that I did. I have never had any occasion to regret it, except it certainly did create an impossible situation for me when I ran for the United States Senate.

F: I can imagine.

C: Because I wound up in some very critical places, including Selma. There at Selma our little agency was able to move in after that horrible blood bath that they had there on the Sunday and then when they were going to have the march on Tuesday. We worked out the understanding between the state authorities and Dr. King and his forces that there would be a confrontation but there wouldn't be any pressure to a point of any further violence. There was a great big confrontation, and I was right out there in the front row of it at the bridge, Pettus Bridge. But Dr. King, as he agreed with me that he would do, turned his forces around. They went back to Brown

Chapel, and the soldiers put down their guns and arms and horses and went their way.

F: There's a certain amount of structuring in this just like you are putting together a ballet performance or something, isn't it? You advance and I retreat and we agree to do our two-step together.

C: That's right. I was standing right there, and I didn't know who was going to double-cross me at what point and then we would have a horrible mess. It would have been awful. But that was just the little tip of the iceberg so far as what this organization did. We had one million dollars to spend, and that was about half of what the airplane cost that the President had me flown around and talk to the governors about this whole thing in. But it was well put together with some very talented and some very dedicated people, black and white, and we did a tremendous job. We couldn't publicize it because the law required us to keep what we did secret.

F: What was it mainly, just buttonholing people and sitting down and talking about something?

C: We worked out a plan to develop what we called the TQ, tension quotient, for different areas. We first figured the most serious and most difficult states and then the areas within the states where the problems were the most severe. We had people that were there moving around and learning who exercised the power and who wielded the influence, black and white, and then we would go in with teams when they would have problems. We had some great people. In south Georgia we had a tough situation. In Moultrie, they had one hundred

and fifty black children in jail there over some school thing, and this was creating a horrible problem. We had some people who were very good that would go in there and get right on top of that job.

They wanted us to send a black man down there from the South who could try to talk with the black people of that community, and we didn't have a black man from the South. But I had this volunteer, this black man from our staff who offered to go down there because the situation was so critical. I said, "They want somebody from the South." He said, "I'm from south Philadelphia," so we sent him down there. (Laughter) He did just a great job, just a great one. He had the finest attitude and finest manner of rationalizing with people, and when he got through working that thing out the city council honored him with a resolution of appreciation. And outside the courthouse as he was leaving that night the Mayor called him around behind a tree and gave him a key to the city! He said, "I couldn't do this inside, but if anybody ever deserved one of these keys you do."(Laughter) There were just countless experiences of this kind. That little agency earned its money. I don't think anyone has ever earned it any more than they did.

President Johnson realized--I tell you Lady Bird realized what we were doing really maybe better than he did, because she would send me copies of letters that she would get from people. I have two or three letters from her just expressing the greatest appreciation. We went when he made a speech to the Congress one evening on the civil rights bill, the voting rights bill. Do you remember that one?

F: Yes.

C: They invited Mary Call and me to come around to the White House.

F: That's your wife?

C: Yes. [We went] to the White House and had dinner. After dinner with the family we went and sat in a box and listened to the President's speech and came home. Then he gathered us all around his television set; he wanted to see what all the TV reporters were going to say. He was having telephone calls coming in from all over the country. I don't know whether he had gotten different people to give him soundings or not, but he was on the telephone two thirds of the time and we were listening to three different television channels reporting.

F: He was pretty pleased with what had gone on?

C: Yes.

F: What do you do in a situation like that? For diverse reasons, the so-called establishment will play with you and the militant organization will play with you, but what do you do to hold in this fellow who for sheer mischief-making, hooliganism or whatever decides to take it into his own hands on either one side or the other?

C: Well, we had some of that, of course.

F: Which can be terribly incendiary.

C: Yes. We had to undo some of it. We had some of those bombings in some of those churches and schools and things like that that were just horrible. But I think we helped to minimize it by getting a public acceptance for the basic idea of people living in harmony,

mutual respect and without discrimination so far as color is concerned. I think we were able to build a lot of that. We stressed community responsibility.

I think it was fine for that agency to be a part of the Department of Commerce. Ramsey Clark and President Johnson and I had some considerable differences about this. My feeling was that it should be in the Department of Commerce because we could go into a a community, a representative of our agency could, and say, "I'm from the Department of Commerce," and that businessman would sit down and talk to him. I always said if we had to go in there and say we're from the Department of Justice, it would be very difficult.

F: That's where Ramsey thought it ought to be?

C: Yes. He [the businessman] wouldn't know whether you were trying to check up on his income tax return or what. The Department of Justice was not the kind of a sponsorship for getting people to come together.

F: Did Johnson tend to side with you on this or give you a free hand?

C: All the time I was in the office, fine. He never raised any question about it while I was holding the job and doing the job.

F: Did he listen pretty hard to Ramsey?

C: Well, now wait a minute. Ramsey was over there as assistant attorney general at this point and he was representing the Attorney General in some of these confrontation situations. I never did talk with Johnson and Ramsey together. But after the end of my service, after I had done that for a year, I asked to be relieved from it, and so the President asked me if I would be under secretary of commerce.

He just wanted to give me something else to do for the federal government really before I went back to private life, and I thought that was a good thing, too. He realized that going from that into private life may not be as helpful to me in some of the practical aspects of my adjustment, getting back to making a living and that kind of thing, as going from the Department of Commerce. So he suggested that I take the under secretaryship of commerce, which was a nice experience, too. I liked very much the Secretary. He was a man who turned over to me a good share of the responsibility at the time.

F: Who was that.

C: John Connor.

But I was astounded. Johnson didn't have anybody to take my place in the Community Relations Service. I had an assistant there named Calvin Kytle who was the next in line. He was a Georgian who had lived most of his adult life up in Columbus, Ohio. He had done public relations for insurance companies, and he was a very sensitive person. He had very good relations with press people around because he grew up in journalism. He worked for the Atlanta Constitution.

The President got the feeling that Calvin Kytle was creating more problems that he was solving. Instead of calling me over there and talking this out with me, maybe I could have helped resolve some of the problems, it just kind of festered with him. Then he got very fixed in his feeling that Calvin Kytle was a bad man and ought to be out of there. He didn't want to fire him or tell him to get out, and Kytle didn't want to get out and felt that he had kind of

a commitment there. He was carrying the title of acting director. So somebody--Katzenbach I guess it was, maybe Ramsey had something to do with it but I don't know that he did--recommended that he transfer community relations to the Department of Justice. He made up his mind to do that without discussing it with me at all, which I couldn't understand and I don't understand to this day. I would like to have tried to talk him out of that.

In the first place, I was trying to give that agency some independent status, a status of respect and the status of some recognition in the public mind for what it was setting out to do. I knew if it got in the Department of Justice it would just become submerged. It wouldn't have any personality of its own, it would be submerged in that department, and I thought it could do a better job on an independent basis. When I was running it with Commerce, the only thing that Commerce did was housekeeping things for us. I could go to the Department of Justice or Department of Defense or anywhere, and I was recognized as an independent, a representative not of another cabinet department. I knew that feeling would get lost if it was in the Department of Justice.

F: Had you been given any sort of guidelines, or did you pretty well develop this on your own, sort of feeling and trial and error and so forth?

C: We didn't have any guidelines. We had to do it on our own, but I had some very fine people, very fine people.

F: To go back a moment, Strom Thurmond opposed your confirmation, even went to the floor on it. Was this personal, or would he have

opposed anyone in that position because he didn't like the agency?

C: He was unhappy about the Columbia speech more than anything else, I think. He was trying to get me to say there that I would not use the power of this office to encourage desegregation, and I kept telling him that I would use the power of the office as provided under the law. If the law provided for desegregation then I thought the responsibility of that agency was to help accommodate that, but that I would not do that beyond what the proper authority of the law provided. That was pretty safe ground for me to be on, but he was not happy about that. He wanted somebody to tell him that they would not go into a community and recommend to anybody that you let black people in as any part of any adjustment. He was perfectly happy if the agency would go into a community and tell people, "You stay out." See, it was almost that simple. Then he became infuriated by that speech at Columbia because he felt when I referred to the "Claghorns" that I was talking about him. So this is what set him on fire about that.

Johnson called me over to the White House one morning, and Hubert Humphrey was there, Katzenbach was there, and they handed me a paper reporting this change. Now this is while I was in the Department of Commerce. They handed me a statement that Vice President Humphrey was releasing. They wanted us to have an interview with the television camera people and support the soundness of this thing. This is the first time, so help me, I'd ever heard of it. I read that thing, and it argued for the soundness of putting

this in the Department of Justice and destroying the individuality of it. I said, "I just don't think that's right. I can't get up there and say I think it's a good thing to do because I don't think it's a good thing to do. I just can't do it." They were all right. But they went on and went before the cameras. I know Hubert Humphrey didn't like it either, but there was nothing else he could do.

F: I was going to ask you. This sort of took it away from his general overlordship and put it over in Justice. It wasn't, I don't suppose, in any way a lack of confidence in Humphrey?

C: No, no, it was a lack of confidence in Kytle. The President just got a passionate feeling of antagonism for Kytle.

F: You know this has always interested me, that it would reach down that far. You'd think that Kytle, in a sense, would be beneath his notice.

C: No, no, he was the kind of president that reached down that far.

F: Yes, I know.

C: In fact, he would get under secretaries together from the various cabinet departments and bring them over there and talk with them, and assistant secretaries. He believed in having a pretty close contact with people at that level. He didn't respect Kytle, and he thought Kytle was not loyal. What it was all based on, I don't know.

F: He never did fire Kytle?

C: Of course, once it went over there, Kytle went out. That did it. I was quite distressed about it because I had put most of the people in our organization and had great

confidence in them. I just left the White House and went back over there. I didn't take part in the press conference, and nothing was said to me about it. I just told Califano that I couldn't do that in good conscience because I thought that was a mistake, and I wished the President had talked to me about it.

F: Did the President ever say anything to you, ex post facto, or otherwise?

C: No, he never said a word about this, so I don't even know whether he knew all this went on. It was the Vice President's statement that was issued to the press, but it was a statement that Califano had prepared.

F: When you became under secretary of commerce, did you continue to oversee community relations?

C: Yes, as long as we had it.

F: You just added other duties in other words.

C: Yes, and general responsibilities. But that was part of my domain, that agency that we had for--

F: Were you in on the Harlem-Bedford-Stuyvesant troubles, or did that precede your moving in?

C: I remember that great big breakout didn't occur while I was there. The Watts did.

F: Watts and Chicago.

C: Watts and Chicago.

F: Did you get involved directly in that, or was it handled by your subordinates?

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C: Yes, I was in Watts after the fact and before the fact. But a strange thing: we had in our assessment where the worst dangers were. We picked twelve cities, and we invited the mayors of those cities to come to Washington. Ten of them came; two of them didn't come. So we talked to those ten mayors along this line, we said, "This is the information we have about your city"--we didn't have any press people there--"we think it's dangerous. We think it has serious dangers building up, and we want to provide all the resources of the federal government to you to try to protect against this. If there are projects that you can put into effect under the OEO, if there is help that you can use from any other federal agency, we got you here so that we can let you know that we want to help you." Well, those ten were fine. They were quite cooperative, and we helped them. The two that didn't come were Mayor Daley from Chicago and the mayor from Los Angeles.

F: Yorty?

C: Yorty. They took the position that this was not any of the federal government's business, that we didn't really know what we were talking about, and that they could look after their own affairs. They wouldn't come and wouldn't go into these kind of conferences with us. I know it must be partly coincidence, but maybe not altogether coincidence [that] those were the two cities, Los Angeles and Chicago, where the most serious trouble of all developed. We were helped rather importantly in all those other places. I was out in Los Angeles the week before the Watts outbreak and talking before a welfare group, and I

told them exactly what all the information that we had indicated was about to happen there.

F: Your intelligence was pretty good?

C: Very good. I don't see how we did it. I don't see how our people did it, really, but it turned out to be, after the fact, very accurate. I made a speech out there, somewhere there's a copy of it, in which I said, "It's serious, and you've simply got to recognize that this can be very explosive and can create some real problems." It wasn't a week or ten days later that they had that great mess out there.

F: This is a little bit like fire prevention. If you prevent it, you never know what you're preventing; whereas if it breaks out, you know what you should have done. What could you do to stop something like Watts, or to head it off?

C: Go in there and get people talking with each other, and the dissidents, the ones who were going to make the trouble, give them the feeling that there was somebody listening to them and somebody who was willing to help and somebody who would help them.

F: If they can get someone to talk to that does defuse them to a certain extent?

C: Yes, it does. The difficulty was that so many of these councils and the heads of these municipal departments wouldn't even talk to these people. So our job was first to get them to talk to them. Then if you've got a horrible area down there where the housing is bad and the playgrounds are bad and the dope dealers bad and all that, if

you can organize meetings through the churches to bring people together and build a swimming pool for the children, if you can get that done through private business or through some kind of government help, this could relieve a lot of that. Just the feeling that somebody was helping them--we found this, above all else, perhaps the the key to helping in those kinds of urban situations.

Now we had an area over here, a little town in Mississippi where they had a situation where there was just no communication whatever going on between the blacks and the whites. The blacks and the whites would sit there with their shotguns, you know. Some of them would be patrolling around, and they were taking potshots at each other. That town was closed down. There wasn't anybody on the streets hardly. It was very, very bad. We went in there, and we talked first to a hardware merchant. Then he got somebody else back in the back of his store, and then we got the town newspaper editor, just kind of one getting one and all building up a group and then started bringing in a few black people. We got them talking, and we got some of the tension settled. Then we set up a plan to get a little plant in there to give them some work, and they agreed there wouldn't be any color line in respect to these jobs. There always had been. We got this manufacturing group to put a little branch plant in there with jobs for many of the needy. Most of the work had to be done by hand, and [it was] easy to teach people to do it. I think they were making shirts.

F: What town is this, do you remember?

C: Well, now, these are the things we were supposed to keep in confidence. I shouldn't mention the town, although I mentioned Moultrie, Georgia, a while ago. But that town, within six months, was just humming away. They were just getting along fine, and we were told the white people were accepting the blacks in the theater and the eating places. This is commonplace nowadays, but in those days it was pretty rare. They had this plant, and the town's gotten along fine ever since, as far as I know. This is the kind of thing that was really the glory of this little agency, that it could do a few things like this. Now we probably didn't do one for every fifty that needed being done, but at least we were getting some things done.

F: What inducement, besides patriotism, can you give a man to make him put a plant in a town like that? I mean, after all, it does have a certain high risk factor in it.

C: You see, we had an advisory council that the President had appointed. He had picked out these people from all over the country. It was a very, very high quality council. Many of them were manufacturers, some teachers, some preachers, all kinds of people, but they were strong people, strong leaders. We had a committee of that council that was especially involved with this, and they had the means of getting this kind of thing done. They got that little plant over there for us. I imagine that it was done on a kind of a personal basis. Jim going to John and saying, "You're expanding, I know that, putting plants in different places. Now here's a place where the country really needs you to put one because of this racial situation.

We'll do our best to make it work and see that you don't have any trouble from that and see that you have a good pool of manpower."

F: You had that in most of the places.

C: Yes, we had lots of that. Lots of manpower.

F: Were you able to sell the militant blacks?

C: We got the labor leadership, of course, that became involved in it, too. We had to get some of them to kind of waive rules. We had a lot of labor people on this advisory council, too.

F: You must have felt a little bit like a missionary.

C: Yes, quite a bit like one. A cross between a missionary and a fireman, as you said a while ago.

F: Were you able to sell some of the more militant people on the basis that who gets hurt in these troubles is the blacks?

C: We had a lot of help from most of the civil rights groups. We didn't have any contact with the Black Panthers or some of the extreme ones. Andy Young, who was elected to Congress the other day up in Georgia, was a great help to us. He was working with Dr. King at that time. Do you know him?

F: I just know who he is.

C: A very extraordinary person. He ran for the Congress one time and was defeated, but he made it this time. I was glad to see it. Dr. King was helpful to us. The SNCC people, they helped.

I'll tell you another thing that caused me to take that job. I was in Washington when they had that march on Washington. I just wanted to go down and see what it would be like, and on my own I

just walked down to the mall that day. I don't think anyone could be there without being very deeply impressed, if he had any sensitivity at all. These people were so quiet. It was such a moving experience to see that great mass of people [with] no disorder in it at all. It was something from the soul and the spirit of those people that was coming through. You had the feeling that the song, "Old Man River" gives you, those lines about being tired of living but scared of dying. Being there made me feel like as a citizen I really ought to have a greater part in it.

I've always been a great fan of Oliver Wendell Holmes for some reason, as a lawyer maybe, but there's a quotation from him that has stuck with me over the years and I'll paraphrase it. I won't give it to you exactly but it goes something like this: "A man who does not become a part of the passion of his time doesn't live." I felt that this whole civil rights movement was the real passion of my time. I knew it was going to get adjusted in time, that there would be a lot of headaches and heartaches and broken heads in the process, but it was going to be adjusted. If I just stood on the sidelines and let it go by, [I thought] I'd always have the feeling that I just hadn't lived really, that I had turned away from being a part of what was happening in my time that should have commanded some of my effort. In restrospect, I just wish I had done more, really--not less.

F: Did you get involved at all with the rural blacks?

C: Yes.

F: They're a little harder to get at, aren't they?

C: Yes. They're more intimidated and less of them are--

F: Less cohesion.

C: Yes, but we certainly felt them and understood who they were and where they were. We heard about that black man who was supposed to be on the broadcast from Mississippi. You've heard that story, haven't you?

F: No.

C: There were whites who were convinced that the real solid, old black citizens were not really in harmony with all this change that was coming; that they really loved their white masters, and actually wanted to continue their present ways of life. So the whites figured that if they could just find a way of getting the message from these black people to the other states and all around that a lot of the tension could be taken out of the race relations problem. So they found this old black man, deeply rooted in the southern culture of his time, and they asked him if he would be willing to say how he felt on a national broadcast. He agreed to.

The way they tell the story, the network camera men all came down there, and insisted that it had to be spontaneous. The old black was sitting on his cabin porch in his rocking chair, tattered clothes, just sitting there. The cameras were set and the director said, "Now when we get ready we're going to give you the signal to go, and just start talking and tell the pepple in your own words just how you feel. It's just going to be a few seconds now before

we're going to be ready for you. Now you be ready to go, and when I pull my hand down you start talking." So they gave him the signal. He said, "Is it time to talk now?" [They whispered], "Yes, yes, go on, talk." [He said], "Now I can say anything I want to?" [They said more urgently], "Yes, yes, go on." And so he raised his voice and yelled out: "HELP!"

F: Very nice, I hadn't heard that. Did you ever talk to President Johnson about getting back into politics? Incidentally, before we get into that, I'm taking for granted that by your position you were barred from any part in the campaign of 1964, that you couldn't do much for Johnson in 1964, besides as just an ordinary citizen.

C: Well, he didn't need too much done for him in that campaign. But I would have helped in any way that I could have helped, and I did do some things. Everybody knew, of course, that I was for him. When I got ready to leave the government he asked me to come over to the White House. When I got ready to come back home, I wanted to run for the Senate. This was in the latter part of 1966. When I got over to the White House he took me into the little tiny office. He's got a little office there, had one not much bigger than this table.

F: He pretty well filled it, too.

C: Yes. He said, "I just want to talk to you a little about your future and all that." He said, "You know, of course, that I appreciate all you've done for the government. We've been proud to have you." Said some real nice things, and then he said, "I'm glad you're going

to run for the Senate." He said, "I just think that's the greatest service a man can render. I just wish you luck. If there's any way I can help you, whether I come down there and make a speech for you or against you, whichever way it'll help the most, well, I'll be glad to do it." You know, that was kind of his line. He said, "I will always enjoy my years in the Senate, maybe above all the others." He said, "There's one thing I regret though about it, I wish that I had never taken positions of leadership responsibility in the Senate. I wish I hadn't been majority leader." He said, "When I took that, then I was always having to do things for other people and to tailor some of my positions to try to bring enough people together to get something done. I wasn't free to sit back and just call everything like I saw it." He said, "I think that would be a glorious experience, just to serve in the Senate without all of the problems and pressures you get trying to be majority leader."

F: Of course, you and I know he could no longer--

C: No. Not only that, but a lot of the distinction that he got and the interest of the people in the country came because of what he did as majority leader. No, I can understand him saying those things and I can understand how he could have reflections of that kind, but at the same time, that was the passion of his time, that service that came his way, and he had to be a part of it.

F: Did he feel strongly about Governor Burns' election in 1966 in that race against High? Did he ever indicate to you a preference in this? Burns claimed that LBJ was on his side, but they, as far as I can

tell, pubicly never made any statement at all.

C: I didn't know of any relationship or any interest that he had in this.

F: Did he do anything in the Senate race, or did he stay out of that?

C: In my race?

F: Yes.

C: No, he didn't do anything overt. I didn't ask him to do anything overt.

F: Was your association with the Community Relations Service a handicap?

C: Oh, yes.

F: They beat you on that?

C: Yes. You see, I had an attorney general in the state who ran against me in the primary. He's the one who really defeated me, although I beat him.

F: [Earl] Fairclouth.

C: But he made a huge issue about the fact that I was mollycoddling all these criminals and stirring up these people in Watts and Cleveland and Detroit, and all those things were burning up. You know there was a great wave of those kind of things in that year of 1968 after I left. It was right during my campaign, and it was climaxed by the convention in Chicago. This opponent kept telling people that I was at Selma, and they had a picture of me with Dr. Martin Luther King in the front row of that march to Montgomery. Of course, I was there, and I knew they were taking all the pictures. But I was trying to get some things worked out, and this was the only way I

could talk with King, as we walked along. I got some marvelous cooperation from him. I would walk along and talk with him a while and then get out and get in the car and go down to Montgomery and talk with the police commissioner. Red Blount, incidentally, was working with us on that, but it never did get out on him, I don't think, in his later campaign. Or maybe it did. He got beat. He was helping us; he was helping us rather importantly.

F: Did you get pretty good cooperation from them?

C: Yes. Then I'd go back and get in the line for further negotiations and understandings. But the appearance was that I was leading the march, that I was leading the demonstration. I was a "liberal," and they were screaming about being "conservatives." When the attorney general in my race came out pretty close--I defeated him but it was by a very close margin when most people assumed to start with that I was going to defeat him overwhelmingly--this showed my vulnerability to his charges of liberalism. The Republicans, all they had to do was to put a man out there who had no opposition vote, which they did, and looked good; 30 per cent of the people were against me by that time. Gurney, the man who beat me, all he'd say was, "We've just got a choice in Florida. He's a liberal. He's Lyndon Johnson's man. He's part of the hierarchy that fashioned all of this lawlessness that you see happening every day now. He's the liberal, and I'm the conservative. So you just take whichever you want."

F: All he had to do was pick up another 20 per cent and he had it?

C: That's right. That's right. They had over 20 per cent Republicans.

It wasn't the time that I could have won. Actually, I was terribly disappointed. I wish I could have gone to the Senate and I think I could have made a strong senator. I think I had the capability and the friends and the knowledge of people and could have done a great job. But it was one of those things that I think a political leader ought to be able to face. The time may come when he won't win, and he may not win because he's done some things that he really should have done. But if you've got to win at the cost of not doing things you should do, what kind of victory do you have? This is kind of the way I looked at it. I've really settled now into a more private life. I haven't been involved in politics much, and I've got this position here with this law firm. I'm my own boss. I handle the cases I want to handle, and I don't handle the ones I don't. I don't get myself into a rat race, you know, drawing deeds and mortgages and closing real estate trades and some of the things that just overburden a busy lawyer. I've got a place down here on an island in the Gulf off from Carrabelle that I love to go to. I go when I want to, or when I feel that I can go.

F: I noticed that you had two residence addresses in the phone book. Is one of them that place?

C: No, that's a misunderstanding. There is another LeRoy Collins here. He's the superintendent of Tall Timbers Plantation.

But I'm not retired, I'm working hard. I don't want to be retired. My health is good; I think it is, and the doctors think it is. I want to work, but I'm doing things I want to do. I even wrote a book.

F: I noticed that over there.

C: It's not the kind of book you'd think I'd write. It has nothing to do with political philosophy or political experience, really. It's a group of stories of old Florida.

F: Good.

C: They're stories that a good many have heard, but nobody's ever retold them like I'm telling them and pulled them together in a book. I came out of my political campaign with a deficit, and the profits from that little book have cleaned up my deficit. It's been that popular.

F: That's great.

C: People like it, enjoy it. It's got the story of my own home, which is the last chapter in it. It's got one chapter in the middle that does have my philosophy and some of my biography. There's a little poetry that I've written. So I can do these kinds of things that I really have a desire to do, can live mostly private. I don't take part in many public things now, but I do budget a part of my time to church work and a part to fund raising work for charities of one kind or another. I like the way things are going.

F: Have you had any contact with Johnson since he left office?

C: Not much. I've had some notes from him. He wrote me a beautiful note after my defeat. It was keyed right to what my situation was, so I know it carried his personal thinking and wasn't just some routine form letter. I ran into Lady Bird up in Washington once, enjoyed seeing her. She's got some things in her book about us. She's got the story about the night we went to the joint session

and he spoke.

F: Is that the farewell address or another joint session?

C: This was a joint session on the voting rights bill. You know, there was considerable opposition from the South because of supervisors, and certain states based upon their records were subject to having the supervisors to check on the fact that everybody who wanted to could register, could do so and vote.

F: Did you get the feeling that Johnson turned loose more in the way of civil rights than the country was ready to absorb, or do you think he did what was necessary?

C: Oh, I think it had to be done. It's just like the Civil War, really, like Lincoln was confronted with. He came along at a time [when] this had to be done, and it had to be done notwithstanding the fact that it was going to create severe problems.

F: Do you think he understood that the problems he created were just sort of a natural accompaniment of what was going on?

C: I think so. I think he's a man who has a deep sense of history. I think he recognizes the fact that the man who does not come to grips with the issues of his time is just shelved, so far as history is concerned, and I think he really wanted to have a permanent place in the leadership that would help this country achieve its basic purpose. I think he saw that his was the time that he had to be strong in bringing the people to understand and to live by the simple obligations of the Constitution, which, of course, are also

the obligations of their religion. I think he felt that this was his mission as president, that he would fail if he didn't do it.

Kennedy, you see, didn't do that. Kennedy was trying to tread lightly in this respect. Maybe in a second term he would have been as strong as Johnson was in it. I don't know about that. I would assume that he probably would have. But he was trying to cement his political strength and ties to get these other things done, and he by-passed civil rights needs. I think Johnson realized that if he did that, that he would have a place--

F: That he would be listed in the appendix.

C: Right, that he would be listed in the appendix. I think really that it's just terribly tragic that this Vietnam War came along, because I think without that war experience Johnson would have and deserve the satisfaction of knowing that his was an enormous record of accomplishment for this country. The war has given his record a sort of smear. People got so unhappy about that war. In restrospect, I imagine now he kind of wishes things had been different.

F: He lacked the emotional appeal, of course, of a Kennedy to the oppressed and the downtrodden and the blacks and so forth. You were in a peculiar position to observe black leadership. Even though they might not have had that kind of close feeling of alliance with him, did they understand what he was trying to do?

C: I think they were suspicious about him and had their fingers crossed and their doubts for a long time, if no more than just because of his accent, you know, his Old South heritage and things like that. I

think they reacted that way about most of us, but I think as time went on the black leaders I knew had a deep conviction that Johnson as president was a strong champion and leader of their cause.

F: Thank you, Governor.

C: Thank you. I'm glad you came by.

(Interruption)

F: Go ahead. You can do what you want with it later.

C: I think Lady Bird exerted a very strong influence over the President, and I think it was all for the good. I think she is a marvelous human being. I think she toned him down quite a bit. Still her influence was there and it was felt. She was so interested in highway beautification and in trying to make the countryside pretty and to preserve our natural heritage. This was a very laudable instinct and interest that she had. There was a bill in the Congress limiting billboards and abolishing junkyards and old automobile junkpiles so that people wouldn't have to see them riding on a beautiful country road. The bill was hotly contested by the sign board people, naturally, and the others who stood to lose some advantage they felt they were getting under the status quo. The lobbyists were very active.

President Johnson never took any bill and getting it through Congress any more seriously than he did that one. He pulled out all the stops. I remember one day he called me--somebody had given him some information that had just made him furious. I have never seen a man or heard a man who was any stronger in his denunciation of what he was running into, and he felt so furious about it that

I couldn't say anything for a matter of ten minutes. He just went on and on excoriating in some terms that no one else should ever repeat what he felt about this. It was all a part of a righteous cause, but he had a way of expressing it when he let his hair down with his friends. (Laughter)

F: Why did he call you?

C: I don't remember just exactly. He thought I would be someone who would listen. He knew I was interested in helping, and I think he got all that off his chest and probably felt better for it.

F: There wasn't anything you could say, was there?

C: Well, I could let him know I understood and would try to help.

F: One thing we didn't mention that we ought to clarify. In this community service, we've been talking primarily about places that had racial problems. Did you have any authority at all in places like Appalachia and Cairo, Illinois, and places like that that were otherwise depressed and therefore had really a community problem also? Or were you confined pretty exclusively to racial tensions?

C: Mostly racial because that was our assignment. There was need for help in those other areas. You say Cairo, Illinois. We didn't do anything in Cairo, Illinois, that I know of. We did in Gary, Indiana, and we did some very important work there. That's where one of the mayors was who came to see us, and we worked out quite a strong program to help him.

F: That was pre-Hatcher?

C: Yes.

F: Mike Mayfield.

C: Right. But I don't think we tried to get involved where there weren't racial difficulties and tensions. We were spread pretty thin even just taking that part of the society.

F: I'm sure it was hectic at the time, but it must be marvelous to look back on it.

C: Yes, sure, I'm proud of it.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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