

SUB: S. P. E. Pinkney

INT: Button Project

PLACE: Eustis

NOV. 21, 1980

jf

I: . . . the tenth. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ . This afternoon I will be interviewing his honor S.P.E. Pinkney, mayor of Eustis, Florida. Thank you. This is a test of equipment.

I: Okay, -we are, we are now on the air, and I will ~~not~~ start with the questioning.  
Section A: The following questions are asked to find out how well the Voting Right Act of 1965 has helped blacks take part in Florida politics. Your Honor, what year did the first, did you first register to vote?

P: I first registered to vote in 1937.

I: And what year were you first eligible to vote?

P: Thirty-seven.

I: How were you registered, was it local registration board?

P: It was a local registration board.

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

P: No, they are seemly, always were very pleased.

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

P: Yes.

I: If your answer to the proceeding question <sup>was yes,</sup> could you name some of the organizations like local and national that held the registration. <sup>?</sup> like was it the NAACP or?

P: Yes, we , we had the, the Voter's League. We always have the Voter's League every two or three years <sup>to</sup> register voters.

I: Voter's League, is that a mixed league, white and black or . . . ?

P: That's strictly black.

I: Oh, I see. When, when were these voter registration drives held, before '60 or '60s to '64?

P: <sup>From</sup> '60 to '64.

I: How successful were these voter registration drives?

P: They were very successful because we pretty near reached everyone in the county.

It was a county-wide, and we tried to reach as many people as we possibly could, and we had it so well organized that only a few people were left out.

I: Are there things which prevent blacks from registering in this district at all, your district?

P: No there isn't anything I know of that would hamper the black from registering.

I: Number six: please rate how important you think each of the following items are in preventing blacks from registering in your area. I can, I have some papers that I'll give you later on, and we'll go over number six in a few minutes. We'll just go on to section B. Before we go to section B, I'd like to turn the machine off just to make sure we have got section A properly.

Thank you.

(Pause in tape)

I: Continuing with our interview, section B. The following questions are asked to gather information on the election campaigns of black elected officials in Florida. Question seven; were you able to campaign freely, <sup>?</sup> that is, were you threatened in any way in your campaign?

P: No.

I: -Would you like to say something else sir?

P: No, I was <sup>not</sup> threatened at all in my campaign.

I: All right. Were you handicapped by a lack of campaign money, or not?

P: No, I think we were able to secure a sufficient amount of money to run our campaign successfully.

I: Why did you decide to run for office? Was is your selection, were you selected by a political party, or maybe selected by a group of concerned citizens?

P: I was really selected by a group of concerned citizens. They really were after me and asked me several times to, would I be a candidate. Sometimes I said, many times I said no. And I told my friend if he would run, I would be his campaign manager, which I was. And after he died, then I was forced to run.

I: Well, you mentioned your friend, <sup>and</sup> I gather you were talking about Mr. Walter T. Simmons?

P: Right, right.

I: To which political organization do you belong, the Democrats, Republicans or some other?

P: I really belong to the Democratic.

I: You say you really belong, I, I gather <sup>that</sup> maybe some other party too?

P: No, I always run on the partisan ticket.

I: Oh, on a partisan ticket?

P: Yes.

I: Right. What were the two or three most important issues on which you campaigned?

P: <sup>The</sup> ~~A~~ three, I think, important issues <sup>is</sup> ~~A~~ number one, housing. Housing conditions are deplorable in ~~our~~ community, and there are no houses. And therefore, many people, especially the black needed housing. And I see the dire need for housing, and therefore I use that as my number one. Then we wanted to get the affluent, keep the affluent from pouring into our lake, Lake Eustis, a beautiful lake which will become contaminated and polluted. And I wanted to get that stopped, and we're working on that now. We're working on the housing right now.

I: Is this uh, the lake is it . . . uh what is it, actual trash going into the lake or . . . ?

- P: ~~Affluent.~~ *Effluent.*
- I: Flourant?
- P: ~~Affluent.~~ *Effluent.*
- I: Right, okay. And were there . . . -
- P: And then we wanted to, to get some lift stations in order to, that we would be able to take <sup>the</sup> sewage out from the various places in lake, in the city.
- I: Section C: These questions are asked to determine some of the conditions which have enabled blacks to win office in Florida. How were you elected, were you elected at large or by a district, at large or by ward or district?
- P: I was elected at large.
- I: At large. How many people, ~~oh~~ <sup>then</sup>, actually if you're elected at large then I guess how many people were in your district would not pertain to you. ~~all~~
- What percentage of the population in this area that, at large, did you feel is black? Is it over fifty per cent or thirty per cent?
- P: Oh, about thirty per cent, maybe. And seventy per cent white.
- I: Uh huh. About what percentage of the blacks of voting age in your district are registered to vote? \_\_\_\_\_?
- P: I imagine practically 100 per cent of them.
- I: I'll put ninety-eight per cent.
- P: ~~Well~~ <sup>Or</sup> you can make it, make it good, ninety-eight would be a good number.
- I: Ninety-eight would be a good number, great. About what percentage of the blacks who are registered to vote, do you estimate actually vote when you were elected?
- P: We had the highest number at that particular time. I can't exactly tell the per cent, but we're, ~~was~~ a very good percentage voting.
- I: Right, a very high percentage . . .
- P: Yeah, high percentage.
- I: Of the people that were eligible actually voted then. Do you think you got any votes from the whites?
- P: Oh definitely, I could not have won <sup>the election,</sup> had I not. I had a lot of support from

P: the whites.

I: That was the same with Mr. Eli White and Claude Brooks \_\_\_\_\_ and Crystal River.

P: That's right, I couldn't have gotten along without 'em.

I: That's exactly what they had said; they could not have won have won the election.

\_\_\_\_\_ About what percentage of total votes do you feel came from whites? If a thousand people voted ~~voted~~ for you, do you feel, was it like about four or five hundred, that was it . . . ?

P: I, I believe uh, at least 300 whites.

I: All right, so what percentage . . .

P: Or maybe 400 whites.

I: About 400 whites, okay. In the election in which you won office, I guess that would be nineteen, January, the December '73 election. In that election in which you won the office, how many opponents did you have?

P: There were four opponents.

I: Were there, were they all black or mixed white and black or what?

P: All white except me.

I: And did you, what percentage of the total votes did you get, was it over fifty-one percent?

P: No, I got about eighty per cent.

I: Eighty per cent.

P: In fact, I might want to say this; the person getting the highest number was the vice-president of a bank. He only received seven more votes than I received.

(Pause in tape)

I: Okay, continuing right along now, we have section D, and these questions are asked to determine how well black officials in Florida have been able to benefit those they represent. In what ways do you think you have helped blacks in your

I: district by holding office? Could you please discuss this?

P: I have <sup>helped blacks</sup> ~~blacks~~ in my districts, however, I want to say this; that I try to help everybody. But, 'cause I see whatever the needs are, I try to reach the people. But I try to help the blacks when they come to me for help. Anything they ask me to do, or I see a need, I try to secure that information, if they need information, if there's something need to be in the, done in the community, I try to work with them willingly and gladly. <sup>I</sup> What, if anything, has prevented you from doing a better job, especially in regard to benefiting blacks in your district?

P: I'm fortunate because I've had very good cooperation from my white counterparts. And they have worked with me willingly and we have gotten together, if any, if I have a problem anywhere I talk with them, and we get the job done, regardless of what the job is. If it's finance we need, we try to work toward that particular end. And I, I feel proud that I have worked with that type of people.

I: Thank you. Question twenty-two has eight parts, and I have a slip of paper here which we'll go over later on. The question is please rate how important you think the following items are in preventing you from doing a better job in benefiting blacks. Question number twenty-three; has criticism or lack of support from the black community hindered you in holding office. <sup>?</sup> that is, do you, do some blacks not cooperate with you because they believe you are only a token in government and have no real authority?

P: No. I have the cooperation of the blacks. The majority of the blacks, and I can, <sup>of the blacks,</sup> to all the way to, practically eighty-nine percent or ninety percent, <sup>^</sup> I have their full cooperation.

I: <sup>Yeah.</sup> <sup>^</sup> Do you feel that white officials treat you differently from the other officials, or not. <sup>?</sup> that is, do they consider you the only spokesman? Do they consider the only spokesman for the blacks, and are you able to raise only certain issues?

P: I can raise any issues that I want to raise. <sup>And</sup> <sup>^</sup> Anything that comes up, I speak to the point, and it doesn't matter what it is. And I just don't think in terms

- P: of black issues either. I think in terms of issues, period.
- I: What services have you provided blacks in your district or area that they did not have before you took office? And could you please give us an example.
- P: Well in some instances, better lights. As I said before, sewage disposal is better. And I hope and trust, as well as pray, that I can help them, and it will be beneficial if I can get a housing project started, which I'm working on that now.
- I: Question twenty-six: please rate how effective you think you have been in each of the following services. We'll go over that question in detail a little later. Twenty-seven, have you gotten federal funds for your district, or I should say for your city, since you are the mayor?
- P: Yes, we have gotten federal funds.
- I: Were these federal grants?
- P: They was mostly grants.
- I: Right.
- P: Got mostly grants.
- I: But could you uh, do remember any of the amounts and for what purposes?
- P: No, I wouldn't try to say the amount.
- I: But do you remember what they were for? Were they for sewers or . . . ?
- P: Well we've gotten a part for sewage.
- I: Water, highways?
- P: We have also gotten a part for buildings. Our city hall has been erected through some of the funds that we have received through the government. And now we have spent a lot of money for land for the sewer, sewage disposal plant that I've mentioned, and that has come through the government. But that's part one has, and we have got another branch, we've asked for another branch, and we is hoping that that will come through.
- I: Oh, I see. Have you as an elected officials, or as part of a local committee, been

I: able to bring industry or retail stores into your area?

P: Oh yes, ~~We~~ we have brought retail stores in, and, but we have not brought any industry in as yet.

I: And these retail stores are hiring the local people right?

P: All of them are hiring local people, yeah. Many of them are hired by all the local, I mean the stores that have come in.

I: Right. Have you been able to see that blacks are hired fairly in local government?

P: Oh yes. We work religiously with the stores and we, if you go into stores now you'll see . . .

I: I meant the local government too, the local government like the police department or . . . ?

P: We haven't been able to get anyone yet in the, in the police department or work on that but it isn't because that they will not hire, because I have been after them, and they had people, blacks, to come down and take the examination. It just so happened that they didn't make the score. And I didn't trust that, I went through the examination to make sure that, that what I saw was true. And we would hire black policeman tomorrow if we could get it. I've had people in the community, black people in the community like the chairman of the NAACP chapter to help me to try to find some blacks. But we haven't been able. When I say the chairman, that's Mr. Pool, Thomas, Thomas Pool. And he's president of the local NAACP. And we have been trying, and at first he thought they weren't doing anything, but we have proven now that we can put them to work if we can get them.

I: Has revenue, ~~the~~ federal revenue sharing helped your district or not?

P: Yes, federal revenue sharing has helped the district just like everything else.

I: Almost like the other question. Have there been any black protests, sit-ins or boycotts or riots in the city in the last ten years?

P: No. We haven't had <sup>any of</sup> that.

I: I will stop now because we will be going <sup>pretty soon</sup> there to the end, and I just want to make

I: sure we have, so far what we have taped.

I: Continuing with our interview, Section E. The following questions are asked to enable an assessment of black politics in Florida in general. Briefly, what is your opinion of Gov. Reubin Askew, <sup>?</sup> that is, do you think he has been favorable in attitude and policy towards blacks in Florida or not? And what is your opinion of other state officials and state representatives? Could you explain a little bit?

P: Just to elaborate on ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ a little about Gov. Reubin Askew, I think he's one of the best governors we have had. That's my opinion now, and I think he has been very liberal and he has been very open-minded in helping the blacks. That is about as much as I can say right now. I think he is a fine gentleman.

I: And what about the other state officials and state representatives, have they given you cooperation?

P: Well they have given me cooperation, and I don't, I can't pinpoint just who is doing what. But they have worked with us in every way I imagine they can. I think there's a lot of improvement can be made. But, so far we are still waiting and wishing.

I: Do you think that winning and holding in Florida has been worth the effort?

P: Yes I think that it has been a challenge. It really has been a challenge. I've had some things <sup>and</sup> done some things that I've never dreamed of. And I've been able to accomplish some things and made friends, lasting friends with white and blacks, and in the county, out of the county, and in the state, and throughout the state, that I never would have met before had it not been for this office.

I: Section F, <sup>elected</sup> these questions are asked to compile an overall group profile of black officials in Florida. No individual answer will be reported.

(Break in tape)

I: Continuing. Question thirty-four; the type of office held is mayor, right?

P: Right.

I: The date first elected?

P: Um . . .

I: December 8, 1973.

P: That's right, December 8, 1973.

I: The date you took office was January . . .

P: January 7.

I: ('74.) The number of times that you have run for office?

P: Once.

I: Are you between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine, thirty and forty-nine, or fifty and above?

P: Fifty and above.

I: Your occupation before the election?

P: Coordinator of the migrant and visiting teacher program in Lake County.

I: The education, did you complete grade school, did you complete high school?

P: Yes.

I: And did you complete college?

P: Yes.

I: The salary received from your elected position? As the mayor.

P: How much I get?

I: Yeah, your salary.

P: One hundred dollars per month.

I: One hundred dollars a month. Were you active in the civil rights movement of 1960 through 1966?

P: No.

I: To what church do you belong?

P: St. James A.M.E. Church.

I: Are you an official in your church?

P: Yes, I'm the head steward in my church, and also a trustee.

I: Are there other community organizations or activities that you are involved in?

P: Yes.

I: If so, what are some of them?

P: I'm involved in the Kiwanis Club, I'm involved in the Lake County Investment Corporation, <sup>I'm</sup> involved in the Elks Lodge, I'm involved in the Mason.

I: Do you know of any black elected officials in this area who have been in office since 1974? I think you mentioned somebody over here in . . . ?

P: C. O. Lott, was it he?

I: What was the other gentleman that you were talking to you, rather, he had received a letter from Gainesville, was that his name?

P: Yes.

I: What was his name again?

P: C. O. Lotts.

I: Is that how it's spelled?

P: L-O-T-T.

I: <sup>okay.</sup> Where is he from?

P: Mount Dora.

I: Oh that's right, Mount Dora, that's right. Okay. All right then, I think that just about finishes it. And I have some questions here that if you don't know the answers it's quite all right, and we'll try to get them ourselves later on, but anyway it has to do with the Florida city itself, of Eustis. Do you have any idea of what the population was in 1960?

P: Um

I: I mean, do you have any idea at all?

P: 1960, no I don't have an idea.

I: Would you have any idea what the population was in 1970?

P: Yes, around 7000.

I: Wow, that's a big area. Do you by any chance know what the population in 1970 of the negroes or the black people were, in 1970? You said before, thirty per cent, would that mean about 2,000 or . . . ?

P: Two thousand five hundred.

I: Yeah, do you know what the mean or the average income for the black and the whites would be <sup>for</sup> in 1970? Would be about \$100 a week or eighty dollars a week?

P: Well <sup>there's</sup> ~~it's~~ a little <sup>difference here</sup> ~~different~~ because <sup>we</sup> ~~have~~ . . .

I: You have a lot of migrant workers.

P: We have migrant workers to contend with, and then again we have fruit pickers. And they might make, some of them make as much as \$100 a day.

I: I know, I know, we have people from as far as where I come from come down here and they make . . .

P: That's right, we have 'em all over. In fact, we had 2,533 migrants. That's right in my area, see, coming in.

I: The type of city government that you have? Do you have a mayor, mayor-council, or do you have a manager-council?

P: Manager-council.

I: That means you hire a manager to uh, to uh, to run the city?

P: Yes.

I: Right, the number of councilman?

P: Five.

I: Council elections, are they at large or from districts?

P: They are at large.

I: They are at large, <sup>?</sup> okay. The only other question I have here is, it says information on the elected official himself. And I wouldn't know where I could get that, but do you have any background information that you may want to tell us about at all?

P: I'll just give you a biographical sketch, and you ~~can get~~ and you take whatever you want of it. That'll tell you everything about me.

I: Great, great

(End of interview)