

SUB: Willie Washington

INT: "Button Project"

PLACE: Welaka

JF

NOV. 14, 1980

I: Okay this first series of questions is about voting rights since the act of <sup>'65</sup> 1965, and you know how that helped <sup>you</sup> /or didn't help you. The first question is what year did you register to vote?

W: I believe it was back in, I can recall I can't tell you right off hand.

I: Just give me a general idea.

W: I think it was back in '58, <sup>or</sup> 17 or something like that, it was sometime back.

I: Okay, and what year were you first eligible to vote?

W: (chuckle) At least as soon as I was 21, 'cause I'm...

I: Then it should be, yeah that's right.

W: As soon as I got twenty-one, I'm thirty-six, I'm thirty-six now.

I: Okay, I can figure it out a little later. Let's see, how were you registered, by local registration board or by the federal examiners?

W: No, we went up to the, just to the courthouse there in <sup>Palatka</sup> ~~Welaka~~ to the registration, registering blacks there in the courthouse.

I: Okay, did the local registrars ever turn you down when you applied to register?

W: No, no, no.

I: Have voter registration drives been held in the district which you hold office?

W: Uh yes, well since we got elected, <sup>well</sup> here in town, well at least in <sup>Palatka,</sup> ~~Welaka~~ that was for the county, but in the town here, you could register down at the city hall.

They have registration books for the city election for the municipality downtown

W: there, at least down there, that's where you register for municipality. But here, I think about a couple of years ago, after you register for the county, then <sup>you're</sup> ~~you~~ covered for the whole municipality too, I think that's a new law <sup>that's</sup> come out. Other words you had to be registered in the county.

I: Yeah, do you know any of the organizations that held the drives, were they local or national organizations?

W: Well not in Welaka they didn't, 'cause I mean most everybody voted, you know, you know, here in Welaka, <sup>I mean</sup> they've never had any trouble for, that used to be a big deal all along here in Welaka, coming up for election of city municipality here in Welaka.

U: I bet a lot of these questions apply to big cities.

I: Yeah, they do. When I went through them, <sup>a lot of the</sup> ~~they're not~~ questions... ~~and~~ all the places I'm doing are smaller towns.

W: Yep, yep, yep.

I: Okay, are there any things today which prevent blacks from voting in your district?

W: ~~no no no~~ I don't think so.

I: Okay, <sup>so</sup> ~~is~~ your answer <sup>is no.</sup> ~~was~~ ~~yes~~

W: I mean everybody wanted to vote, you know they afraid of \_\_\_\_\_, you know, I mean it's no hassle, unless you can't vote \_\_\_\_\_.  
But that's not only in Welaka, that's in the county too. I mean I never heard anyone say that they, you know were turned down.

I: That's in all of Putnam County?

U: Right.

I: Now, this is some factors that have prevented people from voting in other places, and maybe you could run through them with me since you said there hasn't been anything, it probably won't apply, but we'll go through it anyway. I'll give you a pencil, what did I do with it? here. Okay the first one is economic dependence on whites?

W: Uh, now <sup>you</sup> mean, how do you mean?

I: If these things might have kept blacks from registering to vote or from voting, how important are they? <sup>um</sup>

W: No, not really.

I: You can check not applicable, there isn't one here but it might not apply.

W: Uh huh, well not that I know of, I would say.

I: Okay, fear of physical violence from whites?

W: No, no.

I: Let's see, complicated registration forms?

W: No, they <sup>were supposed to, well</sup> ~~was~~ I mean, well least here in town, I know, I mean, if there was any questioning, I mean whoever was registering, they'd explain everything. Of course mostly every year, it was mostly about the same ones, <sup>because</sup> until here recently, quite a few younger, you got to become eligible to vote, and they didn't have enough

I: Oh, okay.

W: And uh . . .

I: How about number six, if none of the others apply?

W: No no. No, not that I know of.

I: Then we'll just go on to the second section. That one really went fast. Okay the second section is mostly about your campaign, you know, for your election.

W: Well uh, when I first ran, that was back in 1968.

(Break in tape)

I: ~~WMM~~ you know what \_\_\_\_\_ . Well it just started to play.

W: Got to back over this.

I: I thought it was awful quiet. Some of these I've made notation on. Now it's running. It may, I may have hit it some way, 'cause this cord's right up here, Oh I'd hate to start this thing over again. Let me see what I've got down. I shouldn't have any trouble with the first page. I've been taking some notes. I think we can go ahead from here, because I've pretty much covered these in my

I: notes.

W: Okay.

I: Okay, these questions, I don't know if you'll have any precise figure on 'em, but I'd just like to give me maybe your estimation of 'em. What percentage of blacks of voting age are in your district that are registered to vote?

W: Oh let's see. Now . . . it's probably about uh, I don't know, probably about twenty per cent is youngsters, I would say.

I: Um hum, and how many of those people are registered to vote, what percentage, of those that are old enough to vote <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ registered?

W: Out of the twenty per cent?

I: Um hum.

W: Well I was speaking twenty percent as a whole. Now is, now you said . . . that's what I think we got a little confusion here. (chuckle)

I: Okay, about what percentage of blacks of voting age in your district are registered to vote?

W: Probably about twenty per cent of them ~~is~~ <sup>uh huh</sup>.

I: Okay, and how many do you think actually voted, what percentage actually did vote?

W: Probably about, well about fifteen per cent, because most of the ones that is eligible to vote, they does register and go out and vote.

I: Okay, do you think you got any votes from whites?

W: Oh yes.

I: What percentage of the total vote came from whites?

W: Probably about seventy-five percent, probably about seventy-five.

I: In the election in which you won office, how many opponents did you have?

W: Well in the last one I ran I believe I had, I believe it was four, I believe there was four of us running, in the last election I ran in. And I think I was the highest, or the second highest, I was the highest because I was president, I was president of the council. This last time I ran.



W: like as a whole, I think we have benefitted you know by helping their, well in the streets, just as you call here, just blacktop it, what you all call it now, see that road used to be so bad, especially like if it was raining late, I mean you couldn't hardly get in and out. And since we was on the council we got that, think about that that was the first paved street in Welaka in the last fifteen years, I believe.

I: Is that so?

W: Right.

I: I'd say that's an accomplishment.

W: Yes it was, I mean you bring up paving, and everybody <sup>holler</sup> ~~holler~~ <sup>don't</sup> we want the same old sand street, we want paved street we go to the city. (laughter) But really that was the first paved street here in Welaka other than ~~that~~ this one just before you get to the traffic light that goes down straight from the uh, straight to the river down there, to St. Johns \_\_\_\_\_ . And I think the county commissioner <sup>paved it</sup> ~~meant~~ some years ago.

I: What, if anything, has prevented you from doing a better job, especially with <sup>benefitting</sup> ~~benefitting~~ blacks?

W: Well, we didn't have no hassle, I mean some of the council, well the whites, I would say they come amongst the blacks and tell them bout, well just like, I say take instance this street, when we were first talking about this street, some of them came down there and told people live side the street, <sup>that it's</sup> ~~they're~~ going to make their taxes go up, and you know just blindfoling them. Just backing out, and all like that you know, but really it wasn't no big hassle about it. I just ~~left~~ on 'em until we got it paved. So really there's one thing, they wanted to pave. Another, see they have this, <sup>this condominium</sup> ~~this kind of unincor~~ down at the point down there. And well, well this road after you go east, turn right at the traffic light, then where it's a little bumpy along there, and then if you go down further you go on sort of a shell type road. So they want to pave that street

W: in order for the people to go down to, you know like visit or something for a weekend, people come in on the weekend, go down there want to look around. So they want to pave that street. I told them the first street they're going to pave in Welaka would be this street here, and only way I go along with paving street is to pave this street first like that. So after we paved that street here, then the next one we got was that one over there, going down there to this ~~continental~~ condominium.

I: Okay I've got another series of questions here, and if you'll check those while we go over them, um, they deal with more of the same kind of what items on here have prevented you from doing a better job in ~~benefiting~~ <sup>benefitting</sup> blacks. So the first one is office has no real authority.

W: Yeah, we have the city government, <sup>at one</sup> ~~because~~ <sup>on</sup> time the blacks, see once there was three of us on the council, which is five ~~councilman~~ <sup>Councilmen</sup> and the mayor. So one time, it was three councils on there, and we did have control. Of course, I mean we didn't, you know, we didn't try to take advantage of it because there was three of us on there, I mean we still worked this whole, I think that lasted about a year, and some, and one of the fellows resigned. So, and then they, well you know how some people <sup>get disturbed and</sup> ~~just can't stand~~ stuff, you know saying just 'cause there's three of 'em that they don't do nothing and this that and the other. But it really wasn't no big hassle. But the reason ~~the~~ three got on there, 'cause some of them just sat back and didn't run, and some of the ones that was running they didn't want 'em, so that's how three blacks got on that.

I: Okay, outvoted by white officials. For most of the time that you were in office, were there a majority of blacks, or was that just this particular time?

W: No, no. It was just one time. I think that was one year, yeah one year I think it was three blacks, and two whites.

I: So did you find very much difficulty in being outvoted by white officials?

W: No, no. Well the next time, the next year when it come time to run these blacks

W: that was on the council, let's see who it was, me and George and ~~Sam~~ <sup>uh,</sup> Johnson, Emanuel Johnson, in fact, but he was the one, it was George, myself, and ~~Emanuel~~ <sup>Emanuel</sup> Johnson, so ~~Emanuel~~ <sup>Emanuel</sup> Johnson after the first, I think he won a ~~term~~ <sup>term</sup> of one year, so after that year was up he just didn't run the next time. But George and I, George Barlow and I, we've been on, I ~~believe~~ <sup>mean,</sup> ever since we got on the first time. I think George he missed out a couple of times, because he missed out the first time he ran, him and I ran together, and . . .

I: Is that the first time you ran too?

W: Right, that was back in ~~1968~~ '68.

U: That's what the article says.

W: Yeah, and George missed out in, well one year I missed out, one year myself. And I ran the next following year, and I think George missed out one year, two years \_\_\_\_\_

I: Okay where are we, number three, not enough revenue available, how's the town for money?

W: Well it, you know you never have enough. <sup>(chuckle)</sup> But this, since they, since we was getting this, you know began to get this revenue, I mean it really ~~come~~ <sup>came</sup> in handy. Fact about it, that's how we paved this street out here. See 'cause they sent that little pamphlet out, you know what the revenue supposed to be used for.

I: Was this government revenue sharing programs?

W: Right, yeah. And fact about it I told 'em was I ~~was~~ tried, briefed over ~~you~~ <sup>this, you</sup> know how it's supposed to be spent. I told them that's that the idea of <sup>the</sup> revenue sharing, that's it's supposed to spent in you know lower . . .

I: That's what a lot of people don't understand.

W: That's right, it's hard to get over to em, it's hard to get over to 'em too. So the attorney which I was clerking, our attorney Sam Holt, so he got ahold of that pamphlet and then I haven't seen it yet. (laughter) Well like I said, I had read everything and got the understanding of it, you know what it really,

W: you know the revenue is all about. But like I said, it really has helped a whole lot of us. "Cause I think one time that most, you know, the reason the town was on a standstill because it just, you know it was going off the taxes and this, that and the other. This is our fifth year.

I: What they could bring in revenue.

W: Yes, uh huh. But uh since this revenue started, it helped a whole lot, no question about it.

I: Okay, number four: unfamiliar with administrative duties?

W: Well, I didn't, well what I was doing, I mean, I <sup>was</sup> pretty well familiar with it 'cause I think, well one time I was on the, I was on the . . . different committees, but the one I was on I <sup>was</sup> ~~almost~~ recently familiar with.

I: Here's one, number five is lack of cooperation from whites.

W: No, I never did have no, you know hard times with 'em, I mean I always got along with 'em.

I: Okay, you've pretty much answered that one. And the next one is lack of cooperation from blacks?

W: Well, we always got along, yeah.  
 Like I say some people, you know it's sort of hard to get over to 'em, you know, but <sup>after</sup> you explain it to them, I mean, if they want to understand, they will understand, you know, <sup>know, you</sup> some people will, you <sup>talk to 'em,</sup> just don't understand, you can ~~stop and~~ try to preach <sup>it,</sup> and this, that, and stomp and everything else, if he don't want to understand, you ~~know~~ just won't understand you know. But overall, I mean, didn't have any problems.

I: Okay. Number seven is lack of cooperation from state officials.

W: No, I mean, let's see. Well, when we asked the county commissioner, well I ~~he~~ asked him to do something, I mean when he got around to it, you know he come available, when they come down. I know recently, we had had him to come in and grade the streets and this kind of thing. Of course we

W: had to pay 'em, but they didn't give us no hassle about coming out.

I: And here we have lack of cooperation from federal officials?

W: Well like <sup>I said,</sup> ~~say~~ uh, well, on that we didn't uh, <sup>as matter fact</sup> ~~had to think,~~ about it, I never did have no contact with federal officials, I put it that way. 'Cause like I say, <sup>uh,</sup> when <sup>as far as</sup> I guess they, <sup>I know,</sup> they did what they supposed to do, this that and the other, I never did have no hassle with them.

I: Okay, we can skip the next two questions, 'cause you've already answered them above. We've pretty much covered number twenty-five too, but I'll ask you anyway. What services have you provided blacks in your district that they did not have before you took office? Could you please give some examples?

W: Well one thing, a lot of them had these outside facilities so the town drew up an ordinance that abandoned all those, because we got the county health department <sup>to</sup> help us on that, you know so he got on committee and did some inside facilities.

I: Okay, is there anything else you can think of?

W: Well, well anything else would be over the whole town, I would say.

I: Okay, I've got one more list of things here you can check off. And this deals with your effectiveness in <sup>each of the</sup> ~~these~~ following, in this list here, and it's in terms of benefits for the blacks here in Welaka. So the first is police protection?

W: Yeah, well we didn't have any, I mean we always had police protection from the police for the last sixteen years \_\_\_\_\_.

I: So that one really doesn't apply? <sup>Yes he was</sup>

W: Yes, he was a black fellow, <sup>Of course</sup> so he lived right across the street over there.

(chuckle) so, and like the fact about <sup>shoot,</sup> he's been with the police here ever since back in the <sup>fifties, or</sup> ~~twenties~~ <sup>like that</sup> something <sup>I believe,</sup> Ed Smith.

I: That's a long time.

W: <sup>Yeah,</sup> He's been around a long time.

I: Okay, number two is streets and roads?

W: Well like I say, until we, they started paving these couple streets here <sup>and</sup> they mostly just you know sand streets, and that's what the people say they wanted. (chuckle)

I: And then housing.

W: Well most of the houses, I mean they own their own houses, I mean they didn't have any, you know federal houses come in, I know a company supposedly that you buy a house, and the company come in and build it for you. \_\_\_\_\_

I: Okay, number four is welfare.

W: Well, I haven't heard of any difficulty concerning welfare, not that I know of.

I: Okay, so then that one doesn't really apply?

W: No.

I: Either?

W: Welfare?

I: Yeah.

W: No, because they didn't have any hassles, not that I know of, no one hadn't had any hassles concerning welfare. I know <sup>that</sup> if you ~~was~~ <sup>with</sup> qualified welfare, you imagine you ~~no~~ had gotten it.

I: What about employment?

W: Yes, now down until the, well it's always has been, fact about that was, mostly the only employment in Welaka down ~~to~~ <sup>is</sup> there ~~to~~ the fish house by \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. I mean the deals with catfish, and they're taxing ships and all. Now they also deal with crab, and they can crabs \_\_\_\_\_ and this, that and the other. And most of it, well that's about the only, you know, considering jobs, it's always been just ~~say~~ the economy. *am*

I: So is there any problem there with hiring blacks?

W: No, no.

I: Never.

W: Fact about it, that's mostly all that works down there is blacks, really.

I: Okay, parks and recreation?

W: Well, we improved the recreation place up here, 'cause well uh, it used to be owned by some white lady, she had a lot of land around here, and since we was in office, well what it was, when it come up to you know, ~~but~~ <sup>to</sup> explain ~~it~~ something on the ballot, they'd say, "well the city doesn't own that, and we can't do this and that and the other." So, we finally got our clerk to contact this lady, and she deeded the town, this park up in the colored section, and by doing that, ~~then they~~ <sup>the city</sup> didn't have any excuse for not spending money, so they started, <sup>ya know,</sup> spending money you know on it, of course, that's been in the last three years.

I: The next one is water, sewage, and garbage?

W: Well we have garbage, but we doesn't have any city sewage ~~or~~ <sup>or</sup> water. we have a garbage collection.

I: So then again, that one doesn't really apply ~~here~~ <sup>either.</sup>

W: Over here, such as those like sewage and garbage, like ~~that~~ <sup>that uh, I mean</sup> we doesn't have, what that supposed to be ~~not~~ marked or checked there?

I: Pardon me?

W: What's that supposed to be checked as?

I: I guess just as not, doesn't apply?

W: Not effective?

I: Well not really not effective, but if you could just make another column along the side for the ones that didn't apply to you at all, 'cause there have been a couple of them, you know.

W: Oh I see what you, I get the idea.

I: 'Cause there have been a few that didn't really fit in.

W: Okay, what one was we, health?

I: Health and hospitals?

W: We doesn't have any of that down in Welaka either.

I: Education.

W: No, they, <sup>at</sup> the university at Gainesville they have this, let's see if it's on here, well it's not ~~nearby~~ in the city limit, it's outside the city limits, ~~nearby~~ keep on through the traffic light, on through to 90, University of Florida have a place down there. And I think the kids mostly come down there on research, this that and the other. But like I said, it's not in the city limits, so we doesn't handle it in the city.

I: And then the last one is fire protection?

W: Well they have a little volunteer department, that's all.

I: And that services everybody?

W: Yes.

I: Okay, number twenty-seven deals with I guess more of the revenue sharing, because it asks if you have any federal funds in <sup>your</sup> ~~the~~ district?

W: In the district or in the, are you speaking of the town?

I: Well, in your town, yeah.

W: The whole . . .

I: Yeah.

W: Yes.

I: Okay, it's still on, I'm listening for it. The next one is, could you please list some of the important federal grants that you and other black leaders have obtained for your area?

W: You mean such as what have we used the federal money for, is that what you're saying?

I: Well wait a minute, I think that comes later. Has, is the only federal money you've gotten the revenue sharing programs?

W: Yes.

I: Okay, well that's covered here . . .

W: Then you, well that and then you get the, you know your cigarette taxes and taxes of this, that and the other, <sup>and</sup> As far as revenue, that was on this revenue sharing that we

W: received from the government.

I: Okay, again some of these questions mostly apply in the bigger areas.

W: Yes. (laughter)

I: ~~So~~ I just have to kind of run through them so it looks like I covered them.

U: It may be that, that ~~some of~~ <sup>even</sup> the small places ~~is~~ <sup>are</sup> eligible for them, but they're never told because it always . . . .

W: That's true too, that's true too, right.

I: Okay number twenty-eight, have you as an elected official or as part of a local committee too I guess, been able to bring industry or retail stores into your area?

W: Well, ~~well~~ let's see. Well ~~on this~~ <sup>only</sup> thing we, well I've said, <sup>the</sup> reason the fellow ~~built~~ the 7-11's down there because he already had owned the land where he built it at, and he had a lease on this, on one store and then the lease ran out, he owned this land across the road that the 7-11 is now, so he just didn't renew his lease because they didn't, he just since he owned that land, he just built a new one.

I: Well I think they were thinking more of terms of things that would provide jobs for black people and stuff like that.

W: Uh no, 'cause it's really ~~having~~ <sup>hasn't</sup> any, ~~any~~ <sup>been</sup> any.

I: Have you been able to see that blacks are ~~heard~~ <sup>hired</sup> fairly in local government?

W: Well what few is open. Well I say for one reason, uh, we got this money through the county, I believe. I've heard, I think the state distributed it to the county and the county distributed amongst the municipalities. And it was for you to hire some low income that was on welfare, <sup>or</sup> something like that. So we hired this colored girl that I knew to be, ~~well~~ <sup>because</sup> we didn't have no secretary that <sup>would</sup> be there all, you know, everyday through the week, and since we got this money through the government, we in turn hired her, and so down at the town hall it does, there's somebody down there every day through the week.

I: Okay, here's the part on the revenue sharing, has federal revenue sharing helped in your district, or not, and please explain your answer.

W: Well yes, because well when we, when we, well before, before we started getting that revenue sharing, we didn't, <sup>the</sup> police used ~~the~~ his own car. ~~now~~ now that we started getting that revenue sharing, they bought a special police car through revenue sharing. And ~~like~~ I <sup>said,</sup> ~~say,~~ the street works, that was did out of revenue sharing too. and a lot of work on the parks and recreation, that was also, come from revenue sharing.

I: Okay, have you had any protests or sit-ins or boycotts or riots ~~in~~ Welaka in the last ten years. (laughter) I didn't really think I had to ask. Okay, well that was supposed to be the real hard section. The rest is real short.

W: Well, ~~like~~ I said, we always, they always got along just fine. ~~now~~

I: Okay, we're trying to make some sort of assessment of black politics in Florida in general, so that's the next couple of questions. I think there are only two or three that deal with that. What is your opinion of (Gov.) Reuben Askew, I guess in relation to blacks in Florida?

W: Well I imagine he's doing all he can, you know, <sup>well</sup> let's see how would you say it . . . Well you know a lot of times, I think some blacks feel because they're black they're supposed to get you know, you're just supposed to get 'em the job, but a lot of times it, you know it consists of whether you're qualified for the job or not. But I think far as people being qualified when a job come open, and I think, you know it seems to me like, that they would get the job. I mean, well <sup>I'll</sup> put it this way, in this area of Putman County, I would say, and I see where Askew appointed this uh, guy that's on the what you call it you know, black, we had a \_\_\_\_\_

I: What, the guy on the supreme court?

W: Yeah.

I: Yeah, that was last week, ~~or the week~~ lose track of ~~probably strike~~ a time in the summertime.

W: So, I mean, like I say, they, they, the whole world ain't gonna turn over overnight,

W: but I think, you know, I think it's improving a whole lot considering what it was. Fact about it, I would say I know it, is.

I: Are there any other state officials you got, you have some opinions on?

W: Well, let's see.....

I: You know, significant people around this state?

W: Uh let's see, well no, not around the state, 'cause I mean I had a pamphlet <sup>that</sup> they sent, I forget the name of it, and they sent that all, you know different elected black office around this state, and you know by looking through it, and just going through it, I mean to me it seemed like it, the fact about it, like I said a while ago, I know it has improved considering what it was, because on the pamphlet I think <sup>most the time</sup> a black be elected, be elected into office, you know the name <sup>will</sup> be in this, and they have what they entire list on the job, and to me it has really improved over the past ten years, I know.

I: Yeah. that's about the time where we're mostly interested in, that time between ~~1965 and 1975~~, '65 and '75.

W: Yes, right, um hum. See now just like in Palatka <sup>now,</sup> ~~now,~~ there's a lot of black people <sup>that</sup> ~~there~~ qualified for city, you know to be on, to be in the city politics 'cause every <sup>year</sup> ~~year~~ I doesn't never see a black on the ticket. <sup>too,</sup> I mean a lot of people they just don't want to be involved you know, they just want to sit back and talk about it you know, use something for an excuse you know. But I believe if someone would really get out and run, you know they'd be elected. Well it's just like on the school board, this guy Sam Taylor, he run the first year, and he was so, well this was the first time a colored ran for the school board, and he missed it on the first go round, fact ~~it~~ was, he was in the run-off in the first time he ran, so in the run-off he was beat, so the second time he ran and won.

I: Um hum. He came real close the first time. Do you think that winning office and holding office in Florida has been worth the effort?

W: Oh yes, yes.

I: You need to explain that.

Well, I would say,

W: Well let's say, just like here in Welaka, you know, just like, I mean for years you know, people <sup>have</sup> been telling you, <sup>just giving you a</sup> this line or we don't have the money, and we can't do this and that, this, that and the other. <sup>And</sup> since I got in you know, and I got these pamphlets in the mail, and what money supposed ~~to~~ to be spent on and this, that and the other so I would say my experience, I enjoyed being in it myself. <sup>And</sup> ~~now~~ like I said, I learned a lot while I was in there. And I just learned a whole <sup>lot</sup> how people, you know, you ~~used to~~ <sup>you know</sup> used to fool <sup>yourself,</sup> you know when you go down and ask them how 'bout you know doing so and so, and then they always had an excuse you know, for not doing it, even though they have the money, but they, you didn't know any better, you didn't know any better.

I: That's right. Okay, we're down to the bottom here. The next questions are just to give us an overall profile of what a black elected official in the state is like, and so we're trying to get information on the office and how old they are and stuff like that. They're pretty quick and I can run through them pretty fast. The first one is: the type of office you held?

W: Was councilman, city councilman, town councilman at least.

I: And then the date first elected?

W: <sup>I think it was</sup> Back in March in 1968?

U: Right.

I: And then the date you took office?

W: I don't know. Does it, don't it say on the date there?

U: Yeah, it's 3-12-68, it's the newspaper . . .

W: I think it's down there when I was installed.

U: "and will be installed as town council here at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday." Was the election on Tuesday.

W: Yes, but I think I was installed the following Tuesday.

U: Twelve and seven, the nineteenth.

I: The number of times you ran for office, or you have run, I guess, total ~~ly~~?

W: I believe it was, let's see, first time I had two years, the second time I had ~~two~~<sup>two</sup> years, third time I had one . . . believe about four times.

I: And I need to know your age, which is thirty-six?

W: Yes.

I: Okay, and your occupation before election?

W: I was working for the school board as a plumber, on school board maintenance.

I: Okay and your education?

W: Twelve, high school.

I: Okay, and the salary you receive from your position?

W: That's on the council?

I: Um hum.

W: None, we wasn't getting paid. They just, you know, last year or so, then they voted in, I think each councilman should get twenty-five dollars a month, I think it was. But during the time I was in there, that was after you re-run for office, 'cause if you was already on the office then you couldn't vote, you know to pay your salary, you have to, you'd have to re-run again, right. So like I said, after I resigned, in this past October, and then I would have had to run this past March, then I would have been eligible to get paid then.

I: Okay, so then the pay started as, with the people who were elected this past March?

W: Right, uh huh.

I: Okay, do you belong to a church?

W: Yes, St. Johns.

U: St. James.

W: St. James (laughter) I don't know, I always say St. Johns.

I: What kind of church is that?

W: Methodist church.

I: Are you an official in your church?

W: Yes, deacon.

I: And they want to know what position you hold, deacon?<sup>4</sup>

W: Deacon.

I: Are there any other community organizations or activities that you're involved in?

W: Well, really, the first organization I was in <sup>was</sup> before the council, I believe it was the biracial committee.

I: What was that?

W: Biracial committee. I think I was, <sup>oh, but</sup> ~~not~~ before I <sup>was on,</sup> ~~remember,~~ during the time I was on the council, I believe, Yeah, yeah, it was. So I was on that during, before my father-in-law died, biracial committee.

I: Is there anything now?

W: You mean other than the. . .

I: That you're involved in right now?

W: No, no. I got <sup>to</sup> a release from some ~~one~~ political power.

I: When you got out, you got out. (laughter)

W: I decided I'd give somebody else a chance to see what it's all about, 'cause it's ~~run~~ just like <sup>talking,</sup> ~~talk it~~ you know.

I: Have they taken the opportunity?

W: Well not here in Welaka. I mean only somebody ran, let's see well this past election, nobody had ran, no colored had run, because George, he had another year, for he had a two-year term ballot, he had a two-year term, so he didn't have to run this past month. No other one, well yes there is, a colored guy-he run for Mayor, of course it was just a waste of time to start with ~~~~~~~~~  
But I think he just run, you know, just to say he was running for mayor. It wasn't a possible chance to start with.

I: \_\_\_\_\_.

W: Telling you.

I: Okay let's see I think I've covered L, what was your father's occupation?

W: He was agriculture, he worked at the fernery.

U: That's why you have so many green plants.

W: How's that?

U: <sup>That's</sup> Why you haven't ~~been~~ so many green plants.

W: He worked over at Crescent City. fact about, that's where I'm originally from, Crescent City. You know where Crescent City is?

I: Yes. I think this is the last question. Do you know of any other black elected officials in the area which have been in office since 1974? I guess except for Mr. Barlowe.

W: Well like I said, over in Crescent City, over in Crescent City, not in Welaka.

I: Is there somebody in office there now?

W: In Crescent City?

I: That has been, yeah.

W: Yes, he just recently got in there last, it was last year.

I: All right, can I take his name down, because . . .

W: Thomas \_\_\_\_\_.

I: How do you spell his last name?

W: \_\_\_\_\_, let's see \_\_\_\_\_.

U: \_\_\_\_\_ how do you spell \_\_\_\_\_

?: ~~Colbert~~

I: Okay, and that's in Crescent City?

W: Yes.

I: What office is he in?

W: He's a city councilman. \_\_\_\_\_ . Yeah, he's in city government too.

I: Okay, that's good, that's helpful. And then the last question. What effects did running for office and holding office have on you personally and maybe on your family?

I: No, it just, you know, just a lot of time. I mean, it didn't really have any bearing on anything. Because we mostly had meetings after the, I mean when, mostly we

- W: held meetings, we'd meet about 7:30, I mean so they wasn't \_\_\_\_\_.
- I: Okay, we're finished.
- W: Well George, like I say George, he lives the second door down there, and he was home, I don't know if he still is.
- I: Yeah, I've got an appointment with him . . .
- W: The first of August?
- I: I think it's on August fifth. <sup>Mm hm</sup> August Fifth at ten in the morning.
- W: Ten in the morning. (laughter) Yeah, that's about the size of it. And well as, well let's say the sheriff's department, they just, well they, well how long they had a black? I think they just hired a black about three years ago, 'cause the black on there now, he's been working with them full-time about three, about three years. That's the Sheriff's Department. Now they have three full-time deputies. Of course they would hire more, but you know the ones that wants the job, they just not qualified, and the ones that is qualified, they doesn't want it. So that's all over you know.
- I: Is there anything you think we might have left out on this questionnaire that would be important to Welaka?
- W: Not unless you have some more questions you want to ask.
- I: No. I just thought there might be something you'd want to add.
- W: Uh no.
- I: Once I got this tape recorder going it didn't budge.

The End

[END OF INTERVIEW]