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This an interview by Dr. James Button of Hollice T. Williams on 7-29-75 in Pensacola, Florida, for the Button Project.

I: They're through tapes of interviews with well-known political figures and other leading figures in Florida over a period of time. In fact, going back even now several decades. They would like to, if possible, transcribe the interview, send it to you. It may be a year or so because they're backlogged with tapes that are going through. You can change it, edit it, do anything you want to with it. In fact, in the end, decide not to make it part of the oral history project if you want to.

W: Uh huh.

I: If after editing it, you would like to have it become part of the oral history project, it will. And it will have your name on it.

W: Uh huh.

I: But if you don't, again, if you don't want that, you don't have to sign a release form. Anyway, you'll get the whole interview back.

W: Right.

I: But that's something separate from this.

W: Okay.

I: That's mainly the reason we're taping it. They'd like to have it become part of the oral history project.

W: Beautiful.

I: Again, we'll send you a transcript, but nothing in the meantime.

W: That's all right.

I: And even then, it means it just becomes part of a library. It's not released to the press or anything of that sort. It's for scholars and students, and it was to be saved for posterity really.

W: Uh huh. Yeah. Right.

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I: Over the years. We have a series of questions we'd like to ask you. First of all, to find out how well the civil rights movement in Florida has helped blacks to take part in Florida politics. And we'd like to, first of all, ask you what year you first registered to vote.

W: What year that I first registered to vote?

I: Yeah.

W: Why didn't you ask me a question that I wasn't--

I: It takes you back a ways.

W: The very first year that I become of age to vote, and I'm forty-six now. And when I found out I could register, and that takes me back some long time. But when we was allowed to vote, now I don't know the exact year or the exact date.

I: About--it was--did you register the year you turned twenty-one?

W: Right.

I: Okay. Were you ever turned down when you attempted to register to vote by the local registrars?

W: No.

I: Okay. Have voter registration drives been held in Pensacola in the last--

W: Yes, we've had some--I don't feel that they were of the magnitude that needed to be. We've tried to have some voter's registration seminars and what have you. In fact, I attended one in Atlanta and brought the information back to try to set one up here. This happened some three years ago when we really first tried to put on one. We formed what we call a Unity Day activities, an extended kind of coalition is actually what it was. <sup>Consisting</sup> ~~It consisted~~--hopefully <sup>consisting</sup> ~~consisted~~ of all of the key figures in the civil rights movements in

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W: the area, SCLC, NAACP, and all organizations that were--we thought that would--could fit into it.

I: Uh huh.

W: We could not get 100 percent participation because at that time SCLC and NAACP--NAA--you know, whatever I'm trying to say there--uh, would not participate because we had a breakdown in communication. I just use that generally.

I: What year was this--that this began?

W: It began--this is '75, '74, '73, 1972.

I: Okay.

W: Uh huh.

I: There were no large registration drives before that time here in Pensacola?

W: Not to my knowledge, no.

I: Okay. What year were you first elected?

W: I was appointed in 1970.

I: To fill out a--

W: To fill out a term of nine months--between eight and nine months of a person who resigned, and then I ran and won that one. And in the next election I had no opposition. And the next one, and then I ran this last year.

I: So you've actually run three times.

W: Three times. Three times.

I: Three times, <sup>you've been elected.</sup> ~~and you when you were elected?~~

W: I've been elected three times. Twice--I don't know how this happened to be, but twice--the two times that I had to really get out and beat the bushes I had <sup>two</sup> ~~to~~ white opponents. And as I said, the middle time

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W: that I run, I had no opposition.

I: Okay.

W: Okay.

I: In terms of this voter registration drives, how successful did you feel they were. You said you--

W: I don't feel like they were very successful. I feel like there was two things--two reasons why. Well, I'll say two reasons why. One of them was that we were not organized or we did not have the knowledge of how to really conduct a voter's registration drive.

I: Uh huh.

W: Many of us say we do, but we really don't. I feel like it takes a little bit more study from what I've seen and what I've heard and read. I think it takes a little bit more than we put into it.

I: Uh huh.

W: In order to get it done--a little bit more organization.

I: Do you have any idea of about how many people were registered in these drives? Or what the increase in percent of registered black voters was?

W: Well, I would say that we--from what I understand--I couldn't offhand tell you exactly how many black registered voters we have right now either, but I know that the Unity Day thing we gained about 250 people. And that's about--and when I know that are many more that should have been reached.

I: Uh huh.

W: Uh huh. And many more were reached but the selling power that we have was not of the caliber I guess to really sell the people. We had door-to-door knocking and inquiries and trying to give out what

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W: information we had. We used the young people similar to what they did in Selma to get it, but I think in this area here that we--the black people are still somewhat sceptical of--well, I've used the term sceptical but I mean that's not the word. But we're still, in general, feel like, well, what's the use.

I: Uh huh.

W: You know--too many, well, <sup>what's the use--</sup> ~~most think it's~~ why, why, you know.

I: I was just going to ask you what think<sup>s</sup> are there which prevent blacks from registering to vote, \_\_\_\_\_.

W: Well, this--yeah, this is one of the main things it is. You know, that old saying, well what's the use. They're going to do like they want to do anyway. We still have in this area some thinking by the general public as to when minorities--blacks mostly have placed in office and these kinds of things, well, it's a set-up. It's a token, you know.

I: Uh huh.

W: It's still a token to some of them, but my personal feeling is that in fact I know for a fact that my election and my being on the council is not a token. And that's based on the things that I've had to go through with that nobody controls or even nobody's attempted to control.

I: Uh huh.

W: When you use that term control, it means not directly now. Maybe the pressure's been put on me from different kinds--different sides in order to make me stay in a certain voting area from time to time when an issue comes up. And here I'm just talking, I don't actually believe that, but I do know from what little experience I've had in politics that if an issue comes up that I want to really fight all the way I do use every means legally that I can to try to get that vote across

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W: so the pressure--what I'm actually saying is that I have to look at everything else. But when an issue needs to be passed and it's going to--my votes going to be affected by it one way or the other than I'm sure that every means untold to me is taken so that I will vote in a certain way. But here again, this is just things that I'm saying.

I: Uh huh.

W: I'm trying to use what experience I have to rationalize--this kind of thing.

I: Okay.

W: Okay. I hope I'm not talking too much. That's all.

I: No. No.

W: I love to talk.

I: Okay. You'll get your chance today. We've got lots of questions.

W: Okay. You ask them then.

I: We have a few factors that we have listed here which, in some cases in some areas have prevented blacks from registering to vote.

W: Yeah.

I: Typical things. We'd like to have you check and comment just briefly on each one, whether you think it is still either very important, fairly important, or not important at all in this area, in Pensacola, in terms of preventing blacks from registering to vote.

W: Economic dependence--you're going to have to break some of this down for me.

I: Okay.

W: Economic dependence on whites.

I: The idea that because in many cases blacks work for and are paid by whites--that this might be used by whites to make sure blacks don't

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I: register or if they do register that they vote a certain way. They might be fired. They might get a decrease in pay or something of some sort because in many cases their employment is dependent upon whites. Do you think that factor is either very important, fairly important, or not important?

W: Well, it's not important. Well, the factor is--in fact, here you're right. That pressure can be put on some blacks in so far as registering to vote--to keep them from voting because of their jobs. Okay. So this is what you're saying?

I: Uh huh.

W: And you want to know that's important or not important.

I: How you would rate that factor.

W: Well, I rate it--it's--I hope I'm getting this thing--I hope I'm defining this right or getting my clear thinking on it. It's--it don't happen--I don't believe it happens that much in town. Now what would I--how would I do that.

I: So you're saying I guess it's not important.

W: Okay.

I: You don't know of any examples?

W: No.

I: Any cases of that ever happening? ~~AAAAAAAAA~~

W: Fear of physical violence from whites for registering. And we are actually talking about registering to vote right now.

I: Yeah, registering to vote.

W: Well, it's--no, we don't have any of that.

I: Okay.

W: Complicated registration forms. Now I do feel, and you can help me

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W: answer this, I do feel that there are registration forms and because of the educational standards of a good many blacks in the area, it's actually confused. I don't think this is the pressure of whites or anything like this. I think it's a fear that we have of reading forms and trying to find out these things now. Maybe this would be very important I guess--wouldn't it? Or would--

I: Okay. That's how do--you feel that has been very important in terms of preventing blacks from registering?

W: Right. Yeah.

I: Okay. And you do have to, I guess, you were saying when you register you do have to read--be able to read the forms.

W: Yeah, well, you do have to--well, you got like this thing here. And to be downright honest with you because of my limited education, these kinds of things frighten me.

I: Yeah. Yeah.

W: You know, that's why you hear me rattling off, trying to find out actually what this thing is saying. Although I can read the words here, I've learned that you've got to know what those words--

I: Right. Yeah. Yeah.

W: You understand what I'm saying. Poor registering hours. I think that the registration hours--our place here has really tried to cooperate in trying to get people registered so I don't think that's very important from that end of registering.

I: Are they open regular hours?

W: Yeah, they're open--they push themselves and can stay open even on Saturdays sometimes. And even their books will be placed in certain areas of the city sometimes. So I think that they've really tried to

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W: work that out. So I don't think that's very important. Would that be the answer?

I: Yeah. Okay. Good.

W: Registration not held often enough. No, I think that that's not very important because I do think that they try to push--to keep the books pretty much open.

I: Okay. How about re-registration laws? For example, if you don't vote in two years, your name is taken off the rolls.

W: Right.

I: Does that effect the black's vote?

W: I think this has effected some. I think it's an unfound thing though with many because many people don't realize that they, you know, that they're off the books. They're sent out a form so that they might be able to--well, our form--they send out--there's just a card they need to sign and send back, you know, so that they can get updated on their registration from time to time. And I think a lot of people drop this or lay it on the shelf and forget<sup>it</sup> and don't do it. And I think this has really lowered some of our--the registration with us.

I: Okay.

W: And it's a thing that's--it's a thing that I just feel that we need to be more educated<sup>to</sup> because of the fact that responsibilities in the black man is not grabbing his full hold yet.

I: Uh huh.

W: If you know what I'm saying. We sometimes just don't push forward on what we call little things like this to be responsible to go ahead and do it, and it's unconscious thing. It's not a--in many cases it's not a deliberately done thing. It's something that we're just not really engaged in long enough because when we go to work, the man tell

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W: and that was the extent of it. We didn't have to worry about being responsible for setting the program up and all this kind of stuff. So I think that still exists even with little things like registering. Indifference of blacks in voting. Is that--indifference--I don't understand that one.

I: Indifference in terms of apathetic, feeling it doesn't make a difference.

W: Yeah, I think that's very important.

I: Okay. Yeah, you had mentioned that already.

W: Okay.

I: That's quite important. On the economic dependence on whites, you said you didn't know of any in the city, but do you--

W: I don't know of any that have pressured any blacks not to register to vote.

I: How about out in the countryside--more rural areas, is that--

W: I still don't know of any cases that might have done this.. I do know this, though--I feel this, I don't know it. I feel that within the blacks' mind that, and more especially the maids and the kitchen helps and the laundry helps and things of this nature, that they feel that if they register to vote that it might be a--and the boss finds out they're registered to vote and then it might--they within themselves feel like it might have a bearing on their jobs.

I: Uh huh.

W: Now I do feel this.

I: How about actually voting? Is there any --

W: I think there is a lot--a lot of black people actually feel that way, too. Not pressured by that individual. I can't sight any cases of pressure. I think that just from hearing some blacks talk from time

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W: to time that I feel that they feel within themselves, "Well, if I get out and really hustle and talk about voting and registering to vote and getting out and voting that it might have an effect on my job." Now I do feel that, but I feel that it's within the blacks themselves. I don't know of any pressure cases that have come about.

E: Uh huh. Okay. Thanks. We have a few questions that we'd like to ask you about your election campaigns actually...

W: Okay.

E: ...Here in Pensacola. First of all, were you able to campaign freely?

W: That is, were you harassed or threatened in any way when you campaigned for office?

W: No, well, one of the first times that I campaigned, I had several--I don't know whether you'd call this pressure or not--several people who come to approach me and say, "Look, I want to donate to your campaign, but how would you feel on this issue, that issue. You know, I can't help you if you're going to vote this way or that way--another way." And this didn't effect me at all, but I was approached under these terms, and one of the hard core ones were the whiskey dealers. I had several of those who wanted to donate to my campaign not as a firm, but as individuals that wanted to know--and where I was to give an example during that time I--we had to Sunday liquor laws going on in Pensacola and it was before the council. And me being a Baptist and yet I feel like everybody has the right to do whatever they want to do, and this is the first and only mistake I made on the council.

E: And only.

W: Yeah. This one fellow approached me and asked me how I feel about the Sunday liquor law, and I related to him just like I'm relating to you

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W: now that I think everybody has a right to do what they want to do, and all this kind of stuff. If they stay open in the suburbs, then you ought to have a right to stay open, too. But then after looking at that think, you know, to get--getting ready to vote on that thing, you know. Then I came back and I said, "Well, you know, I think I'm being unfair to my religion and everything. I don't mind--what I said is actually true, but the Sunday liquor law only applies maybe two more hours they're talking about actually being open on Sunday. And I don't--I think that's--the general public is asking too much. Or the whiskey dealers are asking too much of the citizens. You know, so I voted against the dog gone thing. So that's why I'm saying. So I was almost ran out of town. Well, I--that's a bad term. Not almost ran out of town, but I had some problems out of that. So that's the only mistake I made, but pressure--I was able to campaign as freely as I guess you would want because I've always been my own man and a threat or anything contrary is a thing that really attracts me more because I fight hard then to overcome that.

I: Uh huh.

W: I've--now I think that's because of the way I was raised. It was forced on me by being black, really. When you see the opposition you got to really get to it.

I: Okay. No threatening phone calls or anything of that nature.

W: Yeah, I've had threatening phone calls. If I do this, then you know, well, you won't win the election any more or we're going to get out and go against you, you know, this kind of stuff. That and other things. If that's threatening, nothing--not only elections that I've had, I've had all kind of threats since I've been involved in--been

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W: on the council.

I: No threats as to your personal safety or that of your family or anything like that.

W: Since I've been on the council?

I: Yes.

W: Yes. Yes, and here again, I don't know whether it was white, black. In fact, I do know some black was involved when we had the Escambia school crisis. And I feel sure you've heard about it. Anyway, the rebel flag and the dixie song and all this kind of thing. When I made the radio announcement and newspaper announcement, I feel like we ought to stop this foolishness, and let the children go back to school. If we need to sit down and discuss the rebel flag and dixie then let us elected officials and adults sit down and do it, and let the kids go on to school. Well, then I got threats that if my kids, well, home with a knife in their back sometime, don't be surprised. Or if your house blow up, don't--you don't stay home all the time. And you better be careful about your car and this kind of stuff. You know, you better watch where you're going. I got many of those.

I: Do you think some of these were from blacks?

W: Yeah, I'm sure some of them were from blacks. And I feel some of them were from whites, too.

I: Uh huh.

W: Because I feel that a lot of disturbance in our city here is--when I say a lot--we don't have a whale of a lot, but some of the things that happen in our city, I feel it's a combined effort of some white structures and black people in order to keep things going. Now I can't prove this, but I definitely feel that, you know, they're communicate

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W: ~~ting~~ one with the other and backing each other and for what reasons, I don't know. And I can't even prove what I'm saying. I'm just thinking this, you know.

I: Uh huh.

W: Because again, with what experiences I've had and the reactions of people, you know.

I: Uh huh. Okay. Were you handicapped at all by a lack of campaign money when you ran for office?

W: Yeah, somewhat. I--well, I didn't raise as much money as, naturally, as the other candidates and all. Here again, I got good support from the white population. I got reasonable good support from the Black population, but because of not having any money themselves, they couldn't give any kind of monies other than a dollar here and a dollar there, and all this kind of thing. But I feel like I got enough to-- I must have gotten enough to win the election. But if had I had to really get down and fight a real hard election, I mean campaign then I would not have had. You know, like a whole bunch of billboards and this kind of stuff. I never would have been able to raise enough money to do it.

I: Were there any particular organizations that assisted you or helped you --

W: Well, yes. Well, I said any organization. I'm a member of a social and savings club that more or less spearheaded my campaign along with some of the other citizens. I had nobody like NAACP, SCLC or nothing like that to do it. It was just my close friends--we just together that--

I: Uh huh.

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W: And this is the only helps that I had into spearheading this thing.

I: Uh huh. Okay. Why did you decide to run for office?

W: Well, number one, I was extremely surprised when I was asked if I would consider being appointed to the thing. I never had in mind at that time that I'd ever be in any kind of politics. And quite frankly, I've always been afraid of it--that it was farther from me. But when I was appointed and I felt like I--by having worked at the YMCA as long as I have, I've been dealing with people so long and I feel--I just love people. And I felt like that I want to give it a try. So I okayed to be appointed, and I did get appointed. So after that, I felt, when I ~~saw~~<sup>saw</sup> what was going on and the needs of the community and saw that I--and felt like that I could contribute something. I felt like I'd be doing an injustice to the city in so far as race relations goes. And not necessarily to--for the gain of the black people as far as material things and stuff like this, but that played a part, too. But I tried to keep an open mind about this things and take the total city as a whole 'cause as the city goes so does black people go. So that's what--actually what I'm saying is you can't take it halfway. You've got to take the whole show, you know. So I felt that need and I felt like it was my obligation. I had to fulfill.

I: Uh huh.

W: And plus the fact that I loved it, too. I began to like it a lot. I realized then that I could fit in, and for the first--when appointed I was scared half to death because here again, a limited education and I was sitting and dealing with policies that I've never seen or heard of before. Just to show you how dumb I was, when the budget come up and the account numbers was on the thing, well, I was so frightened

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W: sitting up in the meeting one night. And we had a--well, the 900 accounts, for example, came up which happened to deal with the personnel and all this kind of stuff. And I asked, "Well, what are the 900 accounts." You know, and here it is right before me in a big old book, you know. And not knowing anything about bookkeeping or finances or anything like this, you know, it scared me half to death. And I asked a stupid question out in the council meeting. You know, where I didn't get frightened of it, but two or three weeks later when I realized--well, you know, you was dumb as the dickens to sit up there and ask a question in the general public, you know. So I found out that I could fit in. I found out that I could, if I stayed in long enough and experienced--I need to get that experience. And if the black people don't get in and get some experience, which is one of the things I'm fighting now, then they'll never get anyplace because when I say I'm fighting that now because every application--most that you see come out--a job of any importance it says that you must have so many hours--so many years experience and exposal to this or that. Well, black people have never been exposed to a bunch of these so they'll never get it, you know, one of those top jobs. So all this came through my mind to make me say well you got to stay in there. And you got to start somewhere so at least you could be representative of the black people as well as--on the council with--for Pensacola. And I felt the need that, not that I'm all that different from anybody else, but I'd hate to see someone in the position that I'm in who was an outright militant--one-sided militant. I don't mind <sup>a man</sup> being militant, but as long as he's, you know, he's open with it. And I felt like that this is a time that somebody

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W: got the thing<sup>k</sup> and would be able to take the criticism and still think objective and vote objective.

I: Okay.

W: Okay.

I: Yeah. Thanks.

W: I'm sorry, man. You get me started and I can't stop.

I: No, that's fine. No, you're very good. I appreciate your elaborating.

W: Okay.

I: If you weren't, I'd be asking you.

W: Well, okay.

I: Which party--political party do you belong to?

W: Democrat.

I: Okay. The elections, as I understand, <sup>them are</sup> ~~they were~~ non-partisan in Pensacola.

W: Right. Right.

I: But did you ever receive any help or assistance or guidance at all from the Democrats?

W: From the Democratic committee? No.

I: Okay.

W: In fact, if you want to hear a little story on that. You know, before I was placed on the anything, all right, by--that was my mother, excuse me. Before I was placed on the city council, I was approached by Governor <sup>Claude</sup> ~~Carl~~ Kirk's committee in this area--the governor's committee in this area as to whether I could--would like to serve on the selective service system. So the Republicans appointed me--gave me my first appointment in any kind of government by being on the draft board and all this. And so I--that's why I said it's been quite an experience for me.

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I: Who appointed you to the council here in Pensacola?

W: Well, the city council itself. They seek out some people.

I: Oh, they did.

W: Yeah.

I: Oh, it wasn't someone like the governor?

W: No. No. The city council themselves.

I: Okay. When you campaigned what were the two or three most important issues? They may have changed from one campaign to another, but when you campaigned what were the two or three most important?

W: Well, at that particular time, the issues on the book--I concerned myself--I didn't concern myself with at all because I realized that I didn't know anything about housing or the sort of problems that they had, you know, in the book--financial problems, job problems and this kind of thing. So I campaigned that I wanted to be a councilman for everybody.

I: Uh huh.

W: And that I wanted to not just to be a black man sitting on the council but my total campaign was based on this. Elect Hollis Williams--that he is concerned about all of the people.

I: During any of your campaigns were there more specific issues that you talked about?

W: All right. Yeah, well, one of the things I did talk about was employment.

I: Okay.

W: And I was concerned--I didn't push the issue but I let it me known that I was concerned about more blacks being on the police department, more blacks being on the fire department. And I was concerned about the--

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W: and we've already touched base on that--the applications and how blacks get involved in jobs because black are inexperienced.

I: Uh huh.

W: So I talked on that a little bit.

I: Okay. Were there any other issues that you talked about extensively during your campaigns?

W: No, I condensed all of my little speeches and purposely doing so because I had a lack of knowledge of what is involved in it. Even now, in the last election, I condensed everything. In fact, I said the same thing everywhere I went because I don't believe--well, one of the things I did say, and this I truly believe is that I don't believe in solving or trying to solve the problem outside the meetings of the council. In other words, what I'm saying if I get out here and say, now vote for me because I'm going to have everybody driving two cars, you know, I don't know whether I can do that or not. If that issue come up I would say, "Well, I'll discuss it with the council, and if it's available for everybody to drive two cars at that time, then I would vote in that favor. If not, then I won't."

I: Uh huh.

W: Yeah.

I: Okay.

W: So I think what I was saying that I would solve all the problems that I would work together with the other councilmen and when the issues come and hit the floor, then I would work on them and I would vote my conviction at that particular time.

I: Okay. Do you think these issues that, especially the issues, well, you mentioned employment, do you think these issues were the main

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I: problems facing blacks in Pensacola or were there other issues or problems facing blacks?

W: No. No. No, I think the main issue and here again, you're making me think of some of the things we did touch base but not using them as an issue is that there is, and I still feel like this, that there is a communication gap between the races.

I: Uh huh.

W: And that communication gap is not necessarily because of the races do not try to work together and do things together, it's because of that old background of superior or what's the other word insuperior, whatever it is--

I: Inferior.

W: Inferior. I think that's where it is. And it's a hidden thing still with many. It's not--and yet I'm not saying a person is bad because superior or inferior. I'm saying that it's a hidden thing unconscious thing that controls to allow a limited amount of elevation or what have you--communication is maybe the word I'm still trying to get to-- with people. We--and I wish I was that way sometimes--we're still suspicious when talking to people. And you can tell the suspicion when people talk to you. I'm talking about people of opposite races now.

I: Uh huh.

W: That suspicion is still there to a certain extent. It's embedded and it's almost like the cat and mouse game still.

I: Uh huh.

W: See, but these are the kind of things that I think that I'm trying to prove and get out of all people that man is a man and a woman's a woman who is black, white or what have you. And we're going to have to try to

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W: remove this barrier somehow. How it can be done--it's an individual problem more or less, but I think the more examples we show of better communication, the quicker that we can move that barrier.

I: Okay. Okay.

W: I hope I'm making sense.

I: Yes. Thank you.

W: Okay. All right. Shoot.

I: We have a few specific questions about your elections themselves that we'd like to ask you.

W: Okay.

I: You were elected at large?

W: Right.

I: Is that right--all councilmen are elected at large in Pensacola?

W: Right.

I: And there are ten councilmen?

W: Ten councilmen. They're elected at large, but they must live within the ward. We've got two out of each ward.

I: Oh, okay. Okay. Fine. Do you have any--do you think that that is a hindrance<sup>a</sup> to perhaps electing blacks in this city--the fact that the people are elected at large? Do you think that--what's the percentage of blacks in Pensacola?

W: To tell you the truth I sure can't think of it right now, and I'm embarrassed because I can't. But the--we're about one-third population inside the city limit, but I can't give you the exact numbers. I have mixed emotions about being elected at large and being elected right inside your ward. Of course, my--here again, my goal is to prove that--one of the goals I have is to prove that both black and white can do things

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W: fairly and just and all this. And I would like to see, and like I said, I got mixed emotions--I'm kind of--in a way I'm happy because my campaigning and Dr. Smith's--who was elected here last time have proven that if--that the white population is looking more to--dealing fair and justly with--and I'm not saying it's perfect. I'm not saying it's all to where it should be. But they're dealing fair and justly in the election. So by the two of us having to run at large it proves that this is so now. That if you apply yourself and if the white population begin to break down the barrier of just trying to keep a black out because he's black and they're beginning to vote a little bit for. Now on the other side of the coin is that, yes, we could equalize this thing better if, as far as black and white goes is if we're selected within a ward because we would have more black people on the council. Now, what is that doing? In my opinion that that would still be saying that we are segregating ourselves to a certain extent. So it's a touchy thing, <sup>with me</sup> ~~but, you know~~, and I'm really not saying actually what direction I think we ought to go, but I don't-- I feel that if we are going to break down the segregation and all this type of thing that we got to be able to contribute that part of integrating at whatever costs in order to make it come to be. Yes, I would like to see just for the sakes of looking better and maybe getting better communication. I'd like to see more blacks on the council, but I'm wondering if we broke it down to put it back into the wards that whether that those people within those wards would be able--would-- and I'm talking about both white and black--would look at the total community and not just in their ward. And just try to satisfy those people within their ward. And just get things done within that ward.

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W: Whether or not that would be bad on the community. Again, I think this is one of the things that really have happened before. And it's an unfortunate thing that I have to think this way or it is this way.

I: Uh huh.

W: But if you're going to fight segregation, you can't do it by segregating. Maybe that's what I'm saying.

I: Have other blacks run in Pensacola recently and--for council?

W: Uh huh. For council, yes. We've had several of them to run for council, yes.

I: Have any others won?

W: No, I'm the only one that won. Dr. Smith's--now the two of us won. Dr. Smith's won this last election. Of course, we've changed and went over to the school board so I'm the only one on the council now.

I: Okay. How many people are in your ward approximately?

W: I wish I had my papers. I'm sorry. I really don't--we--our wards are so divided that I don't even know the mileage that's involved in my ward. And I guess roughly--I could say about maybe five or six thousand.

I: Okay. What percent of the five or six thousand are black in your ward?

W: In my ward I think about 30 percent.

I: Thirty percent? Okay. About what percentage of blacks who are eligible--who are twenty-one or over in your district--are registered to vote? Do you have any idea?

W: Yeah, the number in my ward. I think that my ward would have the--probably one of the largest percentage of blacks that are registered to vote. Out of that 30 percent, I imagine about half of them is.

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I: Okay.

W: Yeah.

I: How about in the city as a whole. Do you have any idea how—you say it's about one-third black.

W: Yeah.

I: What's the percentage of registration among black?

W: Among blacks? I think the percentage of registration, now let me see. Can I get my percentage right here now because I think more registered—blacks are registered to vote in the city than in the total Escambia County. So I'm thinking of the population of the city of Pensacola—I'm thinking about, oh, at least 60 percent of the blacks are registered.

I: Okay. I know it's tough to—

W: Yeah, it's pretty tough for me to do this. I'm really estimated on that.

I: Yeah. Oh yeah.

W: But I'm trying to use some—

I: Yeah. No, I understand. About what percentage of the blacks who are registered to vote do you think actually voted when you were elected?

W: Of those that are registered to vote, I think that maybe just about a fourth of them to be down right honest with you because the turn outs have been real bad.

I: The turn outs were bad when you ran?

W: Uh huh.

I: You obviously then got votes—a fair amount of votes from whites?

W: Oh, yes.

I: What percentage of your total votes came from whites approximately?

W: I think about 75 percent of them.

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I: Did this vary from one campaign to another very much?

W: Uh huh.

I: This was true for each time you ran?

W: Yeah.

I: Okay. How many opponents did you have each time? You ran through that once.

W: All right. Yeah, well, the first time I had to run I had two opponents, both white. The second time I had no opposition at all-- no opponents at all. The third time I had two opponents, both white.

I: Okay.

W: And I win it in the first primary both times.

I: That you won?

W: I win it in the first primary.

I: Oh, you won in the first vote.

W: In both times.

I: Without a run-off?

W: Right. Without a run-off.

I: What percentage of the total vote did you get approximately?

W: I've carried the largest number of votes--well, except one time. The total vote, I imagine I got about 80 percent.

I: Okay. When you had opponents and when you were unopposed 100 percent.

W: Well, it might not be that high, but it's about 75 percent.

I: Seventy-five percent?

W: Yeah, because--well, it had to be--I got more than that in the first one. I got about, in the first one when I got about 80 percent for sure. And the second one, I got about 75 percent.

I: And that was city-wide.

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W: Right.

I: Okay. Thanks.

W: Uh huh.

I: The last section here has to do with how well black officials have been able to benefit those they represent and we have a series of questions we'd like to ask you.

W: Okay.

I: Here.

W: Sock it to me.

I: Okay.

W: Is that thing still running?

I: Yeah, it's getting close.

W: Okay.

I: It's a long one.

W: That's all right.

I: In what ways do you think you have helped blacks by holding office?

W: Okay. One of the ways that I think I've helped blacks by holding office is that I've proven to the general public that a black person can sit on the council and I can be real objective and not just be all black. He can be concerned with the entire community-- that I feel like this has opened the doors for blacks where the white population or white community is beginning to trust that blacks can sit down and work out problems, work out the issues and speak their opinion about them and still try to move forward without any hatred or whatever you want to call this thing that I'm trying to say. You know, without feeling that they are inferior.

I: Uh huh.

W: And can move forward.

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I: Uh huh. Okay. What, if anything, has prevented you from doing a better job, do you think, especially in regard to benefiting blacks in Pensacola?

W: I think that my job, number one, has prevented me from doing a better job for the community. I think that my limited education has prevented me from doing a better job.

I: You said your job. What do you do?

W: I work for the YMCA. It's a long story here. I hope I can say it short. It's a lot to it. So I've been working for the YMCA since 1944. And I started as a janitor. I've worked my way all the way to the top of the ladder. I feel that when I--well, I'm a health service director by actually trade. I've studied--this is all the certificate that I have except my high school. I graduated from college--the Swedish Massage. And this--that's a trade. So that's my profession. When I got to that--this job keeps me on a hourly basis. I've got to punch the clock. All right. Well, I did get out and elevated myself to physical director which still gave me hourly punching the clock. From that to executive director of this downtown branch which gave me the freedom that I needed to be in order to work with the community. And I feel that the--and it's a hard thing for me to say this, but I feel that the administration--the new administration that came in above me evidently was envious of my position--being on the council and that's the--

End of Side 1--FB 33A

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Side 2-Beginning

W: nearly went back to the health club to get on my hourly job which cuts me out from being part of all the committees that I was involved in. Well, for example, if I have a ten o'clock meeting with the council on ages, well I can't do that anymore.

I: Uh huh.

W: Because I was working with the cancer society. We'd have a five o'clock meeting about once a month. I can't do that anymore. So I think--and I think it's important that I had worked with all these agencies--the community mental health center. I was on that committee. I'm on the Baptist Hospital Committee. I can't meet these meetings anymore because of my time frame, and I had to work for my family. I have to make monies and I was elevated from a \$6,000.00 a year<sup>job</sup> to a \$10,000.00 a year job. And I think they felt like that was too much for a black fellow to be making. That's a shame for me to say it so--that's why--I'm explaining why I think that--you asked me a question, I'm telling you what's hindering me. And I think that if I had the freedom of movement which I think, and it's a block in my mind, that I should be if not executive director of something, I should be in the area of some type of public relations--a person for the YMCA. I could be more beneficial to the Y, be more beneficial to the city, and to myself and to black people. And I think this is the main thing, more than education, this is the thing that has hindered me from doing a better job with the community. I definitely feel that if I was--if it were white and I'd been honored to be appointed even to the city council. And no other white had ever been appointed to it that this would have been<sup>n</sup> something that they would have freed, and I'd have been more beneficial to the YMCA just by running to meetings for them. And

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W: saying little speeches for them than I would be in a health club or with the pressure in running a class, a gym class, which I love. I don't kick that. I love the Y. I love the work that I do. I love working with kids. I love working with old people, and I love working with the health club.

I: Uh huh.

W: I love sitting down and counseling kids and all this kind of thing, but it has been a hindrance. And it's a block in my mind. I can't do the job because I'm thinking about if I don't do this job in the health <sup>club</sup>, if I'm late, they're going to fire me. You know, they wouldn't let something fire me, but there'd just be so much pressure put on me 'til I couldn't do an effective job. And I'm not doing an effective job as I should do right now because I think in terms of that job. And I think I should have been held my job. I think I should have been freed. I didn't get a salary increase for three years because when I reached \$10,000.00 they thought it was too much money. That just the way that I feel.

I: So you, in effect, were demoted.

W: In effect—well, they use it <sup>lateral move</sup> a ~~lot to remove~~, but I think it's a demotion because I went back to a--and yet again, the pressure made me go back to the hourly thing from executive director to outreach director. I mean it made me go back to an hourly thing, and I went back in order to relieve myself from every day somebody looking over my shoulder saying, "Hollis, you got to do this. You can't go to that meeting because these kids got to be picked up. You got to drive the bus yourself. You've got to teach the swimming yourself. We can't hire anybody else." Well, see, I can't believe that this is

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W: the right thing.

I: Uh huh.

W: I believe that if I was a white person that all of these things would have been eliminated from me and I would have been able to perform for this community in a better way than what I am doing now. And I'm talking about freedom. So I think that's a--- has been a direct blockage as far as the community goes. This is one of the things I really dislike about the community. And I'll use the term community because they shouldn't allow this man to get me in this position.

I: Yeah.

W: Okay.

I: I see.

W: I've cried now so...

I: No.

W: But it's actually facts and this is the way it is.

I: Yeah.

W: Okay.

I: We have another sort of checklist here--items which, in some cases again, have prevented black officials from doing a better job.

W: Okay.

I: I'd like to have you, if you would, just check whether you think each of these items, again is very important, fairly important or not important in terms of having prevented you from doing a better job.

W: All right. My office as a city councilman?

I: As a councilman.

W: Do I have any real authority?

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I: Authority or power to get things done.

W: Yeah, I think it's very important. Now wait a minute.

I: Okay. Now in terms of preventing you from a better job, do you feel that because the office has no real power or authority that this has prevented you from doing a better job or do you feel, really, that your office does have a fair amount of authority and therefore is not important.

W: I feel like the office has a fair amount of authority so it's not important.

I: It's not important.

W: Okay.

I: In terms of preventing you from doing a better job.

W: Outvoted by white officials. That's not important because my--let me explain this. Maybe it'll help me answer this.

I: Uh huh.

W: I hope it's the way that I conduct myself and everything because although I talk a lot now, I study issues--a thing come before the council a little bit more seriously and more deeply than maybe the other fellows because they read faster and they are more educated and everything than I. And I usually wait before I really get down on an issue, I usually wait and wait a thing out pretty good. So when I do speak, usually my vote carries. In fact, the councilmen's is in such a way now that they kind of make their votes according to the way that I think sometimes.

I: Uh huh.

W: I mean--of course, they know me well enough. And once I get an issue or once I voice my opinion on an issue, I don't know any time that I've

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W: ever changed that opinion. So this isn't very--evidently this--I guess I'm trying to say this isn't very important.

I: Okay.

W: You know.

I: Okay.

W: Okay. Not enough revenue available. No, I don't have enough revenue. I would say that's very important.

I: So you think that's very important in terms of benefiting blacks.

W: Yeah, that's right. That's why I'm broke right now. Unfamiliarity.

I: Now--in terms of--yeah, the council is broke or you felt that you were broke in terms of--

W: Well, I--this don't--

I: I guess you meant the council doesn't have enough money to do--

W: Oh no. No. No. No. The council have enough to do. I thought this was a reflection on me of doing a better job. What I'm trying to say--that if I have a \$7.00 meeting to go to, you know, that you're going to have to pay for a dinner. And the councilmen always pick up these tabs.

I: Oh, okay. I see. I see what you mean.

W: This is what I'm saying.

I: Okay. What about the council itself? Do you feel that they can do what you would like them to do because they do have enough money, for example--

W: For the--to operate the city?

I: Yeah, and to get the things done that you'd like to see done, especially for--

W: No, I don't think they enough money to get the thing done I'd like to

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W: see done.

I: Okay. So again--

W: My answer is right, huh?

I: Yeah, I think in terms of what you're saying. Yeah.

W: Yeah.

I: In both regards.

W: Yeah. Uh huh.

I: Yeah. Okay.

W: Unfamiliarity with administrative duties. That's not very important because I'm gaining that. I'd say this one's probably is fairly important.

I: Fairly important?

W: Yeah.

I: Okay. I guess at first you found that more difficult?

W: Right. Uh huh. Lack of cooperation from whites? No, that's not important because I get the cooperation from whites. I guess the-- I get good cooperation so this is not very important.

I: Yeah, not important.

W: Lack of cooperation from blacks. I get good cooperation from blacks. Lack of cooperation from state officials. No.

I: Do you have much dealings with state officials?

W: Not a whole of a lot, but we communicate real good. Most of all of them, here again, I don't know whether it's me or whether it's a feel of the community of what black people think or not, but if anything come up that it might be on a racial overtone or something like this, most of these guys will contact me and talk to me, and so I got good communication with them.

I: Okay.

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W: Lack of cooperation with federal officials. I don't even know no federal people I deal with.

I: Okay. In terms of trying to get grants and things?

W: Oh, no. I don't have no problem. We've got an IP office I hear that <sup>7</sup>  
works real good with.

I: Okay.

W: Okay.

I: Good. Thanks.

W: Sure thing.

I: Has criticism or lack of support from the black community hindered you at all in holding office?

W: In some cases, yes.

I: What do you mean?

W: Some blacks think, for example, we had the issue of a shooting of a Black person by a deputy here. Whether it was right or wrong, some of the blacks think that I should have been marching down the streets, you know, with the crowd which I don't believe in anyway. And they criticized me to a great extent where it makes my job harder sometimes to get the type of voting I need for recreation or more firemen or more policemen down here because they--it puts another blockage to the white community that, you know, we still got the--we want to do but these black people now they going to--we're going to get one in there who's going to--I'm talking on the police force or who's just going to be all black. / I'm saying that the criticisms on me sometimes makes the white population think that the blacks are not with me, they won't listen to anybody and all this kind of stuff. So I think that has made my job tougher than ever. But still with the criticism, I still

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W: communicate--well, I say communicate--I still talk and get along with all of them. And I never have backed off of one. If we're criticized when I go to them and sit down and still ask them, "Well, what can I do to help you. You know, if it's something that I can do to help legally I do it.

I: Okay.

W: But it makes my job hard.

I: Yeah. Yeah.

W: You know.

I: Okay.

W: If that's any kind of an <sup>n</sup> answer.

I: Yeah. Do you feel that white officials treat you differently from other officials or not?

W: No, I don't. Well, I say I don't. All of our and we have one of the best councils I think we could ever have. And I'm talking about the council now as well as county commissioners and all this. Everyone that I've come in contact with maybe a very minimum will still like to treat me as just Hollis, the black boy that--you know, I got to help him along. But most of my fellow councilmen, if I ain't got no more sense than to get my neck in a noose, you know, I should be a man as they are. They treat me just that way, you know. They don't give me any special treatments whatsoever. They like to treat me--if an issue come before the house, they might say, "Damn it, Hollis, that's wrong." Just like anything else, you know. So I don't believe that--if it is it's an unconscious thing if they treat me any different, but I do know everyone tries to treat me just as anybody else. Now for another example, though, on the other side of the coin,

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W: everyone knows that I am the most--less fortunate financially than anybody on the council. So from time to time, reluctantly to do so, if we go someplace or something, reluctantly to do so, some will try to pick up a tab for me and all this kind of stuff, you know. But it's done, I think, they try to hide it. They feel bad. In fact, they feel embarrassed about doing it a lot of times. I know they do. So a lot of times I shun from this sort of thing.

I: Does the council provide some traveling expenses and so on to--

W: Oh yeah. The city provides that. Yeah.

I: The city.

W: Yeah, I was just giving that as an example for little things like, you know, this interview here. We might just, say, we're going out to have a luncheon together. Well, that's on me. I couldn't send a tab to the council for that.

I: Yeah. Yeah. Right.

W: You see. But here again this is important to the community. I need to be doing these kind of things, you know.

I: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Do the white councilmen see you as a spokesman for the black community and do they look to you to speak for the black community?

W: No, not necessarily so. I think that's because I tried to curb even that. They look to me to--they feel like that I'm accepted by the black community. In fact, they know that I'm accepted by the black community, but they don't look for me to come out and say what is good for the black community and what's not good for the black community. No. I mean because we try to do things and I've tried to prove that I want to do things for Pensacola. And let's face

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W: it, I'm black. They know I'm black--ain't no way I can hide from it. And there ain't no other way that I can--I want to be but black. And so my actions and everything don't necessarily have to be geared because it's a black out there, you know.

I: Okay. What services do you feel you've provided blacks in your ward or in the city as a whole that they did not have before you took office?

W: All right. Here again, just backing up to the same question you just asked me there.

I: Uh huh.

W: Black people need somebody to go to whether they were determined spokesman for the blacks or not.

I: Uh huh.

W: Well, I do feel that they--that that service is--that the services I've rendered is where they feel like now that--a good portion of them--that they could ask me questions and get information that's needed for whatever. If it's pertaining to a bill, pertaining to a job, pertaining to policemen or whatever it might be. A majority of them feel that--in fact, I probably have about ten phone calls down at the Y right now waiting on me. You know, somebody done called and asked me about something. They've--even in the school system they feel that way. So that service--I think that I have set up--given them the feeling that they can--if it don't reach me that they can talk to people in the governing bodies and all. Where at one time for a black person to go down there--say I want to see the city manager, it was--wasn't heard--wasn't thought of. You know, you find of one every once in a while of a black person to go and say I want to see the chief of police, but they feel like they can go

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W: and do some of these things now because we got somebody over there on the council--their representative on the council.

I: I see. I see.

W: Now I had to explain things because I can't answer you direct.

I: Yeah.

W: You know.

I: Sure.

W: All right.

I: We have, along with this question, we have some sort of service areas which we'd like you to comment on in terms of how effective you feel you've been since you took office?

W: Okay. Uh huh. Let's see what you got.

I: Do you want some coffee?

W: Yeah, let's get some coffee.

I: Yeah, let's--

W: <sup>... a</sup> percentage of the small business loans and all that. Now that might be one of your questions. I don't know.

I: It is. Yeah.

W: That's why you turned it on.

I: That's why I kicked on the tape recorder.

W: Oh, it was. Okay.

I: We have some service areas we'd like you to comment on here in terms of how effective do you think you've been in each of these areas in terms of helping blacks--very effective, somewhat effective, or not effective at all.

W: All right. Okay. I just--if you noticed the paper this morning, I just resigned chairmanship of the public safety cultural activity

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W: committee for the police department--well, for the city council.

And that's--so what I'm actually saying is for the last two years I've been chairman of the public safety committee which has to deal with the firemen, policemen, and all this sort of stuff. So I've been--I feel like I've been very effective on that committee because the city policemen and the black population has really--and I think I contributed some to it--has really begun to cooperate--work good with them. And they feel like that the city policemen are not devils anymore, too much. I mean the majority of them feel like that they are good people doing a good job, and I hope that I contributed something to that, and I feel like I did.

I: Okay.

W: So I think ~~it's been~~ that my effectiveness has ~~we've~~ been very effective. I guess that's what we're asking, isn't it?

I: Uh huh.

W: Okay. Streets and roads. I've been somewhat effective in streets and roads because I've been successful in calling attention to those streets, identifying some of those streets which blacks live in and well, all people that lived in really. But some black people have done some black tops with big streets since I've been down and this--they've been encouraged to sign petitions and things like this so I think I've been somewhat effective in that.

I: Okay.

W: All right. Housing is one of my big babies, and I led the attack on the low income houses here when I first got on the council. I think that I caused them to repaint and to tear some down. The only thing I hadn't been able to do was to break into the rental fees of them,

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W: but I'm still working at that. So I'll just say somewhat effective to the housing.

I: Okay.

W: Welfare. I don't think I've been very effective at all with the welfare probably because that's more or less state.

I: Okay. I guess that doesn't apply to you.

W: Yes, of course, I wish I could be effective. I'd like to tear some of it up because I see some bad things they're doing. So I'll just use not effective. Employment--I think I've been somewhat effective in that because I feel that many people--I've assisted in getting jobs. I've allowed them to use my name as reference which I think has carried somewhat of an impact on some of the industries who know me pretty well around here to help people get jobs.

I: How about in the city government? Have you been able to employ more Blacks in the city government?

W: Yeah. Yeah. Well, if not employed more                     ? well, I've gotten some on the police force. I think I got one on the fire department by my crying out and trying to make it right. But I feel like that I've crawled <sup>?</sup> elevation in some that are already departments. You know, like foremen and this kind of stuff and truckdrivers. I think that we've caused that to come about pretty good. Recreation-- parks and recreation--and I feel real good because just the past budget session, they were--the manager--we made him cut the budget some. And he wanted to take out \$43,000.00 from parks and recreation. And I somehow got all the other nine councilmen to vote with me to make him put that back in.

I: Uh huh.

W: So I think I've been very effective in that.

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I: Okay.

W: Water, sewage, and garbage--I hadn't been too effective in water, sewage, and garbage because the prices are still rising. And in fact, we just had to put another little <sup>fee</sup> ~~figure~~ on the sewage tax here just not too long ago. I lost that particular vote, and I don't think I've been too effective in keeping that where it was. However, I think I contributed something through helping to get the main--what we call the Main Street Sewage Plant being built here now. And somewhere in the neighborhood of, I guess when they get through with it--it'll be about \$47,000,000.00 when they do get through with the thing. But that's your           ?. So I better just say somewhat. Health and hospitals--I think I've been somewhat--real effective in that because I have--I am on the personnel committee at the Baptist Hospital here which is a very good <sup>tough</sup> committee. And that has helped a good bit of the employment and the elevation of some of the personnel out there. So somewhat effective there. In education--yes, I've been somewhat effective there, I think, because of the--it used to be when the--you're moving a black administrator into one of the positions--I'm one of the people that they called. And I helped with that and I've been pretty instrumental in some of the racial problems that have gone on in the schools by just being there and talking to the people at hand--both white and black in helping solving some of those problems. So I think maybe I've been somewhat effective there.

I: Okay.

W: And somewhat effective in fire protection. Of course, that--both of these go almost hand in hand.

I: Okay.

W: Okay.

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I: Have you been able to get federal funds or helped to get federal funds for Pensacola for certain projects?

W: Well, I guess I have. The only thing that I usually do in getting federal funds was working through the IPO officer--intergovernmental program officer here. We have a very good one, and working with him and helping to get funds for different projects. For example, we have one recreation department here--one recreation center here in the black community that never has had any gymnasium or anything--just a multi-purpose building there. And we now have them building a gymnasium and an old folks ~~place~~ ~~where~~ why I said old folks, I better use another term-- to house the aged--house them in their meetings and their activities and things of this nature so it's working hand. And this is one of the things that I pushed for federal funds to go into that. Right now we do have other little old projects going on in the community that I think that we've talked about that are helping to--just encourage him to seek for these funds--some funds--whatever way they come from to get these things done. I may mention, just a minute ago, on Monday night this group of people--well, it's a social savings club and civic club that I had been working with since 1946. We've had this club, and we are going to try and get some federal monies to help minorities go into some businesses. And I'm using the IPO man to help to give us guidelines and directions and assistance in getting this money. So that's one of my outside of council projects, but yet it's still, I feel, it's in direct connection with the work that I need to be doing with the council in getting--because this area is ripe for SPA loans for minorities.

I: Uh huh.

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W: And they should be getting more of it which we--and it's a lack of understanding, the education as to how to go about getting these monies and who qualifies for them. And I'm going to take the steps now to do that. And that's one of the reasons why when I made mention of here I'd voluntarily given up my position as chairman of the public safety committee so that I could work with what I called human relations aspects of the community a little bit more and in a more broader scope.

I: Uh huh.

W: And this is the kind of thing I feel that that comes under the head of--helping to get these small business loans and setting up for minorities and--well, anybody to be honest with you, but I think that's one of the main goals right now is to get minorities set up into some businesses, more businesses in the Pensacola area.

I: Have you been able to--either yourself or a member of the committee--tried to--have you been able to bring in some industry or retail stores into the Pensacola area which would help provide employment to blacks?

W: No, not to my knowledge. I don't know of anything that I have really been instrumental in bringing in here. The only thing I voted on when Westinghouse wanted to come here, I voted on it--just that you know, that we ought to give support to it--for that and this kind of stuff. But it wasn't at my direct efforts or anything like that.

I: Okay. How about federal revenue sharing--have you--has this helped in your ward or--

W: All right. Federal revenue sharing has helped real good in the areas of--and this is where I can see--it's helped in other areas, but in the way of parks and recreation and the policement and the educational

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W: program and stuff like this that I've been pretty much instrumental in that and have helped a good bit. (325)

I: How are you doing time wise?

W: Yeah, I don't want to--if you have to check in--do it.

W: Okay.

I: The rest of this is going to take about five or ten more minutes.

W: Okay. Well, all right. Let <sup>-let me</sup> me call them and tell them I'm coming on down there then.

I: Okay. Thank you.

W: All right. Where were we?

I: Okay. Actually just a few more here.

W: Okay.

I: Have there been any black protests, sit-ins, boycotts in the city in the last few years--were aware of?

W: Yes sir.

I: Difficulties here more recently.

W: Boycotts.

I: What were the issues involved?

W: Boycotts--the issues <sup>and</sup> and I want to add it discourages me a good bit.

It disgusts me--maybe that's the word--a good bit. The person who was shot by a county deputy, here again, I'm not judging where it's right or wrong. I don't want to get into that part of it, but the demonstrations were mostly every Friday for, I imagine, about three months and sometimes twice a week. They marched down ~~Gala~~ <sup>Palafox</sup> Street, and they were boycotting some of the stores in the downtown area-- even those stores that had black employment even as high as management

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W: which<sup>uh,</sup> disgusted me a good bit. There might have been a problem there, and there is a problem there. Here again, right or wrong, it's a problem. I didn't like the method of it, and I don't think it was-- I think something needs to be done, but I just didn't like the method of it. I think it sets us back a good bit.

I: Was there an investigation of this shooting?

W: Yes, an investigation of the shooting even by this office here, by human relations office out of Atlanta, and by the human relations office out of Tallahassee.

I: Uh huh.

W: And also by the state attorney's office and all.

I: Uh huh.

W: So<sup>uh,</sup> there have been some protests. And then another instance where five black people were drowned last Thanksgiving somewhere in that neighborhood. This also brought about some protests and boycotts.

I: Who was leading these protests and boycotts? Any particular group or--

W: Excuse me. Yes, well, SCLC and NAACP was connected in doing it. No, well I said the bodies were connected in doing it. I don't think they had the<sup>the</sup> total backing of both--all members of the organization, but after all, they were representing them so you have to label you as such.

I: Okay. What was the effect of these protests--demonstrations, do you feel?

W: Well,<sup>I</sup> I don't think that protesting and demonstration and boycotting in these particular instances have been any help hardly at all to solve the problems at hand. If anything, I think it has caused

W: problems with the individuals involved. For an example, the<sup>uh,</sup> main spokesman for the—one of the main spokesmen that's in jail now has been sentenced for five years<sup>uh, -at</sup> at Raiford. I guess it's Raiford where he is. He's down at one of the places now.

I: Who is that?

W: <sup>H.</sup> ~~Lee~~ K. Matthews.

I: Uh huh.

W: So I think that<sup>uh, -I think that</sup> it—here again, I'm not judging right or wrong, but I think the protests, instead of helping the situation, have caused several people to be fined<sup>uh,</sup> of monies they did not have and this kind of thing. I—I'm not condemning the<sup>-the</sup> wanting to have something done about the problem. And here's where I get myself mixed up and people don't understand me. I'm not condemning that there is a problem and something needs to be done about it. I'm condemning or going against the methods of doing it. And quite frankly, I don't have any other methods or directions really to say other than to sit down across the table and call a few people are liars and tell them how unfair they are. And then go through the courts and this kind of thing. That's the only other method I know of now to do it.

I: What effect do you think this has had on race relations in the city?

W: I think it has set them back just a little. I think the thing has set them back a pretty good bit.

I: Just briefly, what, in terms of state politics now, what's your opinion of Governor Askew? Do you think his attitudes and policies have been helpful for blacks?

W: Yes, I do. I think Askew has done—well, I think he's done a real good job. We<sup>as</sup> blacks sometimes feel like that because we're not getting the

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W: lion's share of everything that we are not being treated fairly and all. I think <sup>As-</sup> Askew has shown a good thing when he--a good sign of trying to be fair and just because in the beginning he did <sup>not</sup> pick a whole bunch of people from his home town. And more especially the blacks that he placed on committees and everything. He'd gone all through the state and whatever small committees that he put them on. He did it. And then he reached back and he got some blacks, and put them in key positions. I say key positions--but he'd give them some things to do. And the last one, although it's not in this area, but when he appointed the judge down there in Tallahassee, I thought that that was a real good move for him.

I: Uh huh.

W: I think that the governor has had, just like any of us in politics, a real hard job. It's pretty difficult sometimes to do the things that you knew you had to do. And to swallow the things you have to swallow and quite honestly, when the judge stick his neck and the way some things have been <sup>gone</sup> going on as far as race relations go. He say, "Okay, I'm going to appoint a black judge." Well, he stood criticisms I know from the white population, and more especially, those white fellows who feel like they should have had that judge<sup>e</sup>ship and he should have been more right with them. So here again, it's a hard job for him to do it, and I think <sup>he</sup> he's done it. He hasn't been--done everything right, but he's done some pretty good things. I think he was a good governor.

I: One last general question and that is--

W: Okay.

I: Do you think that winning and holding office in Florida has been worth

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I: the effort?

W: Yes sir. You're talking about as far as I'm concerned?

I: Yeah, as far as you're concerned.

W: Yeah, I think it's been worth the <sup>the</sup> efforts for the community and for race relations and <sup>and</sup> all this. I have my doubts about whether it's been worth the efforts for Hollis Williams a lot of times. And this is stemmed back to my job. I feel like that I'm backing up to a certain extent as far as taking care of my family and all this kind of thing. I feel <sup>though</sup> ~~a little~~ however, that I need to hold on to it, and not just necessarily for Hollis. I try not to be selfish. I <sup>could</sup> ~~should~~ be selfish and give it up and get out and make more money than what I'm doing now, ~~and~~ drive a better car and live in a better home and all this sort of stuff, but I think it's--it's a need and I think I need to hold on to it. And I think I need to continue to try to do things for the community in my own way--whatever contribution I'm making, if any, to the community. And just by being in office really gives the <sup>the</sup> black people an opportunity to go ahead, whether I'm directly involved or what have you. As I've <sup>c</sup> ~~s~~ited before, it has caused them now to feel like they can go to different governmental bodies of different interests--different people.

I: Uh huh.

W: Just by knowing that somebody is in office and they will be accepted by the white population that they can go and they might get a no but they feel like, "Well, somebody will accept me because Hollis is down there on the council."

I: Uh huh. Okay.

W: Okay.

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I: A couple—just a—

W: Shoot. Shoot.

I: Your education level—like you mentioned—

W: I'm a high school graduate from Washington High School. And I'm a graduate of the College of Swedish Massage--Chicago, Illinois. The course that I first studied correspondence and I graduated from the school. I ~~was supposed to graduate~~ <sup>went to post-graduate</sup> from the school.

I: That's a four-year college?

W: No, <sup>no-no</sup> it's ~~a goes through about~~ just a nine-month <sup>-a nine-month</sup> course.

I: Oh, I see.

W: I studied correspondence first for about two years. Of course, I'm going through it to get the good credit. Well, that, plus the fact Florida is one of the states in the union that requires a license. And I had to get my license and when I got licensed it was uncalled for a black person to have a license to do anything.

I: Uh huh.

W: But I went to Miami and I broke into that barrier--not knowing that I was doing anything for integration purposes, but <sup>uh,</sup> I was the first black to receive a license <sup>the-in</sup> in Florida for a masseur's license and health service director. So that's the extent of my education. The rest of it is fooling around with people like <sup>?</sup> Allen Aber } [laughs]

I: What's the salary you receive from your elected position?

W: Oh, boy. Here's a good one. I first got on the council, we were receiving <sup>uh,</sup> \$100.00 salary per month and \$50.00 expense. All right. Now that I've been on there for five years going into seven years, we elevated ourselves from \$100.00 salary to \$100.00 salary and then \$100.00 expense. So I get \$200.00 a month. [laughs]

I: Okay.

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W: I get \$200.00 and spend \$300.00. [laughs]

I: Yeah, we interviewed a man yesterday who gets \$1.00 a year. [more laughter]

W: Man, I tell you. I average out at least--I average out even with the pressures and all on me now a minimum of five different meetings per week. That's--if not directly connected but indirectly it's connected with the council some way because I'm on the council. That's the average of five per week, see. So with my car and with the clothes and with <sup>[laughs]</sup> the even/ing things I do from time to time, I can't win.

I: You can't win. <sup>Um,</sup> May I ask you age?

W: Yeah, I'm forty-six.

I: Forty-six years young. Right?

W: Yeah. And I got more gray hairs since I've been here. [Laughter]

I: Were you active in the civil rights movements of the early and mid-sixties?

W: Well, if you call it active--well, in this area, whatever came about I was for it. I didn't--I never have sit-in. I marched when they first marched--when Martin Luther King's march first come out. And then we had a march or demonstration down here, but that's not exactly where I've been.

I: Were you a member of the SCLC or NAACP?

W: I've always been a member of the NAACP. And I just--well, SCLC, too, when it first come out.

I: Okay. What church do you belong to?

W: Emmanuel Baptist.

I: Are you an official in the church?

W: Well, yeah. I guess so. I've done everything except preach. I'm not-- [laughs]  
I don't lay title to myself as being a deacon or anything

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W: like that, but I--my most--I'm more active in the choir and in the Sunday school. And I have--well, I hold office as an education director for our Baptist Association--District Baptist Association in this area. And chairman of our District Choirs. I have been president of the Baptist Training Union districtwise as well as a <sup>in</sup> ~~a~~ <sup>my local</sup> member of the church. I'm pretty active in church work.

I: Okay. Are there other community organizations that you belong to?

W: Oh boy. <sup>Huh-</sup> Now let's see what would be labeled as community organizations. Other than all these committees that I'm on. What do you mean--like, <sup>uh,</sup> community mental health center and things of this nature?

I: Yeah.

W: <sup>Ah,</sup> Okay. I'm still on the Council of the Aged, the Drug Abuse Commission, the Community Mental Health Center, the Cancer Society--what else am I on <sup>uh,</sup> a member of the, of course, I hadn't attended this--what else-- I got some more.

I: Any social organizations?

W: The Gaylord Dragon Social Club. That's unknown to most people except those people right here in Pensacola. That's the bunch that spearheaded, more or less, my campaign the first time I ran.

I: Finally, what was your father's occupation or is your father's occupation?

W: My father has passed. He worked for the NAS.

I: What is that?

W: The Navy Air Station. He was just a laborer at the Navy Air Station.

I: Okay. <sup>Fine.</sup> ~~I think finally~~ That's it, and I really appreciate your giving this

W: Man, I appreciate it. When y'all want to talk, let me know.

I: We hope we haven't gotten you fired or anything of that sort. [laughter]

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W: Oh, no. Look, man, I'm not worried about it.

I: <sup>-the</sup> The Klan had a big march up here <sup>uh,</sup> early this year. Have they been <sup>- have they been</sup> a problem up here?

W: The Klan?

I: Yeah.

W: No more than--to be downright honest with you, it was joke to me.

I: Yeah.

W: When they marched down the streets. I didn't like it, but it was still--it was a joke. They wasn't a problem. I think they was more cur-  
curiosity or whatever they say. It's people, out of curiosity, <sup>[chuckle]</sup> came  
to see them and that was about all it amounted to as far as I'm could see. I didn't see where it was a problem at all.

I: Were they from the Pensacola area or outside--

W: <sup>uh,</sup> Most of them was from outside. We had very <sup>- we had very</sup> few identified as being from here. Now there could be some behind the scene, but I think they <sup>were</sup> ~~is~~ mostly from outside.

I: Okay.

End of interview--Side 2--FB 33A