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S: I believe that's the, uh, yeah, I think it was.

I: And then you ran in '72 for the mayor?

S: Right.

I: And you lost that race?

S: I did.

I: And did you run again since then? Have you been on the council since then?

S: No, I haven't even ran again.

I: Okay. So you served from '70 to '72.

S: Right.

U: '70 to '72?

I: '70 to '72.

S: Well, when I resigned--I resigned just before election time about September in '72 so I could run for mayor.

I: So you ran for mayor then.

S: And served the city council.

I: Uh huh. And you were a councilman prior to that time?

S: Yes.

I: Okay. We have a series of questions. We're looking--we're actually part of a project through the University of Florida interviewing all black elected officials in the state of Florida in the last two years. We will use no names in our study. It's anonymous. And no names of cities even. So I hope you'll feel free to be, you know, honest.

S: All I can.

I: There's another project at the University of Florida called the Oral History Project. They've, over a number of years now, have gathered interviews with political figures as well as other figures in Florida and other states as well. They would like to preserve these tapes for future use, by scholars primarily. ^{It would} go into a special library at the University of Florida. They

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I: would like to send you a transcript of the interview after it's typed up. It may be a year or more since they're ^{certainly} ~~sort of~~ behind. They'll send you the transcript. You have a chance to make changes, delete portions, and if you want, after reading it over, you can decide not to make it part of the library at all, if you want to. They'll send you a release form at that time if you would like to become a part of the library.

S: I understand.

I: And do you have any reservations about that at this time.

S: No, I don't.

I: Okay. Again, they will send you a transcript and you can make the decision then, but we want some general indication of ?. We have a bunch of questions to ask you. First of all, we want to just ask you, in terms of your own voting and so on, political participation, personally. First of all, what year did you first register to vote?

S: I'm guessing.

I: Approximately.

S: I'd say about 1953.

I: What year were you first eligible to register? What year were you 21?

S: Boy. That's right around, guessing now, around 1937 or '36, one of those.

I: Did the local registrars ever turn you down when you applied to register?

S: No.

I: Why didn't you register previously?

S: Well, I was in school and in the service and always on the go before then.

I: Uh huh. Up until 1953.

S: '53.

I: Okay. Were you a resident of Blountstown before 1953?

S: No, I was not.

I: Okay. So you registered here?

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S: Yeah.

I: In that year. Have voter registration drives been held in this area in the city of Blountstown in the recent past?

S: Local.

I: Local?

S: Yeah. No one came in to, you know, sponsor anything, just locals. We always try to get people to go up maybe two months before election time. ~~W~~^e certain citizens go around and try to encourage people to go up and register.

I: There were no organizations outside the city that came in?

S: No, not here.

I: NAACP? Okay. Where were these drives, these local drives, held?

S: You mean what organization held them or what building?

I: Well, okay, what organizations and then where?

S: Well, it was a--we had what we called a Blountstown Improvement Association. They held them over in the Boy Scout building. You know, they would talk about it there then we'd have 30 people go around from home to home and contact people. ^{We'd} / try to get them to go down there.

I: ^a Was this an attempt mainly to get blacks registered?

S: Yes, that was all.

I: What years were these held?

S: Well, for the last eight years, I know, each year, you know, say, the group we'd talk about it about a month or two before the times the books are closed. [^] AND some of them would go down and try to get people to go down to vote to register.

I: So it was over the last eight years?

S: Yes.

I: Almost every year. How successful were these registration drives?

S: I would say that they were about half successful. It was just hard to get people to go--oh, they'd always have excuse about they had to go to work or

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S: didn't have any way to go. Then you'd tell them that you had a way to carry them, and they'd say come back and you couldn't find them.

I: So you think they were just fairly successful?

S: I'd say about half successful. We'd always get somebody to go, _____ you wouldn't get them all always to go.

I: Are there anythings which prevent blacks from registering to vote?

S: As far as I know, not anything.

I: Was there anything during the period in which you lived here since--

S: No, not--like. I said, since I've been here they haven't--if a fellow--if a person wanted to go register, they could always go.

I: Okay.

S: I never know anyone to stop anybody or, you know, turn anybody around to my knowledge.

I: Okay.

S: But it's only--there's not that many here so you would pretty near know what was going on.

I: Yeah. Yeah. Go ahead, did you want to ^{light} write that.

S: Beg your pardon? Yes sir, I did.

I: I didn't want to-- Okay.

S: That's the only bad habit I have.

I: Well as long as that's the only one I guess, uh--

S: Well, everybody got something.

I: We have, uh, go ahead.

S: Go ahead I'm just chewing, and smoking and listening.

I: Okay. We have a few factors here that--or a few items that, in some cases, have prevented blacks from registering to vote. Either in the past, or in some cases, even today. We'd like to have you just check whether you think, and comments briefly about each of these, whether you think it was very

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I: important, is very important, fairly important, not important at all, in terms of preventing blacks from registering to vote in this area.

S: In other words, I can say, economic dependence on the white. That is very important, fairly important, or not important. That means _____

I: In terms of preventing blacks from registering to vote.

S: As I say now--they didn't--I don't know of any cases where they prevented anybody from voting.

I: Okay.

S: So that would be what very--

I: Not important in terms of preventing.

S: Yes, well no. That's right. That's what I'm saying. So do want an X or a check?

I: Just whatever. How about #2, fear of physical violence from whites? Has this prevented blacks from registering to vote at all?

S: If it is--not to my knowledge. That's all I can, you know, not to my knowing.

I: Yeah, right. How about complicated registration forms which may have made it difficult for blacks? Was this a _____?

S: The only thing that I find that--we have some that can't read. And when it's time for the election--as I say, I can't prove it. I don't know. I've heard that, you know, when the fellow can't read--I'd tell you who I want. Well, they could call the name of who they wanted to vote for, but they said that somebody--I don't know how they going to know--now they wasn't in the booth. But they said the person go in there and they wouldn't vote for who they wanted to vote, but they wouldn't know. How could they know. How would I know when I'm on the outside? I'd said, now, you never know what that person in the booth would do. Now we've had several, you know, who wasn't able to read, but they would tell--they could tell the person that was on the booth who they wanted to vote for.

I: Oh.

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I: Okay. Fine. How about--so I guess you were saying that was not important.

S: That's what I'd say.

I: Okay.

S: That was #3?

I: Yeah. Number 4 is poor registration hours. Were the hours such that it made it difficult for people to go in and get registered?

S: I'd say no, not important. That is, my reason for saying that is this. Yes, certainly the hours that, you know, a working person couldn't go; but I've known them to--that's why I say I happen to know about it. I've known them to have the books open on Saturdays when people are not working. She'd put in--I don't know how that would come about, but she would work on Saturdays. So people could come in to.

I: Okay. Has this always been true since you've been here?

S: Well, since I've been here.

I: Okay.

S: But now they're still--about being there on Saturday--they'll find some excuse so they couldn't go.

I: Uh huh.

S: So I wouldn't see where that would, you know, as I say, during working hours--those that did work--there might have been some kind of way ? for them to get there. But I've known it to be open on Saturdays.

I: So I guess you're saying that was also not important. Number 5 is registration not held often enough during the year.

S: The books open all year except, I believe it's a law--there's a certain--I don't know the time, but there's a certain time that they're closed just before elections. And she's in her office every day. The city is in their office every day. And the only time that they'll stop a person from coming is after the books is closed.

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I: Okay.

S: Now, the word--I don't say that the word gets around, but, you know, most of the time people get interested in things like that just before election time. And then the books is closed.

I: Yeah.

S: But what I'm saying, that's just the law and there's nothing you can do about that. But they're open, I'd say, seven--eight months out of the year.

I: Uh huh.

S: And you can go up there--someone could go right now and register.

I: Okay.

S: But they used to be a little inconvenient. They used to--now they used to have--in this county we used to have two cards. That is you had to register with the city and the county. Now when you register with the county, that automatically takes care of both.

I: Why did they have two registrations? Do you know?

S: It was like that before I--no I don't. But they changed over in the last three or four years now.

I: Okay.

S: Now why it was two I never did question it, but when you vote for the city you couldn't vote in the county if you hadn't registered. But now you can go to this person here in the county at the courthouse and register and you're qualified for the city and the county.

I: Okay. How about reregistration effects. I assume that if you don't vote--if you haven't voted in two years, your name is taken off the roll.

S: Right.

I: Does that--is that work a real difficulty, do you feel, for blacks.

S: If they don't vote, yes.

I: And then they get their names taken off.

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S: In one way and one way not. Communication—I'm guessing—I can't prove it. I say, I call it communication—that's just getting the word out if enough people don't know about it. ^{That's} just laws and things—changes and persons—people don't keep up with them—don't know what's going on. Well, we have—we do have a regional station. Well, everybody now is TV happy. They hardly ever turn on the radio, but I'm just using that—I can't prove it. I don't have any statistics or anything to prove what I'm saying. Now I'm just guessing. But I'll say that the, uh, well, we have a local paper. I don't know if it was in the paper or not, but as I say, when a fellow can't read or don't buy the paper or don't turn on the radio, he wouldn't know what is going on. And that's why I said communication. I could be wrong. I can't prove a thing, but a lot of people don't realize it's when they—^{if} you just say to them after it, /you don't vote every two years or whatever that law is. I never read up on it. I know it's a law, but I always vote every year whether I like what's going on or not. I always vote. And no one buys my vote.

I: Yeah.

S: There's a lot of people that—maybe I shouldn't say it, but it's true. That is, you're going to come by and buy me—give me a fish dinner. You don't—I don't take your fish.

I: Does that happen some down around here?

S: Oh, it happens all around—what I mean is that or they'll come in and give two pounds of fish.

I: Uh huh.

S: Well, I don't know if that's buying your vote or not, but no one never offers me any fish. But I wouldn't have taken it anyway, but no one ^{offered} ever _{me} any.

I don't know why.

I: Were there some candidates who used to do this?

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S: Yes, I mean, you know, come in and--they--I don't--they'd just leave it with the different groups.

I: Uh huh.

S: You know, to have a fish fry tomorrow. And everybody come by to eat fish. I never did go by and eat.

I: Is this still done?

S: Oh yes. It's done everywhere around in this place.

I: Are these mainly white candidates that do this or black candidates?

S: Yes, there were no--I'm the only black that ever ran or anything around in here that I know of.

I: Uh huh.

S: And as I say, no one ever offered me any fish and I never did eat any fish. I guess it's all right, I don't know.

I: Uh huh. Do you think that really influences the voters?

S: No. Uh uh. That's what I say. Now don't let--you mean to tell me you're going to give me a piece of fish and not going to tell me how to vote. That's just my saying.

I: Okay.

S: But I don't believe it does. I find out people will take things because you give it to them.

I: Yeah.

S: But you can give me something. If I don't have--want or have any use for it, I still wouldn't take it. Especially if you're a candidate. Now I--you might think that you were doing me a favor by giving me a fish sandwich, but that's what I work for--to buy a fish sandwich. If I didn't need anything to eat, I wouldn't have to work. That's the only you need and I buy it. You can do without these other things, but we don't. As I say, mostly you have to eat. That's one thing you have to do.

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I: The last factor here is--I guess you said that was not important. The last one is indifference of blacks to voting. Some people just don't care. Do you think that's a factor in preventing some blacks from registering to vote?

S: True.

I: How important do you think that is?

S: It's very important. That's something that old ages, ever since slavery time, we've been involved. That is, they don't seem to think that--you can't get it into some of them heads that by them voting that will do good. They think, well, the man going to do like he want to do anyway. Sure, if he sits back and don't say anything and don't vote. And some of them believe that the white man is God. I've had some of them tell me and they laughed when I ran for mayor--said they couldn't vote for me--the black man as mayor. Well, they came out and told me. They didn't hide it. And then I had some white to tell me. Say if I was running for councilman, right on, they'd vote for me, but they couldn't vote for me as mayor. Had black tell me the same thing. So it's just one of those things, but that didn't discourage me. I went on and worked right on, but I wasn't looking for their vote. And they just came out and told me that they couldn't vote for me. Had several of them tell me that.

I: 'Cause they ^{were going} ~~would be~~ to vote for the white candidate?

S: Yes.

I: So you felt that was very important.

S: Well, now when you say very important--by them telling me?

I: No, the indifference of the blacks to voting. I guess you said you felt this was --

S: Well, that would be very important.

I: Okay. The next few questions--we wanted to gather some information on your

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I: information on your election campaigns when you ran for office here in Florida. And first of all, we'd like to ask you--were you able to campaign freely do you feel. That is, were you harassed or threatened in any way?

S: In my--when I ran for city councilman I was not threatened. When I ran for mayor I was, but it didn't frighten me or anything. I got two or three calls and was told that I was to leave town, but I didn't leave.

I: Uh huh. These were from white _____.

S: Well, now I couldn't tell on the phone.

I: Yeah.

S: You know how that is.

I: Do you feel that that didn't effect your campaign in any way or did it?

S: Well, I don't think it did. I don't think I even told too many people about it. I just--well, I told a couple friends of mine and we sit up and then the night that he was coming, we was ready, but no one showed up.

I: Oh, he said he was--the person who called said he was going to come over.

S: Oh, they going to come by and do certain things, but no one showed. We sat up three nights. They don't know if I was sitting up or not. They didn't know where I was. But I was close by, but I didn't leave. And I wasn't thinking about leaving, but they--I didn't want them to come in and catch me in bed.

I: Uh huh. Do you--and you, of course, you didn't know who these people were-- who they represented.

S: No. They didn't give any names or anything.

I: Is the Ku Klux Klan active in this area do you think or has it been --

S: Not since I've been here. They tell me it used to be a long time ago, but not since I've been here. If it is active, I don't know anything about it.

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I: Okay. Were you handicapped by a lack of campaign money when you ran or not?

S: Well, no. My reasons for saying no is this. As I say, this is a small place. You can walk over it twenty minutes and see everybody you want to see. But mostly what I was depending on—I didn't do much campaign^{ing}s. And when I went out to the election, I either went out—I would put it in churches. I was on the radio and when I'd see someone, I'd just pass them a card. And that was about it. But as I said, it's not that many people here, and if a fellow know you, he just know you. If he don't know you, he didn't know you.

I: Uh huh.

S: And one thing that helped out I imagine, by me being out here at the school, which was integrated at the time, most of—well, it was—where they would—numbers — the ratio was about 2:1, 3:1 I'd put white and black. So were I just getting black votes, I couldn't have gotten in. If I'd got all the black votes, I couldn't have gotten in.

I: Uh huh.

S: Because it wouldn't be enough. There's not enough of us. So I had to get some white.

I: You said you did have some radio advertisements and things like that.

S: Yes.

I: Did you spend your own money for that or was that money you were ^{contributed} ~~donated~~?

S: Well, about half.

I: About half was your own money?

S: Yeah. We just made one tape and we also put it on—maybe two days before election time.

I: This was when you ran for mayor?

S: Mayor and councilman.

I: And councilman. About how much money did you spend?

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S: Oh, I wouldn't know. I'd have to look back on the book. What I'm saying, it wasn't that much, but I believe--I'm guessing now--I believe it was \$27.00 for about three minutes.

I: Uh huh.

S: I believe that's what it was.

I: And you had some cards printed up, too.

S: Yes, I had cards printed up.

I: Why did you decide to run for office in Blountstown? You said you were the first black to run. Why did you decide to run?

S: Well, my reasoning was that the things that was going on--we wouldn't know--my people wouldn't know anything about it. That is, no one never goes to the meeting, and I figured by having someone up there they could bring back firsthand information. By the time he get it, it would be in the paper ^{and on radio} ~~in~~. They'd put it in the paper, ^{radio} ~~on their~~ what they wanted to put in there. Who voted for what? Who voted against what? And you wouldn't know. Not unless you were there. And so I think about someone being up there would have decisions--would help make some of the policies for the county--I mean for the city. And then I could bring back firsthand information of what was going on. Money that was coming in--if they got it--well, you know anything about it if it was spent.

I: Uh huh.

S: The revenue sharing, uh, divided the way they wanted to divide it.

I: Okay.

S: And that was my reason for wanting to be up there.

I: What was it when you ran for mayor. Did you have--is that the reason you ran for mayor, too?

S: Well, no. My reasons for running for mayor--I didn't tell a lot of people. A lot of them don't know. And I imagine you don't know. But a small town

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S: a black mayor will get more for the poor people than a white mayor will.

Now what I mean by that--you have to use it for both. You can't just use it all for blacks. There are a lot of projects and things that are going on that would not go to a black mayor--I mean a white mayor that would go to a black mayor. I don't know if you know that, but it's true. What I mean by that--

I: Projects that would be through the state?

S: The government--federal government. Projects that come out that would go to a black mayor, but he can't use it for blacks. He has to use it for both.

I: Uh huh.

S: And that was my main reason for wanting to run for mayor. Everybody said we didn't need a black mayor, but I tried it anyway.

I: What types of projects did you have in mind?

S: Well, what I'm saying, I don't remember the projects. I've been to several meetings in Atlanta and even when I was councilman--things that they talk there, no one here knew anything about it. They didn't get it here. And mostly this was the political doing. Oh, ^{let's see} /if I have anything. I don't know if I have anything here on it or not, but ^{it's} / joint study of political science out of Washington, D.C.

I: Yeah. Joint--yeah. Joint ^{study} set of political studies.

S: Yeah, that's it.

I: Yeah. They had a meeting in Atlanta?

S: They have them every year. I've been _____ but I didn't go. But I don't know. I'm just _____ down here on _____
And in that group you can get a lot of things that I said that was going on that you wouldn't know. But it's--when you get it, you have to--everybody has to use it. You couldn't just put it in the black community. But it would be for white and black. And as a white mayor, he wouldn't

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S: know nothing about that. He wouldn't even get a bulletin on it.

I: I see.

S: I don't know if all kinds of government--^{federal}~~dirty~~ government does that, but they do it.

I: Okay. Which political party do you belong to?

S: Well, you ought to know that one without even--I was born and raised in the South now. So what I mean by that--that's just like a family's religion. It depends on what your mother and father was. You start going to that church and whether you--you might switch over you later by however you find it. So I imagine you know my party. I was born and raised here. My home is at Lakeland. I don't know if you know where that is or not, Lakeland, Florida?

I: Oh yeah. Yeah.

S: All right. So I believe that answers it.

I: So you're a Democrat?

S: Right.

I: We interviewed--a friend of mine interviewed a black commissioner who was Republican, you know what I mean.

S: Uh huh. I have one friend of mine right here is Republican. Well, he was ~~born and raised here,~~ but he moved away before I came here. And he went--moved to Detroit. And he's retired now back here. I think he's about the only one around here that I know of that's black. Well, he's--so he switched over after he got up there.

I: Did you ever receive any support from the Democrat party when you ran for office?

S: No, I never received any support from anybody. I didn't ask for any. Maybe if I would have asked, but I didn't.

I: What were the two or three most important issues when you campaigned--

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I: both for councilman and for mayor. What were the most important issues of your campaign?

S: I don't know if I can recall that back now. Let's see if I have anything on here. I don't know if I--as I said--this is--_____ have something on here just as I said just now. Uh, communication--I have that on here--list communication with citizens--that is--someone that would let them know what was going on. As I say, there were certain--too many people around here--well, at that time--now they've changed it a little bit--they didn't believe in a lot of government projects. I mean, you know, federal projects and things. They didn't bel- because at that time I wanted to try to get sewage and water along. We needed it bad, but they didn't--they already owed the government, federal government some money. The groups that were on didn't think that we needed to get in debt anymore.

I: Uh huh.

S: And as I said, communication is bad. Things that goes on up there we don't get it out here. What we get in the paper, we get part of it. We don't get the whole story. Different things that was going on--that is if you need to know who was voting against what or what was what so when voting time come around again, you would know. But no one was knowing what, and that was my main reason for whating to go up there. Just say any issue--no one had a--around here, you don't have any issue. Because as I say, it's not that much going on. They know you or don't know you.

I: Uh huh.

S: And they vote for or they vote for you. It's not--as I say, it's not that many people here.

I: Uh huh.

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S: And hardly ever there is an issue going.

I: What were the main problems confronting the black community at that time. You'd mentioned something like _____ water and sewage.

S: Well, there was streets, water, sewage, lights.

I: Uh huh.

S: And things like that. That's mostly what it was. Since that time, they have the streets--well, it was in the works when I was in there. We--I think all the streets out here are paved now, but about two and they're short streets. And everybody that wants water can get it. Everybody doesn't have sewage. I don't think, but they do have water, lights if they want it.

I: Were these issues in your campaign? Did you raise these issues in your campaign at all?

S: No. Uh uh. As I said, it wasn't too much of an issue.

I: Uh huh.

S: No one was going on ^{the} issues so it wasn't no issue, I mean--you know what I mean. I just told as many of them one or two things that I would do if I got in.

I: Uh huh.

S: But as I said, it wasn't no special issue which you could hardly-- or anyone since I've been here that no one goes on.

I: Okay.

S: It's just mostly it's--the fellow that the most people know. They think he'll try to do a good job. That's all it is. And the thing that helped me out was that--integration, I guess. They wanted me to be in the courts. Everybody always know the courts when, you know, when you're coming along. And that's about the biggest thing that helped me.

I: Okay. How were you elected? Was it at large? Most of the elections

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I: here are at-large?

S: Yes, they are.

I: In Blountstown? When you were councilman, were you elected in a ward, though?

S: Yes, in a ward, but the way they do it here, anyone that's in that-- well, in the others wards can vote. Everybody votes on who they want it to be. Just the ones in your ward don't vote for you. The ones outside your ward can vote for you, too.

I: Oh, so everyone can vote for you?

S: Yes.

I: Is that what you're saying?

S: Uh huh.

I: But you represented a particular area?

S: Yes.

I: Of Blountstown.

S: Right. But everybody could vote for you that lived inside the city limits that were registered.

I: Okay. But once in office, you were a representative of a particular ward

S: Well, you're supposed to have been, but you could help anybody that came up with a problem.

I: Yeah.

S: I had a, you know, everybody that had a problem or complaint--we'd always helped them.

I: How many different districts or ward are there?

S: Four.

I: Four.

S: Inside the city limits.

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S: It's _____ down somewhere. The cities-- _____ the county.
I thought I saw it.

I: _____ here's the population--7,000 in the
county.

S: Uh huh.

I: Well, that's okay. We can look it up later.

S: It should be in here. Yeah, _____ but it's still county,
though. The population in the community of white and nonwhite.

I: We'll look that up .

S: But I'm guessing there's about two-thirds.

I: Two-thirds white?

S: Yes, just guessing.

I: White--two-thirds white?

S: Well, I mean--you mean for the city. You're speaking about the--

I: Yeah, the city is what we'd like.

S: Well, what I'm saying, uh, it's about one-third--maybe one or two-thirds
colored--black--in the whole city limits.

I: About one-third?

S: Something like that. Just guessing. They don't ever have a definite
figure because they move in and out.

I: Uh huh.

S: Depending on the time of year.

I: About--would you estimate--about what percentage of blacks in your
district are registered to vote? Do you have any idea?

S: I'd say about three-fourths of whatever the number is.

I: About three-fourths were eligible?

S: I mean, what a minute now. You'd said that are eligible. You don't

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S: you mean that--

I: Yeah, well, twenty-one or over. Or eighteen or over now.

S: Yeah. Well, I'd say about three-fourths.

I: Three-fourths. Okay.

S: We might be able to stick with that.

I: Of this percentage who are registered, how many do you think actually voted for you in your--the election which you won--about what percentage?

S: Well, it--when I was/^acouncilman I'd say about eighty--about ninety percent.

I: Okay. And when you ran for mayor?

S: I'd say about fifty percent.

I: Fifty percent. Why was there the drop off there when you ran for mayor?

S: Well, as I said before, they didn't think I could--I would--they didn't want to see a black man as mayor. My own people. And then as I said, some came out and told me to my face. They didn't tell me but they told people that I had driving for me--they told them. Some of them got angry and wanted--I told them you can get mad and fed up. He wanted to fight, but this doesn't make sense.

I: Uh huh.

S: Let them vote for who he wanted.

I: Uh huh.

S: And I tried to show them that if they wanted the other man, let them vote for the other man. And I even carried people--drove people down in my car that I had going that voted for the other man. But you see, I could tell--

I: Uh huh.

S: You never--you don't know their names, but you could go back and check.

I: Uh huh.

S: And find out how many black votes, and then you can tell how many you

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S: got. You can tell how many whites you got, but you can't say who voted. But you can always check and find out how many votes you got from white and black.

I: Uh huh.

S: But as I say, the names wouldn't mean anything--you wouldn't be able to get their names, but--

I: Yeah, you could get--

S: And then so I could tell by the checking of the cards--the fellows told me the number of each one I hauled. As I said, some of those I hauled didn't even vote for me. But they rode down in my car.

I: Do you think you got any votes from whites?

S: Oh yes.

I: About what percentage?

S: About a half of whatever I got.

I: Okay. How about when you ran for mayor?

S: It's about the same.

I: About half. How many opponents did you have when you ran--first of all for the council?

S: One.

I: A white?

S: Both times one.

I: Just one.

S: Excuse me just a minute. Let me .

I: Just one last question on your election. What percent of the total vote did you get? When you won and then when you ran for mayor. Do you remember the--about the approximate percent of the total vote?

S: All right, for councilman, I received about three-fourths of the vote.

I: Seventy-five percent?

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S: Uh huh.

I: And when you ran for mayor?

S: About one-fourth.

I: About one-fourth. Okay. We have one last general section here. To determine how well black officials were able to benefit those they represent. The first question we'd like to ask you is, "In what ways do you think you have helped blacks in Blountstown by holding office?"

S: Well, number one, I was able to put in some of the things that we needed out here that the other parts of town were getting that we wasn't getting. As I said, roads, the streets, water, lights; and they would—~~one thing~~—I could come back and see someone. And talk with them and tell them about what was going on.

I: Uh huh.

S: And I think they benefited from that.

I: Okay. What, if anything, prevented you from doing a better job, do you feel, especially in regard to benefiting blacks in the city?

S: Well, one thing, if—I'm guessing—I can't prove it. I just believe. As I said, no one ever goes to meetings. I believe if I had more people just to come. I'm guessing. I can't prove it. I don't have that any statistics or anything. That is if—when if something/I wanted to ask for or something I wanted to do and I had, I'd see twenty-five ^{people out there} listening and know what was going on, I believe I could do a better job than I would if I didn't have anybody there when I asked for something. Now I might—as I say, even when we have public hearings right now, no one but the people that mostly involved in it are there.

I: Uh huh.

S: But it's still a public hearing. No one seems to be interested in the thing until after it happens.

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I: Uh huh.

S: Then everybody wants to find something wrong, but they never gone to any of the meetings to--where they--that's where you do your talking. You don't do it after if happens. It doesn't do any good then.

I: Were you able to get more blacks to start coming to the meetings?

S: They wasn't able to--maybe the first meeting we had about four.

I: Uh huh.

S: And after it ended, it dropped down to one. And after about six months, no one. _____ not unless somebody had a complaint--something was wrong that they wanted to bring to the council. That's the only reason they would come there.

I: Uh huh. Okay. We have, again, a few items that, in some cases, seem to prevent officials from doing a better job. And we'd like to have you, again, just, if you would, check whether you think these items were very important, fairly important, or not important at all in terms of preventing you from doing a better job in benefiting blacks? First of all, in terms of the office having no real authority or no real power. Did you feel that that was very important, fairly important, or not important at all in terms of preventing you from doing a better job?

S: Uh, now you mean a better job in office, that is getting things--

I: Better job in terms of benefiting blacks and that's--yeah, doing things.

S: Well, I think it was very important. That is--you mean by me being in office?

I: Well, did you feel that the office had no real authority or no real power to get things done?

S: Well, it did. It did.

I: You felt it did.

S: Yes, it would give me a chance to put it on priority, that is, put it on

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S: the list. And after one thing get on the list, like I say, all the streets not--and when it get on the list, they would go on and do it. But if I hadn't have been there to put it on the list, the might have put some of them on there and they might not. I can't--I don't have any proof either way.

I: Uh huh.

S: But by me being there I could put something on the list.

I: Okay. So that, I guess you'd say, was not important in terms of preventing you from benefiting blacks.

S: No, that would be right.

I: How about being outvoted by white officials. Do you think that was an important or not/important factor in terms of preventing you from doing a better job.

S: In other words, you're saying, now if I'd had had some other blacks there, certain things that I've asked for. Well, I'm going to be honest about it. Most of the things that I asked for--it wasn't no use to ask for a mountain when you know the mountain wasn't there. And I was only asking for things that they'd know we needed, and things that they could get. They might not be able to get them right then, but in the ...

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S: keep up with everything--read newspapers and get articles. And by me going up to Atlanta once a year, I'd know what was going on all the time and _____ all in a year. They would send me pamphlets and things. And any of the city laws that I wanted to know about, all I had to do was call down and they would even bring it to me where I could read up on it.

I: Did you have to pay your way to Atlanta or was that paid for you?

S: I had to pay my way there, but they paid for--the center paid my room and board.

I: So I guess you felt that that was not important in terms of preventing you from doing a better job? How about number five, and that is--lack of cooperation from whites. Did you feel that that was a very important, or fairly important or not important in terms of preventing you from doing a better job?

S: Well, as I said now, they all knew me and I all--we all knew each other so that's just like anything else. Same things that they'd want done, I'd vote for it. And things that I wanted done, we'd talk it over.

I: Uh huh.

S: And we'd come to an agreement. We'd compromise. And it was just one of those things. We'd, uh, we got along all right. Or always--maybe one--sometimes everybody not's going to get along together. I don't care who it is. And I got along all right with the majority whether they was. Or I could go by their actions. I wouldn't know what the fellow was ^{thinking} saying.

I: Uh huh. So you--

S: But in the meetings we got along all right.

I: So you felt that that wasn't important.

S: That's right.

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I: How about lack of cooperation from blacks? Was that a factor?

In terms of preventing you from doing a better job?

S: As I said before, if I could have gotten them to come down. They were— everybody always had an excuse. They were tired or just got in from work. And or they might not had a way to get down. But I'd still believe—I don't know. I can't prove it. If I ever had better attendance at the meetings among the blacks, I could have gotten things done a little better than I did.

I: Uh huh.

S: That's just my own opinion. I don't have anything to go on.

I: So you think that factor was maybe fairly important or very important?

S: I think it was fairly important.

I: Fairly important. Lack of cooperation from state ^{officials?} ~~officials?~~ Do you think that prevented you from doing a better job in benefiting blacks?

S: Well, I can't answer that one too good because I didn't have any—the only times I had state officials that I happen to know. I knew him before I got in office but it was ok. And the only times that I got any—had—he would come around when it was time for his election. But I never had any conflicts or anything to contact any of them about during those times, you know, the two years that I was in.

I: Okay.

S: But as I said, only one that I did ever have any contact with, and that was—he was running for office hisself. And I guess that's when he contacted me. I knew—well, I was helping him before I ever got in.

I: Okay. So I guess that was not important.

S: No, not important.

I: Finally, the lack of cooperation from federal officials. Did you have any dealings with the federal officials?

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S: Well, I didn't have any dealing with them. No more than I say I went to these studies up there in Atlanta.

I: Okay.

S: But that was the only dealing that I had with the federal officials.

I: So I guess that was not important. Have you received any criticism from the black community in terms of lack of cooperation because they maybe feel that you're only a token in government and you've had no real authority? Was that ever a criticism that you received from any blacks?

S: No, the only criticism, when I was in office, if I got any, I didn't know-- they didn't tell me. As I say, the only things I know anything about they came by and told me when I was resigning three months before time was up to run for mayor. They told me I didn't think I could--should have resigned to run for mayor.

I: Okay. How about white officials. Did they--did you feel ever that they treated you differently from the other officials, that is, did they consider you, say, a spokesman for the blacks--that you were only able to raise certain issues for the blacks or--

S: Well, I don't think so. They didn't show it if they did. That is--as I say, I had more white in my district than I had blacks.

I: Uh huh.

S: So I'd have about as many issues for one side as I would for the other one
_____?

I: Did you feel, though, that you represented blacks in Blountstown?

S: Well, I figured I represented three-fourths of them.

I: Of the blacks?

S: Yes.

I: Even though your district was white.

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S: But most times they would come to me if something went wrong or they wanted to know. They'd come, and then one or two that knew the other white officials personally would go to them or they worked for them or some of their people worked for them. They'd go see them then, but as a whole, I think it was all right.

I: Did whites ever come to you and get help, too?

S: Yes.

I: Some. But mostly blacks?

S: Well, it's about half and half.

I: Half and half. What services do you feel you've provided blacks in your district that they did not have before you took office as a councilman?

S: Now when you say services--

I: Be it roads or--I guess you mentioned water and sewage. Do you think that you were able to help provide these services for blacks that they'd not had before.

S: Well, I think so. That is by me being able to put it on the priority list.

I: Yes.

S: See, they make a list every year of the things they going to do the next year. And by me being there, I believe it did help.

I: Okay.

S: Because I can recall when I came here, we didn't have water out here, no lights, one telephone, and one paved street. So over the years, it has been improved.

I: Now do you think most of the improvement was a result of your being in office?

S: Well, not the lights, but I'd say the streets and the water, yes.

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I: I see. The lights came in after you left office or--

S: No before. The lights were in, but see, we didn't have water everywhere and we didn't have, well, sewage everywhere. And we didn't have--only one pave street.

I: Uh huh.

S: But now all the streets are paved now. All but two short ones.

I: Okay.

S: And now everybody that wants water can get it.

I: We have just one last of these checklists and I think this will go fairly quickly. These are short. We want you to rate how effective you think you've been in each of the following areas. Now some of these you've commented on already, but again, we'd like to have you rate how effective you think you've been in each of the following service areas in terms of benefiting blacks. First of all, police protection. You had mentioned that you tried to get, for example, I guess some police--black policeman. Do think you were fairly effective in that area or were not.

S: I'd say somewhat.

I: Somewhat effective?

S: Uh huh.

I: Okay. Streets and roads?

S: Very.

I: Very effective. How about housing?

S: That's another that was very. We not--I can say that not because I was in office, maybe, I don't know. But I was--we got the first grant here that ever--that this type of grant that'd ever been received from the federal government. And I happened to be the president of the group. And so I don't know--I got that after I was in office.

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I: Uh huh.

S: I--well, we had to right up a project, you know, you had to right up those projects. You got one from FHA that no one said--We were the first one in the state of Florida to get one.

I: Uh huh.

S: So that's why I marked that one very effective, but not--but maybe because of the councilman not, but I--that was just--

I: Was that money used primarily for housing black housing?

S: Yes, well no. I couldn't use it for black housing. Anybody that wanted to buy a house, I had to sell it.

I: Oh, I see. This was to help people buy homes?

S: Yes.

I: Do you think this helped blacks more than whites or--

S: Well, it did because no white bought any.

I: Okay. So it was just blacks who bought it.

S: But in the agreement with the federal government that we had to sign that no integration--we had to sell to anybody that wanted to buy.

I: Okay. How about welfare?

S: Not effective.

I: Did that--I guess that didn't apply?

S: No, it didn't apply in any way.

I: How about employment of blacks? How effective do you think you may have been there? In terms of crowded city employment?

S: Well, they did hire blacks during the time that I was in, but they never hired one before. We only had--they only hired--they hired two. One quit and one is still with them. So I'd say somewhat effective.

I: What positions?

S: Well, you know, garbage collector.

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I: Okay.

S: So they'd never had one before.

Unknown
Speaker

U: Mike is having a lot of tooth trouble. He got a tooth pulled.

S: Do you need to go home? excuse me.

U: Yeah.

I: _____ done which one, oh employment. Yeah, you said they—you've been able to help get two blacks hired. What positions were those in the city?

S: Garbage collectors.

I: Garbage collectors.

S: So I would say not too effective I don't guess.

I: Some, I guess you say was somewhat?

S: Well, that'd be—somewhat would be all right. That's under employment.

I: Employment. How about parks and recreation?

S: We didn't get anything. We still don't have any. The city doesn't have any parks and recreation. So everything around here is private. That is churches.

I: Churches?

S: You know, have their own. If your church don't put up one, then you don't have one. I don't know what—they seem to think they don't have enough money to do that. They all _____ now they've been trying to get some grants and things, but they haven't been successful yet to get one. That's—oh, I got another booklet somewhere here. I don't know is it's this one. It must be that one. Anyway, they have recreation and things on that priority, you know, what they're trying to get, but haven't been able to get one yet. So that would—I would—that would fall under not effective.

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I: Not effective. Water, sewage, and garbage. I guess you said you had been able to--

S: So that I believe would be--I guess that that'd be very effective.

I: Okay. Health and hospitals?

S: Well, they had a hospital. Health, I wouldn't say that--I'd say not effective. That is because the office didn't have anything to do with it.

I: Nothing to do with it?

S: We didn't have anything to do with the health or even the hospitals.

I: Okay. Education? In terms of lawlessness--

S: We didn't have anything to do with it.

I: Nothing to do with education?

S: Nothing to do with that.

I: Do you have a county education or a school board?

S: Yes.

I: Is is county or city?

S: Well, it's county, but it takes care (fo) the city and the county.

I: County fire protection?

S: Well, I don't think they have--well, that would fall under not effective because--now they give them--their service it is volunteer. Now _____ volunteer department not--they I --they give everybody the same service. So I haven't--that was going on before I got in and it's still going on. There's no paid--

I: No pay?

S: No, just volunteers.

I: Uh huh.

S: So, well, they use most everybody that works right up town there. And I guess it's--I imagine it's a standard agreement that, I'm guessing,

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- S: when the alarm go off, those fellows that work close by--that they already him as volunteer. They'd go get on the truck. You know, now but it's an understanding between them and their employees that they join the crowd. So as I said, we don't have a paid fire department so it wouldn't be--that would fall under the same thing--not effective.
- I: Okay. Were you able to get federal funds for Blountstown? You had mentioned that you thought you were instrumental in getting a housing grant. Were there any other federal funds that you think you were able to get?
- S: That was the only one that I knew anything about. See, I wasn't the only one. I just happened to be the president of the group, and there was thirteen people--twelve people involved. We had to get a charter.
- I: Uh huh.
- S: But it was twelve of us in the group, and I just--they happened to elect me as president.
- I: Uh huh. Okay. As an elected official, do you think you were able to bring or did you ever attempt to bring in industry or retail stores into the city?
- S: No, I did not.
- I: Was there any attempt along this line?
- S: Not--on my part?
- I: Yeah.
- S: Well, no. The chamber of commerce was taking care of all of that type of work at that time, and they still are.
- I: Okay.
- S: And that didn't even--had anything to do with the city, you know. They would always welcome anybody that would come in. We had one or two to come in at that time, but the chamber of commerce has done most--

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S: done--do all that type of work.

I: What--is this primarily a farming community or is there some industry in town or--

S: Well, partly farming. And what would you call pulp wooding?

I: What is that?

S: Pulpwooding, uh, wood?

I: Oh, oh.

S: Logging or whatever you call it.

I: Yeah, logging.

S: Now they have--well, I can recall when I first came here which, you know, was not during _____? _____ . That is--they--from what I understodd-- that they didn't want anybody coming in. But since then, I know the chamber of commerce has been working real hard to get different industries to come in the area. They've gotten three in. They're doing pretty good.

I: Uh huh.

S: But as I've said, they've always taken care of things like that.

I: Okay. Has federal revenue sharing helped in the city here?

S: Yes, it's helped very good.

I: What specifically was the money used for?

S: Well, to upgrade equipment, the streets, the sewage and water, and the salaries for the employees.

I: Uh huh.

S: But for everything they said they could use it for--well, they couldn't use it for everything, but those things it could be used for, it upgraded them.

I: Okay. Have there been, in your memory, have there been any black protests

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I: or sitⁱⁿs or boycotts of any type in Blountstown in the last ten years?

S: Not to my knowing. There could have been. I'm not--if they were, I would have heard about it, and I haven't heard.

I: You didn't know of any?

S: No. Oh, maybe there's been one or two that went place that asked for jobs, but the qualifications hired them--the thing that kept them out.

I: But there were no sitⁱⁿs or protests or boycotts?

S: No, no sitⁱⁿ. No one came in. No one came in or anything like that.

I: I'd like to ask you just a general question or two about your ideas about politics in Florida in general. First of all, we would like to ask you what your opinion is of Governor Ruben Askew. That is, do you think he's been favorable in his attitude and policies toward blacks in Florida or not.

S: I'd say, yes.

I: How do you feel about him as governor?

S: Well, I think he's been very--well, he's been one of the best governors we've had for some time. That is, I believe he--that he, well, I can't prove that he's been doing what he thought was being and that's all you can go by. Is the fellow, you know, well, he's in charge and he's the one that's said it. And I believe he's been trying to treat blacks fairly. I can't prove it.

I: Okay.

S: But the few that I've talked with, and I've been to several meetings with him. And some of the things that he's said he's going to do, he did do them. So that's all I can go by.

I: Are there any things in particular that he's done that you feel has been helpful for blacks?

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S: Well, one thing that I know, he said that he was going to keep the A & M open and it's still open.

I: Okay. What's your opinion of other state officials or even state representatives? You had mentioned your own representative.

S: Well, the only things that I--complaint that I have the--and then it might be the citizen's fault--they only come around when it's time for election. And you see them then.

I: Uh huh.

S: And after the election, you don't see them anymore. And I'm, as I say, maybe they--I say they should come around all the time. That's just my opinion. I don't know. He might not be able to come. I don't know.

I: Uh huh.

S: But you can look for them just before elections--day and night.

I: Okay. Finally just one last general question we want to ask you, and that is, do you think that winning and holding office in Florida has been worth the effort for you?

S: Yes, it does because places and things that I've done, places I've gone and things that I've done. If I had not it'd been a--they accepted me because I was in office.

I: Uh huh.

S: And if I had not been in office, I wouldn't have been there.

I: Where's this?

S: Well, oh I can name--Miami. I was invited--I was down there and I was-- after I had told them who I was, I was able to go places and do things that I couldn't have done if I hadn't had been in office. And I've been to West Palm Beach. And I was treated royally. But I believe if I hadn't had been an officer, I wouldn't have been treated. I'm

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S: just guessing. I can't prove it.

I: Uh huh. Okay.

S: But it helped out.

I: Were there any negative aspects of the job, as you look back?

S: No, I can't see of any.

I: Do you think you might run again?

S: Oh yes. I'm going to run again.

I: You're going to run again? For mayor?

S: No, I'm going to run for school board member.

I: The school board?

S: Uh huh.

I: Uh, you don't have any regrets, then?

S: No. No regrets.

I: How has it effected your family life, your social life--is that--

S: Well, the social life around here is very limited. If you need anything, you have to go out of town. So it wouldn't--it didn't have any effect on it that way. And the family--it was just one of those things--everyday things.

I: Uh huh.

Unknown
speaker

U: My grandmom's here.

S: Okay.

U: She's been waiting on us.

S: Okay. Okay you go ahead and just leave your things.

U: Okay. _____.

I: We had just a few--just personal questions that we'd like to ask you.
First of all, your age?

S: Fifty-eight.

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- I: Fifty-eight. Your occupation before you were elected?
- S: Well, I've been here twenty-three years.
- I: As a coach?
- S: Yes. And I run a laundry right here on--a laundrymat.
- I: Uh huh.
- S: And in the funeral home business.
- I: Oh, do you own a funeral home?
- S: Well, according to the law, no, but I've worked with someone that owns a funeral home.
- I: Oh, I see. Okay. Level of education?
- S: B.S.
- I: From where?
- S: Florida Memorial College. It used to be in St. Augustine. They've moved to Miami now.
- I: Okay. Did you receive any salary?
- U: _____
- S: Okay.
- I: Did you receive any salary from your elected position?
- S: Yes.
- I: Of how much?
- S: One dollar a year.
- I: One dollar a year?
- S: I still have my checks. I didn't cash them. I put them in my scrap book.
- I: Have they raised the salary at all?
- S: No. They still pay a dollar right along.
- I: One dollar a year. Were you active in the civil rights movement during the early 1960's?
- S: We didn't have anything like that here.

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I: Nothing like that? Were you ever a member of the NAACP or ^CSPLC or any civil rights groups?

S: No. No.

I: Okay. What church do you belong to?

S: The methodist.

I: Methodist. Are you an official in your church?

S: Trustee.

I: Trustee? Are there any other community organizations or activities that you're involved in. I know you've mentioned a number of them here.

S: You're got all of that there

I: Okay.

S: All except the few--some that's been added, but there's about seven right here.

I: Okay. Okay. American Legion, Masonic Lodge, Teacher's Associations. Okay. What is or was your father's occupation?

S: Common laborer.

I: Do you know of any other black elected officials in this area?

S: Yes, I know two. One is in Tallahassee, a Mr.--I believe he's only-- or he's also an instructor I think out at the school system. I can't think of his name right now.

I: Mr. Ford?

S: Yeah, Mr. Ford. And there's one down at--oh, I know about the one down here in Ft.--in Crestview or Ft. Walton, I can't--it must be in Crestview. But I met him at the Joint Center.

I: Uh huh.

S: He's a tall, dark-skinned fellow. He's in the school system also. I can't--

I: Okay.

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S: I can't--

I: We might be talking to him. I think it's him in Crestview.

S: Yes, well I've met him.

I: Probably later today--uh, Allen--Samuel Allen.

S: Yeah, that's him. That's him. Well, I met him in Atlanta twice when I was up there.

I: Okay. That's--

S: You may keep that if you want it.

I: Thank you. ^{Could I?-} ~~Good~~, I'd appreciate it.

S: Yes, as I said, that's ^{why I} ~~not~~ brought ^{it for.} ~~into it.~~

I: This is when you ran for mayor or--

S: That's city councilman.

I: City councilman, I see.

S: Yes.

I: Here it is.

S: See, I'd just make up those and pass them around.

I: Ward number three?

S: Right.

I: Okay.

End of Side 2-FB 37A