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Interview

with

GOULD BEECH

August 9, 1990

By John Egerton

Transcribed by Jovita Flynn

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START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

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(SIDE A is Interview with Pat Watters)

GOULD BEECH: . . . [Howard Odum's] Southern Regions focused on the facts about the South. Everything had been judged in terms of sentimental.

JOHN EGERTON: Right.

GB: You know, that here were the facts. How many children had hookworm in Clay County. How many books were in the library. How many lynching had taken place. That book, helped me, I was an editorial writer on the Advertiser.

JE: When that book came out, '36, I believe it was.

GB: Yeah, I had just gone from the University of Alabama and became an editorial writer on the Advertiser with the grand title of associate editor.

JE: First job you had out of J School was as associate editor of the Montgomery Advertiser?

GB: Yeah. Well, I had spent three months as a reporter at \$10.00 a week. I had been making \$175 a month as editor of the student newspaper. [Laughter] I dropped down to \$10.00. I was in love with my wife-to-be.

JE: You met her at the university?

GB: Yeah, we met in class.

JE: Were you from this county?

GB: No, I had lived here two years. My Daddy got rolled. He was a railroad conductor, and we had to go back to Montgomery. I was mainly from Montgomery.

JE: What do you mean rolled?

GB: On the railroad, every three months if I've got more seniority than you have and I want your job, I just put in for your job. You've got to do something else. [Laughter] So it was a sad day when we had to go back.

JE: Was Montgomery the home, where your Daddy was from and where you grew up?

GB: No, he was from Scottsboro. But in any event, this book, reading that book, lead me to apply for a scholarship or fellowship to go to the University of North Carolina to do graduate work. I got a Rosenwald Fellowship.

JE: Is that right?

GB: Yeah. So that blew my mind, that opportunity.

JE: So you went over there and studied under Odum and Vance and Guy Johnson and all those guys?

GB: Yeah. I had a reunion with Guy Johnson three years ago. He was teaching a class on the Negro in American Literature and the Negro in American History. One of the papers was, a paper or something, "What do you think"--this was in 1936-37--"race relations will be like fifty years from now?" I wrote this paper and it was dramatized by the fact that the captain of the University of Mississippi football team, black, married the Homecoming Queen, white.

JE: You wrote this is a term paper for that class in '36?

GB: And Guy said, "Look, Gould, that's an interesting paper." He gave me an A+ on it. But he said, "I wouldn't leave it laying around."

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JE: [Laughter] That's wonderful.

GB: Anyhow, it was a mind blowing experience to be there with those great people, and Frank Graham and whatnot. So then I went back to, I was an editorial writer on the Birmingham paper.

JE: Did you stay over there, how long, Chapel Hill?

GB: Stayed a full year, twelve months.

JE: Get a masters?

GB: No, I was just interested in learning [laughter]. In general, you know, at that time it didn't matter, a degree. I've always regretted. But here's one other thing that you might be able to latch onto. I did collect a lot of material on the Ku Klux Klan of the '20s, a whole lot of material. I was going to do a thesis on that. I developed this theme--and this is right around what you're talking about--the South's great good fortune was that it had the Klan in the '20s. If the Klan had been delayed until the Depression, it would have been devastating. But it was like a vaccination, antibodies, the experience with the Klan constituted a vaccination against that kind of deal.

JE: Well, certainly in the '30s, practically all the newspapers and all the responsible people spoke out against the Klan.

GB: Right, because they knew what it was, you see. And Crack Hannah, who later became the head of the Alabama National Guard, was a strong-arm man for TCI in Birmingham, keeping the black-white deal, and the Klan was in such bad odor in the '30s, that he called his organization the Knights of the Purple Something.

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JE: Something other than Klan?

GB: Yeah, because it was such a bad odor.

JE: When were you born?

GB: In 1913.

JE; in '13.

GB: I'm seventy-seven, yeah.

JE: So in the '20s, well, you got out of college in about '31?

GB: 1934, yeah, I got out in 1934.

JE: And you were looking back at the Klan from the time when you were a young boy?

GB: Yeah, and my Daddy had been a violent anti-Klansman. His life had been threatened. You know, on the railroad most men were in the Klan. But I was doing research on all the Klan in Indiana and everything I could find. But I had known about the Klan in Alabama, and I had known that Bibb Graves, who was one of our best governors, and Hugo Black were actually elected in the Klan sweep of 1926. So I had seen a lot of it personally. When we would be going to my aunt's, my father's sister--I can hear my stepmother now, she lived in Tallassee--saying, "Now, Jim, please don't bring up the Klan," because my uncle was a cyclops of the Klan, but he was also an automobile dealer.

JE: So that was his brother-in-law?

GB: Yeah, my Daddy's brother-in law.

JE: And they'd argue about it, I guess?

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GB: Well, yeah. And then the Klan had tried to unseat the mayor of Montgomery. The Klan, with the help of a guy named Bob Jones who was in your state--where is Bob Jones University?

JE: In South Carolina.

GB: In South Carolina.

JE: He was helping them out then?

GB: [Laughter] Yeah. In any event, those were, of course, dreadful times. My concern was hookworm, farm tenancy, poverty, ignorance, disease, you know, and prejudice. I had a relatively free hand both times I was on the Advertiser. Then I went back to the Advertiser.

JE: Grover Hall was the head of?

GB: Yeah, he was the. . . .

JE: The father or the son?

GB: The father.

JE: Was still there?

GB: Right.

JE: When did he die?

GB: Well, he died about 1939, and I went back to the Advertiser as editor of the editorial page.

JE: In '36?

GB: 1940, yeah, around '40. Then when I got out of the army, I wanted something more dramatic, more forceful, although I had had great freedom on the Advertiser. And I had written. . .

JE: By then was Grover, Sr.

GB: Grover, Sr., he was columnist.

JE: He was writing columns, but he wasn't the editor by then.

GB: No, not at that point. So I went in the army and I met Aubrey Williams, who had been one of the great New Dealers. He asked me what I wanted to do after I got out of the army, and I said I wanted to go back to Montgomery and get ahold of this old farm paper.

JE: Southern Farmer.

GB: He later came back to me and said, "Would you be interested in a partnership arrangement? I think I can get the money." Well, it was sort of a mistake, but it was an easy out. I was in the army and whatnot--a close friend who could raise the money, a fellow named Chris Clements. But that was an easy deal, and, you know, I admired Aubrey. So the two of us were equal partners. He was the publisher. I was the editor, and Marshall Field and James P. Warburg put up the money.

JE: Put the money up.

GB: I don't know if you ever saw a copy of it?

JE: No, I never did, and I've looked for it in the library and can't find it. Most libraries don't have it.

GB: Yeah, well, we were attacked. One of our main goals was attacking the Talmadges and the Bilbos. There was a guy named Glick, and I would go to him and tell him what I wanted to do, and he would draw these cartoons, which were really, you can see that's. . . .

JE: Yeah, tough cartoon.

GB: A quality cartoon. And we were sustained by mail order advertising, which meant we were, you know, completely free. One day an agent sent us an ad from the Southern Oil Company, fertilizer. We ran this ad, a full page ad, and that was great. We'd only had one other full page ad, and that was from Hadicol. I don't know if you remember. [Laughter]

JE: Yeah, right, I remember Hadicol, yeah.

GB: So that was great, you know, had a fertilizer ad from the Southern Oil Company. Within two or three days after it came out, this advertising agency called and said, "For God's sake, I've got to cancel that contract. I'm about to lose this account. Mr. Pugh found out about us advertising in that paper."

JE: And y'all were considered left-wingers?

GB: Oh yeah, yeah.

JE: That drove him off?

GB: Yeah. Of course, Aubrey had been well identified, and Aubrey was no part of a communist, but he was in the whole milieu of peace and fighting prejudice and so forth. Any anybody, you know, that had that identify. . . .

JE: Was branded a communist?

GB: Right, right.

JE: Your opinion, though, is that he never was a communist?

GB: Oh no, he wasn't. There's a book about him that came out.

JE: I've seen it but I haven't read it.

GB: John Salmond wrote it.

JE: Is it a good book?

GB: Well, I guess it is. I haven't read much of it. Every now and then, when I get a book like that, naturally ego. . . .

JE: Look to see?

GB: And he didn't have, my role is not there. He said Aubrey, no, he said that Field selected me as the editor.

JE: That wasn't true at all.

GB: I selected Aubrey as the publisher, and Aubrey selected Field as his financier. But through circumstances I left the Southern Farmer.

JE: Did you leave on friendly terms with Aubrey?

GB: Well, that's a whole, long, that's a thirty minute story in itself. Actually, I was taking an antihistamine drug and went just, sort of like a man on champagne. I ended up in a VA hospital before they discovered what was wrong. This guy said just don't take any more parobenzadrine and you can go home. But meanwhile, I had disassociated myself from Aubrey. But I liked him and so forth. Whether it was a just deal under the circumstances is not for me to judge, but I don't have any. . . .

JE: You didn't take away any bitter feeling toward him?

GB: No--disappointment, but not bitterness. So we went to Texas to manage a radio station for a man named Roy Hofheinz.

JE: This hooks up with somebody else I met, Edgar Ray. You know Edgar Ray?

GB: Yeah, he wrote a book, a tome. . . .

JE: On Hofheinz.

GB: And he's the only man I know that could make it a dull subject [laughter]. And of course, he got Memphis State to

publish it. I guess Hofheinz wanted somebody that was going to really do an authorized biography.

JE: Yeah, that's what that was, pretty much.

GB: Yeah, so I went out there to manage a radio station for him, and I was his executive assistant when he was mayor. We were in causes there. This is not about me, but I just will say that we never did stop. I was Barbara Jordan's, co-manager of her campaign the first two times she ran. She lost those two races for the legislature.

JE: But you managed her campaign?

GB: Oh yeah. I've got a letter from her up there somewhere.

JE: Did you go to Texas after you left the Southern Farmer in '49, when?

GB: That was about '48.

JE: And when did you come back to Alabama?

GB: Oh, I began coming back about sixteen or seventeen years ago. We would trade houses and so forth.

JE: Okay, I'm going to back off from that then, because my time of interest here ends in '54. So when you left Montgomery is really where my part of this story ends, and there's a real crucial question I need to ask you. You managed Jim Folsom's campaign for governor?

GB: No, no, I tell you what happened. We really don't have the Alabama edition of this paper, but a fellow named Handy Ellis, who was the lieutenant governor, was running for governor.

Folsom had run four years before, just in a Model T Ford going up and down.

JE: Let me get the year right.

GB: '46, he was elected in '46, but he had run in '42. So I would ghost-write speeches for almost anybody. If a plumber had come in and said, "I got the money. I'm going on the air, and I'm going to tell them about Big Jim, but I'm afraid I'll start cussing, and I've just been to the seventh grade." He said, "I need you to write me a speech."

JE: And you'd do it?

GB: So I'd do it.

JE: This is while you were editorial page editor?

GB: No, I had gone to the Southern Farmer at that time.

JE: From '42, I guess, '44?

GB: No, '46. I was in the army four years.

JE: Okay, '46, you moved here and stayed two years.

GB: Right, so we had been getting these ads from Handy Ellis and Joe Pool, about three or four guys in there. So after this, the first primary, oh, I called Callman and said, "We've got these ads." [Interruption] "I want to speak to the campaign manager." He said, "Well, he doesn't have a campaign manager." He said, "My name's Roy Finney and I sort of run the office here." I said, "Well, we've been getting these full page ads from these other candidates for our Alabama edition." We had 60,000 circulation in Alabama and a million in the South. So I said, "We want to run him an ad. Would you send me a mat?" I don't know if you know what a mat is.

JE: Sure, when you're doing the old letter press stuff.

GB: Yeah. He said, "What is a mat?" [Laughter]

JE: He didn't even know.

GB: I said, "Well, never mind that. Have you got some mimeograph material that we could put in an ad?" He said, "Listen, anything you write will be better than what we'd had. Just go and write what you want."

JE: Great heavens! Some campaign manager.

GB: So I ran a full page ad, wrote up this full page ad. Then immediately after the first primary, he just, this state was hysterical. Here was a guy that was supposed to run fourth or fifth, and he ran first.

JE: Yeah, this was in the spring of '46?

GB: Yeah, the Democratic primary.

JE: The April or May primary?

GB: Right. [Interruption] This plumber came in the day after this deal when the state was just--here was a guy, you know, just surprised the whole state. 'Cause he had the folk behind him. So this plumber came and said, "Come go with me." Said, "Come on." "Where we going?" He said, "I'll show you. Come on." So we went out and here was Folsom's bodyguard, ex-army sergeant, and you could see the automatic, standing at his door, and we were immediately ushered in. Here was Folsom stretched out on a bed in army shoes, you know, no socks.

JE: Big guy then, wasn't he, a giant of a man?

GB: Oh yes, over the end of the bed, you know. And he didn't get up. He just said, "Hi, Gould, how you doing?" I said, "All right." I hadn't never seen him.

JE: Treat you just like you were an old friend [laughter].

GB: He said, "When I got into this, I wanted you to be my publicity man, but I didn't have but six little old weeklies, and I didn't see any need for any publicity man." [Laughter] He said, "But I want you to come with me now." I said, "What do you mean, come with me?" He said, "Well, just go every where I go." I said, "Jim, I've got this job. We're getting this paper under way over here and so forth. I don't know about that." I said, "You know anything about the Populist?" He said, "Why, hell yeah, man, my granddaddy on one side was a Populist, and my granddaddy on the other side was a fervent Democrat. And that's what this is all about." I said, "I'll see if I can arrange to go with you." [Laughter]

JE: Oh mercy!

GB: So I traveled with him.

JE: You were his PR man?

GB: Yeah, right. I was ghostwriting.

JE: Did you take a leave from the paper?

GB: Yeah, I'd go back and forth, you know. But we traveled all over the state with him. What I would do, he'd been making these talks out at crossroads where he would just talk endlessly, you know. My job was to compress it. And he hadn't had any radio time until the ran first, and you can imagine the money started coming in. He could go on the radio. So if it was five

minutes, or fifteen, or whatnot, I would write it. I had been studying, what was the man's name that wrote The Art of Plain Talk? A scale is named after him.

JE: Not the How to Win Friends and Influence People guy?

GB: No, The Art of Plain Talk, this was an Austrian who'd come over here and learned how to write simple English.

JE: Fleish.

GB: Rudolph Fleish. I had been studying that, and this paper checked out at six years of education.

JE: That story, the reading level?

GB: At that time it was the lowest level reading in the United States. And that was our goal, to talk to farmers any way they could understand. So, dealing with Folsom, I had come academically to a position that he had come to naturally. He was a ( ). Well, there are two books on Folsom. My role in that is fairly well defined. But reading this for the first time in a long time--the staff gave me this when I left--I had a regret about the thing because it didn't last long after I left.

JE: Yeah.

GB: I don't say that that was the reason. There were other things.

JE: But I think the record would be pretty clear, wouldn't it, that Aubrey Williams had so many other irons in the fire, that he wasn't running this newspaper.

GB: Well, he had been very helpful. We boosted the circulation up to a million with contests on WCKY Cincinnati.

You know, you'd send in the most words you could make out of Southern Farmer or whatnot. See here, I was Uncle Dudley. I wrote the fiction under a different name, and I wrote the Advice to the Lovelorn because you couldn't get anybody. I was Joe Cooke, the extra money editor. [Laughter] I was about eight different people. We had a staff of eight people here.

JE: But they were all you?

GB: All me, yeah. You know, you just can't hire people to write at a sixth grade level.

JE: Did you have to write the ads, too?

GB: No, I had very little to do with the ads. See, I don't know if you ever heard of Carroll Kilpatrick? He was the Washington correspondent for the Washington Post. He died. And his name was Kilpatrick.

JE: Oh, Carroll Kilpatrick, I remember that name.

GB: He died about three or four years ago.

JE: This was just a take-off?

GB: Right, I just used names like that. And then I was the cartoonist, but I couldn't draw.

JE: What about the editorial position of this paper?

GB: Well, we were against the [laughter]--"More Cotton in Bedsheets, Less for the KKK."

JE: Right, that's a great headline. You took an editorial position in here?

GB: Oh, yeah, we were hell bent for the small farmer, for co-ops.

JE: And even for black farmers, your position was. . . .

GB: Yeah, we were against prejudice. See here, I was Nan Roberts, the Advise to the Lovelorn. We were against any form of demagoguery, and it ran through, every issue had something about that. It ran through, every issue had something about that.

JE: Was that the first issue, number one, yeah, it says.

GB: This was 107. That was number one. I joined it in January [1946].

JE: And did Aubrey also?

GB: No, he had gotten about, we came down and arranged to buy it while I was on leave, and he had had it for. . . .

JE: For about a year.

GB: Look a there, the South needs a Sixty-five Cent Minimum Wage [laughter].

JE: That's amazing.

GB: It's sort of sad because, see, this paper with all those mail order advertisers, we weren't beholden to anybody. So it was a sort of sad thing.

JE: Mr. Beech, what in the world happened? Let me just sketch a scenario for you here, and then I'll get you to react to it. Never mind the '30s, I mean, we can talk about the '30s, but you know what that history is. I'm talking about '45, '46, '47, and '48. Hugo Black, a liberal, had gone from the U.S. Senate to the Supreme Court. You had Lister Hill in the Senate, a very progressive man. You had John Sparkman. He was a progressive man. You had Jim Folsom as governor. I mean, this is the Democratic machinery of Alabama, progressive, forward-looking, essentially liberal. And yet, by 1948 the conservatives of the

Democratic Party in Alabama were so powerful that they kept the Democratic Party off the ticket in Alabama. You couldn't even vote for Harry Truman in '48. What happened there?

GB: Wallace.

JE: George Wallace, that early?

GB: Yeah.

JE: Tell me what happened there?

GB: Let's see, Folsom was elected in '46, and then he could only serve one term at that time. Then John Patterson, I believe--see, I left in the middle of that. Now, there's a book, Dixiecrats and Democrats. That's Bill Barnard at the University of Alabama. That is a documented and detailed account. Bill has apologized because he, again, my role was not quite clear. I was in Texas and he didn't--he said I should have gotten ahold of him, but that's neither here nor there. The important thing is that there you can learn all about that in documented detail.

JE: Okay. Is he at the University of Alabama now?

GB: Yeah, he's the head of the history department.

JE: But in that period of time, if you look from the '30s on, you have this history of newspaper opposition to the Klan. You have a lot of newspapers in the '30s and '40s with essentially a liberal to progressive editorial policy. They're against lynching. They're against poll tax. They're for fair employment.

GB: They stumbled on the race issue. They stumbled.

JE: What happened there? Why did they lose their nerve?

[Interruption]

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GB: Nobody, let's see, how old are you?

JE: I'm fifty-five.

GB: Well, I don't know how bad it was in Nashville, but I'll tell you how bad it was in Alabama. During the bus boycott in Montgomery, there was a group of women--later became the United Church Women, I think--but they went out to St. Jude, a Catholic center for blacks, and had just a meeting to pray in the middle of the bus boycott. A scoundrel, who had a weekly paper, went out and took their license plates down and published it in his paper. One of those men, the husband of one of those women, wrote an apologetic ad in the Montgomery Advertiser and said he was not responsible, and his wife was naive and whatnot, going to an interracial prayer meeting. He had to disassociate himself for his wife going to a prayer meeting. The intensity of feeling in the lower tier of states--I don't know how it was in Tennessee.

JE: It was that way, essentially.

GB: Anybody that raised a voice. I had a classmate who was a librarian in the library in Montgomery. She wrote a letter and said essentially that--this was during the bus boycott--we shouldn't be disturbed. These are peaceful people. They're following the Ghandi principle. Well, she was relieved of her job, put on leave, and the poor girl committed suicide. The pressures were so great.

JE: Mercy!

GB: Julia Baldwin was her name. You know, this far removed people can't realize how intense the feelings were. Now, once we

got to Texas, it was much more relaxed, far more relaxed. But in this lower tier, and, of course, the conservatives and business interests were latching onto this issue. They, you know, didn't give a damn.

JE: And so what Jim Folsom could say and mean in 1946 or '47 or '48, couldn't be said by a public figure by 1950 or '51 or '52, could it?

GB: Right, and Jim Folsom was put in the squeeze, and he buckled at one point. Lister Hill and ( ) had to trim their sails. It's amazing that they kept afloat, you know, because of their economic position. They didn't demagogue on the issue, but they buckled. That race hysteria just swept the state.

[Interruption]

They buckled. That race, it was a hysterical. . . . In 1941, Frank Dixon was the governor, and Frank Dixon gave the appearance of being a modern man. He had lost a leg as an aviator in World War I, and he gave the impression of being a sophisticated, intellectual, and so forth. He had many attractive policies, but the reporters kept coming in and saying, "God, you can't imagine the stories Dixon was telling today, all off the record." Troop train goes through Montevallo, and black soldiers waving out the window--and Montevallo has a girls' college--saying, "Hey, how'd you like a kiss, honey?" Horrible, you know. He was just telling all these racial stories.

JE: Was he making it up?

GB: Well, he would just pick them up. I don't know if people were bringing them to him. I wrote an editorial, the only

editorial that the publisher of the paper, R.F. Hudson, saw before it went into print. I never discussed anything with him, but this editorial, since it was an attack, an all out attack, on Frank Dixon, I felt he was entitled to read it in advance. His son happened to be back on leave. They both read it. Dick suggested a few sentence changes, but essentially, and R.F. Hudson said, "Well, if you need to say it, say it." But he said, "I guess License Plate #1 won't be parked at my house any more." So that whole race business was just as it had been in the 1900's at the turn of the century, you know. It was just used and misused and used and used and used.

JE: Would you agree with my thesis that that period was a golden opportunity that we could have seized on, but we weren't able to?

GB: Oh yeah, Oh God, yeah!

JE: That's a sound thesis?

GB: Oh yeah.

JE: I think about Bibb Graves, for example. You remember that Southern Conference for Human Welfare meeting in Birmingham in '38?

GB: Yeah, I was there.

JE: Were you there?

GB: Yeah.

JE: Bibb Graves was an active member, and right in the middle of that his wife was taking visiting women around on tours of the city. I mean, the Bankheads were all involved in that. And by the time that thing was over, and that whole fracas about

were people were going to sit, all the politicians took off for the woods.

GB: Yeah, yeah. You know, that thing, imagine the enormity of it, of not being able to sit in a room.

JE: Were you in that auditorium that Sunday night when Frank Porter Graham made that speech, the opening night?

GB: Yeah, right.

JE: That must have been kind of electrifying.

GB: Oh, it was.

JE: You know, fifteen hundred people.

GB: Well, I've always said if I've ever known a saint, a man who approached sainthood, it'd be Frank Graham.

JE: That's the truth. I share that feeling. The more I read about that man, the more. . . . I mean, he got everything thrown at him--communism, you know, nigger-lover, all that stuff. And he'd write these people back the most reasonable letters. He'd say, "Now, ma'am, I know your daddy, and I remember your uncle so-and-so went to school down here, and I don't think they'd appreciate you talking that way. You can't prove all that stuff." [Laughter]

GB: [Laughter] Of course, the Daily Tarheel was absolutely uninhibited, the student newspaper.

JE: Did it take a pretty liberal point of view?

GB: Oh yeah. They had a guy who was actually a young communist, I'm sure, writing a column. So the establishment leaders, including Jonathan Daniels, came for a visit with Dr. Graham--textile heads, faculty heads, alumni heads. And they

said, "Dr. Graham, we've come here because this is really, this University's got big problems. This Daily Tarheel is going to lose millions of dollars to this University. We just came here to tell you something's got to be done about it." Dr. Graham-- you know, he was only about 5'3" or 5'4" tall--he said, "Well, it is a problem. It's a real problem. You know I could do a lot better job of choosing the editor than the students do, but, Joe, your daughter's up here, and she has more influence on who's going to be editor than I do, because they elect the editor. They have all these classes on civics and election to this and election to that." And he said, "If I got around here and dabbled in student politics, you can be damn sure they wouldn't do what Frank Graham wanted them to do. So I can't do that." He said, "Now, the other thing is I guess if the Board of Trustees would authorize me to read over everything [laughter] before it came out." But he said, "The state's paying me \$25,000 a year, and I don't believe it would set well if I had to take a half a day every week." [Laughter] "These students, they're young and immature, and a lot of things that go in there are just really immature. It's immature." But he said, "They've got these classes over there, and they're studying the First Amendment, and how can you tell them. . . ." [Laughter] But when he got through, [laughter] they just filed out, you know. They just filed out shaking their heads.

JE: He was stalwart.

GB: Shaking their heads. Just that mild mannered, reason, just put reason on the table, you know, reasoning with them.

JE: I don't know if this happened when you were there or not, but he had an English professor--I can't remember his name now--who was a Socialist. And the Socialists and the Communists were running a ticket in 1934 or '36, I guess. They were running a presidential ticket that had a black guy who was the vice presidential candidate.

GB: Yeah, yeah.

JE: And he came to give a speech in Durham at a black hotel, and this English professor went over there and had dinner with them. Jonathan Daniels, who's reputation as a liberal was not altogether deserved, wrote Frank Graham a letter and just, just, I mean, gave him unshirted hell, and said, "I'm just going to force your hand on this. You've got this communist over there, and you've got to get rid of him." And Frank Graham wrote him back one of those letters of sweet reason and said, "Hell, no, I'm not going to do it. I'm not going to get rid of the man." That's just how he was.

GB: Oh yeah.

JE: He was amazing.

GB: The scoundrels that beat him and that beat Claude Pepper, you see, that was that whole pattern. And it also inhibited those that didn't get beat. It limited everybody.

JE: That's where it ended, right there in that election.

GB: When Claude Pepper gets knocked off by that jackass Smathers, any guy with courage, you know, with ideas, is liberal, he's got to--said, "I've got to survive here."

JE: That's where it pretty much ended, I think, with that election.

GB: Claude Pepper?

JE: And Frank Graham. In 1950, when they lost, a silence kind of came across the South, and it took the Montgomery bus boycott and the Supreme Court decisions to ever change it, and even that took twenty-five years of bloodshed and turmoil that we could have avoided, I think.

GB: Oh yeah, yeah. But, the people, there were two kinds of people on that race issue. Those who were sincere, if you can be sincere and be a racist, and those who were exploiting. And that combination was absolutely devastating.

JE: Well, in Alabama who were some of those people who were powerful enough to take the Alabama Democratic Party into the Dixiecrats in '48 and shut down the election and all that?

GB: Well, a guy named Sam Inglehardt was one of them. I believe he was a state senator. I'm a little hazy about some of this, but it's in the Folsom book. He actually wanted to abolish his county rather than have it run by blacks. Jim Simpson in Birmingham represented--he was a corporate lawyer that was trying to defeat Lister Hill.

JE: Did they have Klan ties? White Citizen's Council and all that?

GB: Well, what they had, you know, they could use, a guy like that, you didn't have to have a Herman [Lester] Maddox. You could have a guy who would use some buzz words and so forth. He could get that automatically.

JE: He'd get the people to do his work for him?

GB: A lot of times, you didn't have to be an outright demagogue, you know, like Smathers. And like, who defeated Frank Graham, I've forgotten?

JE: A guy named Smith, I think. I forget his name.

GB: You can say, that kind of thinking doesn't represent the true South. Meaning, he's not right on the race issue. So the whole structure was permeated with that kind of thinking.

JE: Does it leave you thinking as you look back on it now that what did happen was pretty much inevitable? That's it probably unrealistic to think we ever could have reasoned our way through to some kind of social breakthrough?

GB: If you had put all the social forces into a computer, and you know the reservoir of racism, and then you had a certain reservoir of enlightenment, and had a reservoir of thinking concern as represented by Odum, of thinking about these things logically, to that degree it would have been inevitable. You know, that that reservoir of racism had to be tapped. It was there ready to be tapped, and the pattern was so universal.

JE: So it was bound to overflow, in other words?

GB: Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana.

JE: South Carolina, yeah.

GB: South Carolina, and, you know, there were other things in the Texas thing which is a new sort of thing, but there were some overtones of it in Texas.

JE: So your feeling is it was bound to overflow one way or the other?

GB: Right. It was just a reservoir of racism, and also, you see, that had been built up with the Klan ideas. That had been built up, and it was reinforced by the people who provided the money for all kinds of publications and all kinds of political campaigns. The one period there, and Populism. Of course, there was another watershed. But the Democrats, the Bourbon Democrats, used race to destroy that.

JE: Right, this wasn't the first opportunity we had that we blew away?

GB: Right.

JE: It had happened before.

GB: There were the Populists with 3,000 cooperatives and residents. I was at Chapel Hill. Mary and I were riding along a country road, and I stopped this old fellow. There was a big, old, almost castle-like structure, up on a hill. I stopped him, and I said, "What was that?" He said, "That was a cooperative shoe factory."

JE: Back in the 1890s?

GB: Right, in the 1890s. They were fighting the shoe trust and trying to wrap their bales of cotton in cotton. Tom Watson, they had one man that represents enlightenment and absolutely destructive racism, in the course of one man's life. Books, I don't know whether history affects books, influences books, or books influence history. But if I would say that there were two authors, I guess W.J. Cash maybe would be in there, but Howard Odum and Vann Woodward. Those two people really influenced history, I think, for the better.

JE: By helping people finally to understand what direction to take?

GB: Right.

JE: By searching in the past, you figure out where to go in the future.

GB: Right. I know in my own life, Vann Woodward's Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel, but that was so vivid, and you could see so clearly what was happening after you read that book. Of course, a lot of his works help to clarify history and put it on a more factual basis.

JE: The churches and the universities, two other big, institutional pillars in society, also had been more liberal, it seems to be, in the '30s and early '40s than they were when this got to be a red hot issue.

GB: Right. Have you ever read Will Campbell?

JE: Yeah.

GB: Oh boy, that is some book, isn't it?

JE: You like that book, Brother to a Dragonfly?

GB: Yeah. Sincere.

JE: That's a great book. It really is.

GB: Sensational book. And speaking of books, have you read or seen The Clothes Had No Emperor, a book by Salansky?

JE: No, I don't know that one.

GB: I'll see if I've got it here. [Interruption]

JE: If Folsom was a combination of genius, moron, and alcoholic?

GB: Sometimes he was a pure genius, and sometimes he could be very dense, and then some days he was an alcoholic. And it was so tragic.

JE: You never knew which day you were going to. . . .

GB: That man didn't realize 20% of his potential. Of course, back in those days we didn't know about alcoholism. You just thought it was sinful or stupid or whatever.

JE: Did you have the feeling, after that golden opportunity passed, and the Wallace era began, and the South was in turmoil and all that, did it give you a sense of regret that somehow they South hadn't . . . .

GB: Oh yeah, hell yeah.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

END OF INTERVIEW