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Lewis Donelson III

By Elizabeth Gritter

Memphis TN

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EG: Moving it up closer.

LD: Been married 59 and a half years.

EG: Henry Loeb and looking at campaign of Sugarmon. I saw you were one fo the few Republicans here in the 40s and 50s.

LD: There was relatively small group of us. Judge Wellford who just retired from federal bench was active in it, a little younger than that. Not many of us left.

EG: What was Republican Party like?

LD: It had blacks? -- heritage from Civil War. It had Post Office Republicans who when Republicans () they had jobs at post office. I'm sort of like Andrew Jackson's great great grandson. A group of us decided to become REpublican and build a party in early 1952. We went down to the Republican () held in courtroom. George W. Lee who was black Republican had us locked out and that got us infuriated and stirred up. We began then to try to build a party. The first primary that we had -- Mr. Crump wouldn't let us have it at the regular polling places so we had it in backyards, garages, and other places, a few churches. We polled 750 votes. A huge amount of work. But two years later in 56 we polled about 10,000 votes in the primary and elected some of our -- what we called them New Guard Republicans -- to the executive committee ... The way the ballot was set up. Lt. Lee was here. Under him was (). Over on the other side opposite him were my wife and Helen Highland? Further down. So many of the blacks thought that people underneath Lt. Lee's name were people on his team. So, they got elected more or less of a fluke -- three of them. Anyway, it was long () battle during the 50s for the control of the local party. The state party had been playing footsie with the blacks for years and years and years. They liked the way it was. They really didn't--. They were so ingrained in being a minority party that they really didn't have any ambitions or wishes or vision that you could be a state-wide party. So they opposed us in becoming active in party. That went on all during the 50s. I think in 56 we ran our first Republican for office down here and got defeated. In 58 we ran for our first slate of candidates for the state legislature. In 60 and 62 we did. In 64, byt that time, we also had somebody running for Cognressional seat. I think we ran somebody in 58, 60, and 62. In 62 we almost elected Bob James, lost less than 1000 votes. One of the more interesting developments occurring during 50s and 60s was rise of the Republican party. B/c Mr. Crump died in 54. We were constantly in papers, the PS in particular very interested in getting a second party going. The fights that we were having with Lt. Lee, the state party, lots of press about it. He teased me about some of these things in the paper. After Mr. Crump died, I said, "Ed, you're going to have hard time now. What in the world are you going to have to do?"

You're going to have to think for yourselves." He never teased anymore. [Laughter.] Of course, Henry Loeb was first non-Crump person to be elected in many, many of year -- that was the first sign that that organization was breaking up and not as effective as it had been. When Bob James almost won, I think they saw you couldn't win anymore by just being a Democrat. We had a precinct orgntn which in Mr. Crump's time, the precinct orgnit was the LGWD. They had somebody down there -- every precinct had some employee who was the precinct captian for that precinct and it was his job to get the vote out and see that everybody voted. After he died, that kind of fell apart. Except in black community where Fords, there is no precinct organization among Democrats even now whereas we got -- not as good as it once was -- we have county, statewide precinct orgnt--not as good in black precincts but in other ones. Part of that is when we started -- the businessmen were afraid to admit that they were Republicans. Some of us would give us a little money but they never wanted to be known what they were giving. We tried to get people organized. What we did: we ended up going around to neighborhoods and getting people that were interested in politics and so forth and we got a lot of small busisnessmen, housewives (more plentiful then than now), we had something called Republican workshop -- we'd go into a precinct and get somebody to host a meeting and invite all their friends to come. Then, we would talk to them about the two-party system and how the whole political system worked and talked with them about the importance about having a twoparty system.

In the 1950s?

Yes. From that we built up a --. My wife was one of the principal ones. Mostly done by women. Most weren't working of course. That's where we built up precinct organization. Some of them are still active today. That was an interesting time. I think they were totally stunned in 62 when Bob James almost won. We did not win in 64 possibly b/c they were better prepared but also b/c at that time Goldwater was ultraconservative and he brought out a lot of black opposition that had been muted before that. The party lines began in 64 election and they've continued to be drawn (Phone rings).

IN 64 it was--.

In 66 we had a big break. We had gone from 52 to 66 without electing anyone. We'd come close twice, once with Gwen Ascumb back in 56 and then again with Bob James in 62. We'd poll a respectable vote in 64 but it wasn't enough. We actually did carry the county for Gore, carried for Eisenhower in 52 and 56 and we carried it for Nixon in 60 but that was (). But locally we had not elected anybody. In 66, something had happened. Baker v. Carr had been decided. Someone came to me and said you ought to go to court and represent the Republican party in the reapportionament . . . Court adopted one of my two plans and shortly after that someone elected to legislature? But in 66 under new reapportionment plan we elected 6 Republicans to the legislature for the first time and we elected Dan K. to Congress. That was in 66. At that point statewide we elected Howard Baker to the senate and then in 70 we elected Winfield Dunn as governor. Baker was a Memphian.

What drew you to Republican Party in those days?

The attraction was in 52. I was at a cocktail party. Talking politics. I ranted about how bad it was to have single-party system. When you have one, it's decided on personalities and not issues. A few days later, this guy called me up, invited him to lunch. He said you ought to become a Repub. The main pitch we used in those day s—two-party sytem. There were two things – the Dem. party was very much union dominated, unions were a bigger factor in those days in politics and the fact that most of the people being elected were well to the left of many Tennesseans shall we say including myself. It was a big decision b/c as I say b/c family connections to Andrew Jackson. So, I had strong you might say Democrat heritage. That's how we sold it in state and county – two-party system, giving the people a choice, letting the issues laid out, etc.

You were involved in Kefauver or movement except Crump in 1948.
No never till 1952 when Eisenhower elected. Mr. Crump did call me to see if I wanted to go to state legislature but I said no, starting to get law practice.

Why Lee shut you out?

Well () Lt. Lee wasn't evil, he was an able person. He was one of less then 5 lts in Army during WWI, so that's why he called himself Lt. Lee. He controlled party down here, it had certain prerogatives he liked and that sort of thing, he didn't want anybody interfering. I went to see him I guess in 1960 and we had defeated him in several primaries and so on and our message was basically we want you to stay in the party, we need your votes, we don't mind you having some positions of leadership but you're not running. Basically he said if I can't run I don't want to be involved. I said, "Move over b/c we're going to run you out, which we did." I think that was probably a mistake but it wasn't a mistake in one sense b/c to do what we wanted to do we had to get control of party. B/c you had a situation where problems getting people to vote for blacks. That was a problem. That's another story. He had the support of Guy Smith who was the long-time state c hair of the party. So, that sort of () that.

So there wasn't much collaboration between whit eand black Republicans in the 50s?
No. IN 56 I was state chairman of Eisenhower campaign in TN and I got Lee to support me. We got a good t urnout from them and carried the county. We carried the county but not the city. We did extremely well. In that race in SC, got 40 percent of black vote? Howard Baker was always strong with blacks. Howard is the Baker of Baker, Donelson. WE haven't been together as lawyers for except about 10 years. I was involved with his political campaigns over the years. It's interesting what happened when Mr. Crump died you had the situation where we were used to having people who just held the ice? As mayor. Mr. Crump made all the decisions. You had a bunch of people who were so-called political leaders who had very little leadership ability so the city kind of drifted. They weren't evil people, they were—. Mr. Crump got a lot of things done. He did what he wanted to, wasn't worried about political risk. He could do things potlically risky. As a result, we got a huge influx of industry, got a bunch of awards for being the cleanest city and quietest city an dthat sort of thing. Made Mephis a pretty nice place to live. Amazing how quickly it generated. There was no one designated takeover so there was infighting, jealousy between various ones of Democrat's leadership after Crump's death. He had planned on his son Johnny taking over but in 37 his son Johnny was killed in a

plane crash. People say he changed tremendously after Johnny was killed. We do know that one thing happened – all the gambling places and all the prostitution houses were shut down. Completely different. I don't know what to attribute that too but that didn't happen. That would've been in about 1939 or 40. I remember when I was in college every hotel had its own gambling (ring/rooms?). Some had poker places. All had gambling rooms. So that was wide open. Of course you could go down on () St., prostitution was wide open. Loeb didn't start out being anti-'Crump person but he was not the choice of what was left of the machine. To that extent, he was viewed as an independent. HE was a tremendous campaigner – very attractive, charming guy, who loved people and that sort of thing has to be genuine. It really does. Ronald Reagan had it – just loved people. So that's the kind of thing--. Of course I had a lot of dealings with him when (). He wasn't an evil man, he wasn't a racist really, but he was awfully – once he made up his mind, he was awfully immovable. The fact that he didn't understand circumstances or circumstances changed that didn't make any difference, he didn't change. Unfortunately, that led to Dr. King's death. We should've settled that strike, we didn't.

What were reasons for rise of Republican party in 1966.

Well, the first real reason for the rise – we'd been rising all along – was the reapportionment. The rural districts had incredibly more rep. than urban districts. We hadn't been reapportioned since 1910. Statewide it was b/c – see there was always the incipient possibility of a Republican state b/c you had those two districts that were overwhelming Repub – 1st and 2nd District. The 2nd district had voted just for Republicans since Civil War – Knoxville and up above Knoxville. Chattanooga was mixed. When began to carry the county in Shelby County, we could change things. When Dunn ran, I'm sure his majority in SC must've been 50,000 which is a huge majority of the county. When people began to realize that a Republican could win, you got better candidates. He ran in 64, was defeated, and ran in 66. We began to pick up strength in our districts in 66. We already had Bill Brock and we picked up a Congressman in 9th district. In 66, we had four Congressmen, so the balance was beginning to shift to a much more Republican State. Probably the rise of Republicanism in SC had more to do with the watershed change in state politics than anything that's happened in my lifetime. It made the state a two-party system and it increased the quality of the candidates.

Some people I have talked to have said that when Democrats started supporting civil rights measures people started turning Republican.

That was first felt in 64 with the Goldwater campaign. That was an election in which Democrats were very strong on civil rights when civil was still a hot issue. The truth of it is – the Republicans we got in the beginning were probably taking the lead on civil rights. Democrats were () Crump's lead. He voted for Strom Thurmond and supported him publicly. So, it wasn't a big Democrat policy to be on civil rights. Of course, Howard Baker made a crucial civil rights vote in his first term in the Senate. It was not--. The Democrats were not the party in TN at least till after 64 when they really started civil rights. But it is true that since then--. We haven't elected many of what I would call anti-civil rights Republican in TN. Bill Brock would be – and he wasn't anti-civil rights

— and he probably would be as close to it as anybody. Elected to Congress in 62 nad Senate in 70. Dunn was not a () at all. Howard was not. Lamar Alexander was not. We haven't had a lot of segregationist-type Republican statewide candidates. As a matter of fact we had a couple who might be classified as such who got beat—Robin Beard was one of them.

Rise of black electoral power and it seems to be starting with 1959 campaign of Sugarmon and other candidates then. Wonder what you remember about this campaign.

I don't think I can tell you if I voted for Sugarmon or Loeb. I probably voted for Loeb. I didn't know Russell at the time. I got to know him on the charter commission of the new city charter. Of course, I knew Willis? Gotten beat in at same time. I was involved with charter commission. Of course he and AW elected to legislature. In my mind, race peripheral. I was very much involved in 68 race when I was running myself and 67 when Loeb was running again and I was not supporting Willis even though I voted him. I was running myself.

That's when you ran for city council.

Yes, I got about 38 percent of black vote.

How influential was the black vote then?

It was pretty substantial. They didn't turn out as well as they do now. It certainly had a big impact in HOWR'd's races in 66 and 72 b/c he got a substantial part of the black vote and that made him almost impregnable as far as votes. He had done some things — one of few Senators from the S who voted for civil rights bill, involved in appointing Ben Hooks to FCC. Of course, I was very much involved in CR myself. That's part of why I got that vote when I ran. I served on Community Relations Commission and that was a wonderful committee and major achievement — we really were the only city in the S to desegregate without violence. All that was loss in King mess. CRC was chaired by Dr. Hollis Price and Paul Tudor Jones who was my own minister and close personal friend of mine. Idea was very skillfully conceived b/c we had both editors on committee and the managers of TV stations and the agreement was we weren't going to let anybody know what was going to happen till it was done. Vasco Smith and I were on committee to desegregate the restaurants. Next morning it was desegregated. So didn't have troublemakers standing around. WE did that same things with buses, the libraries, water fountains, restrooms, movie theaters, hotels, and finally with the schools. It was an amazing achievement and probably part of treason.

What were strategies for persuading people to desegregate — how go about that work?

WE contacted various leaders in each area. We talked to the people. At that time, the most visible restaurants were the ones at Goldsmith's, Loewenstein's, Gerber's, in Peabody, etc. We contacted them and said "It's time we integrate" and most of them said yes. We had important people all them that they would listen to. Important people on the committee. Names were never publicized — weren't hidden. I'd call up all the restaurants and tell them time it's integrated, tell them day it's integrated, and said two couples, one black, one white, will be asked to seated together. There will be plainclothesmen to keep the piece and some members of our committee. That's what we

did on (). Movie theaters we did the same way. When I was elected to city council, we had party for all the council. He said my wife won't eat with blacks. (). Of course, we had elaborate plan with the schools.

I heard you didn't publicize it till afterward.

Yeah. We wanted to avoid crowd and troublemakers. Memphis has plenty of them.

What was relationship like between black and white members of CRC.

It was good. We didn't have segregationist. The white were all known to be supportive of what we were trying to accomplish. The relations were excellent. Vasco and I – I'd never met him b/f. His wife was Maxine Smith. Jesse Turner on committee, a good member black members. Dr. Price minister himself and president of LeMoyne. Also had Rabbi Wax and had a Methodist minister... I don't think we had any white Baptist ministers. Judge Wellford was on the committee. I think maybe there were two or three other Republicans on the committee. It was a committee that some of our Democrat politicians ducked, didn't want to serve on. I was not (). I got tagged pretty early – 54 or 55 – for being supportive of civil rights.

Side 2

Brown v. Board

Busing was problematic, that's when white flight began to take over. It greatly decreased parental involvement/support for schools, not good, had a very pernicious effect. I was on city council. You really have to think through issue b/c law of unintended results is very strong. It destroyed neighborhood schools in the South. The truth of it was b/f integration you had better black teachers by far than you have today. Part of it was that the blacks felt that it was really important to him. People of real quality, ability were teaching. As city expanded, you had wealthier people move out to county and send children to private school. I was at a private school but that was b/f this came up, don't think blacks were there. That was in 32.

Why do you think there was here that they allowed black voting where you see elsewhere that there was all sorts of impediment. Why that and busing opposing.

Cynical explanation – Mr. Crump voted them. It was really a disturbing situation.

Picture you would see – every election – they had open bed trucks the driver would sit there and have fistfuls of poll tax receipts and loaded up in the back would be black people. He would ride from precinct to precinct had hand them out poll tax receipts and they would vote. But frankly when that began to change-- Voting was not an issue b/c they always voted – just something people did. The other side, the truth in Memphis and particularly in Memphis as things were rapidly changing, Memphis was a very plantation oriented town. I make a distinction between plantation attitude and what I call redneck attitude. The leadership of Memphis was very plantation so there wasn't any big drive to create hate against the blacks or anything like that. It was more an attitude that they were inferior and they were our responsibility, we got to look out for them, see they're taken care of them. It describes the fact that we were able to accomplish all the legal segregation without any difficulties even though there was a lot of opposition to busing.

Busing brought an instinctive reaction. I have a good friend from Miss. Who was one of the ringleaders in getting school desegregation . . . (Phone rings, interruption). While desegregation was accepted pretty well, busing was very different. Of course, what you ended up doing that your child could end up going to school that was 60 percent black. At that time, a great deal of opposition among civil rights people against track systems. You knew your child was going to be subject to system treated to everybody. So very difficult problems. We had some academies created in Memphis and some still in existence, mostly from the Baptist. Some private schools had long tradition not created in any racist atmosphere but it was the ones that grew the fastest and many of Baptists have disappeared. Evangelical Christians schools still operating. Those that opposed busing opposed it more out of racism than anything else but there was some logic to the concerns. Like the sanitation strike, it brought out latent dispute but had some logic. It wasn't a racial thing, it was a labor dispute.

I'll tell you another story. I was walking out of a cocktail party in the mid-50s, I said to someone—Harry Wellford with me—I said Harry so tired of nigger jokes, he said so am I. I said let's stop them and we did in our crowd. Soon enough other people saying it too. We were not so rich, more middle class, a few were rich. It's interesting what can be done. But problem of schools is very difficult and we haven't solved it yet. I'm strongly convinced we can't change problems in schools in Memphis without ECE. When come to school, some never read a book, no one has ever read to them. The truth of it is those children will never catch up. Starting very early. Surveys now that show that talking to your child in a womb can have an impact. When read to kid, stimulates their brain activities.

See what happened in Memphis, particularly with coming of cotton picker and chemicals, the need for field labor went way down. In late 30s, they began to move to Memphis. After WWII, it accelerated. The most able of those who came here in the 1940s and 50s went N. What was left was their dregs. So we got this adverse selection that our made our racial problem so much more difficult than it would've been. Uneducated.

Suddenly growing during 1959 was the Republican party and we changed the whole dynamics of politics.

Vasco Smith didn't think highly of CRC.
Is that right?

He said blacks met separate than whites.

That's not true, that's a damn lie. Vasco will lie. I shouldn't say that. We were co-chair. We never had a separate committee, not that I know of. They might've had some separate meetings that I was not aware of about what their position was going to be. Dr. Price and Dr. Jones presided at meetings. Jesse, Vasco attended meetings, that's how I got to know him... Vasco and Maxine have sort of a mindset that anything they can do to make whites uncomfortable was justified. I went to see Maxine, I had a proposal from the county mayors—Germantown, Bartlett, etc.—to provide single source funding for the schools and involved in the termination for busing. Richard Fields agreed to it with some other politicians. He said you have to see her b/c she's the plaintiff. I said I can't do that. I said, "Maxine you know it's hurting black people just as much as whites." She said, "If

it's hurting whites that's good enough for me." On the other hand, AW Willis, Sugarmon, wonderful people, not their attitude at all. Maxine was out there on the cutting edge. She ran into all the white opposition, rednecks, I'm sure that has a major impact on her and him as well. Ask Russell, I'm pretty sure he was on the committee. I'm amazed at that b/c I would think Vasco would be proud that he was in desegregating restaurants.

He said the pressure came from NAACP and boycotts and CRC--.
I was on the CRC and don't recall any pressure from CRC. Don't recall the boycott, forgot that.

Story I got from him that there was pressures as a result of boycott and that the CRC didn't out of own will go an ddesegregate things and they did so out of their pressure. What say to that assessment.

I don't know what to say. We felt pressure b/c we thought segregation was wrong. SC had spoken, we needed to get ourselves--. We were of course aware that Freedom Riders in Miss. and all had (). I'd forgotten about that, maybe I had a selective memory.

So you thought it was wrong.

Yeah, like when we talked to buses, talked to company. I don't recall any of that getting to wehre it was violent, I mayh be wrong.

Committee was formed to prevent violence and help with desegregation?

The committee was formed to accomplish the desegregation without violence. Of course, the truth of it was you didn't have to put any pressure ont eh committee b/c every one of us was committed to doing it. No whit eperson wdasn't on committee that wasn't committed to it.

I guess I'm getting a jaded view.

I guess that's his view, the white people don't ever do anything unless you make them do it. I can tell you one thing my minister took the leads in advocating--. He came with church in 54 and 55.

Who was this?

Paul Tudor Jones. He had a lot of members leave.

I saw at one point he didn't have a lot of black people to worship in his church.

No. When the first people came to our church, we were seated, and we had a big meeting to see what they were going to do. My father made the move that they be seated like everybody else and it passed overwhelmingl.

View I got was negotiations.

It was designed. Paul Tudor and Jimmy Wax were leaders among whites. WE basically started with the premise that we want to do is do this now, how do we do it? Not a whole lot of need to bring pressure on us.

What say to persuade restaurants/businesses to desegregate?

Basically, our message was the law now requires it, it's time to move into modern era, Memphis can never progress if we're not going to deal with this situation and move on. Look at what other cities are doing. Our argument was mainly justice and economics. Each time we did it we got good support from the papers – Memphis is making great step forward.

Influence of SCDC with campaigns and when you ran for City Council.

"That election was nonpartisan. I didn't run as a Republican, even though I was probably the best known Republican in SC then. IT was a major influence. It changed politics dramatically. Those white leftovers that began re-running the party after Crump's death, they demolished them you might say. They quickly became nonfactors as the SCDC gained strength. So, it had a major impact. Actually during the 60s – particularly during the late 60s and on during the 70s, the RP and the SCDC were the two main political forces in the county b/c there was nothing left of the white Democrats. They were a small group and it's amazing how the blacks continued to elect them ... But it was big influence, big influence."

Did you ever work together?

We did on the charter – POP. Actually that was another example. We had that town hall meeting when they chose the POP committee, the Republicans. What happened was mainly Republicans and SCDC on committee b/c we were only people organized and Dems living on the fact that just Dems. WE really worked together on that committee. Russell, AW were very major players in drafting the charter. So, it was--.

You said Republics – did you have precinct clubs.

Had precinct captains and sometimes we'd have (). We still do.

Used for getting out vote, informing of issues.

Yes.

Meetings of precinct captains.

Yes.

How often?

In election year might have three or four, non-election year 1 or 2. We always had a convention every year of Republicans in SC. Precinct captains turned out for that.

How many people in Republican party in Memphis.

IN 56 we turned out 7500 votes and of those votes at least probably around 50 percent of them were black. By 60 that had changed, we turned out 12 – 15- maybe 20,000 and it would be about 60 percent white. After 64 the blacks just fell off to nothing.

Why you think that was with blacks.

The Goldwater campaign thruout every conservative Southern Democrat who didn't like liberal republicans. That's when we really had a major addition in our strength and of

course that resulted in defections of blacks. Probably the black strength never exceeded 5,000.

What do you think impact has been rise of black public officials, positive toward been achieving race relations.

I think it's improved race relations a great deal, far from perfect still but it's improved you might say race relations to an extent that it's pretty much now – Very few openly talk racist in white community. It also has drawn out more blacks to be involved in political process. On the other hand, disturbingly although we've elected 2 pretty good mayors some of our other black elected officials have been pretty bad. They're probably far more racist than ought to be had some not able to make intelligent decisions on complex issues. That's racist thing to say. We've got some whites like that too. It's hard to get people to run. It's a thankless job. Of course I was on council during SS. The quality of our white Republican officials has gone down and I was always think about the fact that AW Willis, bright, able man, successful businessman, he got defeated by a black in legislature. I say problem in Memphis right now blacks are in majority and act like in minority and vice versa for whites. The truth of it is for whites it's that we need to know we're in minority had know how to deal with it. With blacks, they have to realize their power and be responsible. Disturbing to me quality of elected officials black and white. Anybody would tell you original city council was far superior. Also true quality of our legislature had gone down. I would say in sum total it's a good thing. It's an absolutely necessary thing. We've had some adverse results as well and grow up and get more mature about it. That's still to come. Problem is so many people are so totally not involved or ill informed. I say that it has to be for the best, it had to come, had to be done. Real benefits are we got a real black middle class in Memphis, lot so them – unfortunately are out in East Memphis or Germantown. That's a major impact on community. If they would take a little more leadership, they'd sort of turn over to black politicians. Wharton got elected at time when majority electorate was white, real interesting fact. I was very much involved in Judge Horton's campaign when he ran for attorney general. I was his campaign manager. He got like 50 percent of white vote but slaughtered in black community.

When was this?

It had to be in the late 60s, maybe early 70s.

Why was he slaughtered in black community?

Uncle Tom. Turned out white support he had was highly visible, mostly businessmen, prominent people in community. He had been a judge and didn't become one after that? One of able black leaders in this community. Wharton and Herenton have been pretty good mayors.

Why do you think there is this decline in quality?

I think it's stemmed from a couple of things. The first thing is it's not much fun to be a politician, public abuse. It's a thankless task. The second thing though is that we have gotten-- [Phone Rings, Tape ends]

Tape 2

The second thing is that we have gotten democracy and freedom mixed up in this country. We have got this mindset that is out there that the people have got to decide everything. I'm a huge political poll – it's the curse of modern politics. A poll is offhand opinion of someone who didn't know a damn thing about the matter. That's really true. It's not that they're evil. We got politicians now and all they do is read polls – Bill Clinton is one. Polls tell you a lot but you cannot allow polls to run with what you're really thinking. Our system was designed to elect people that we trust. We have a democrat republic, not a democracy. So now you have people elected who play to what they want people to hear. Politicians can hard to take stand that's unpopular. Relinquished their role of leadership. People of knowledge and courage don't want to run. It's true with Congress it's true with legislature. That's why more than anything I think it's gone down. I attribute a whole lot of that to press who has given unthinking support to idea that poll is democracy is at work. No one in right mind wants politics run by people who don't think about issues. Makes things so much more partisan. They call themselves Republicans and Democrats, they don't have to think about why they're it. Pernicious trend. I know Jefferson and Madison would be just horrified.

One thing I observed how campaigning was so different in 50s and 60s-. So different. So much more one on one, personal. Now it's TV.

What was women's involvement like in politics in 50s.

In Republican party, they were very active. The party was really built by Republican women. My wife and 15 other Republican women built that precinct organizations themselves – personal visits, phone calls, and meetings, that sort of thing. They'd call up and find somebody in a precinct and say, "How would you like to have a Republican workshop?" They'd find somebody to get friends to come and we'll give you a lecture and you can sign up Republicans. They were very, very much involved. Gwen A. was our first candidate and did very well and was elected to city council many years later. A good many of our officers, (officeholders) right now are women. They've been very active. They've been active in a fullfledged way. They're type of women where no man told them what to think. I sure don't tell my wife what to think. Those women that helped us start the money their husbands weren't telling them what to think. They were very much involved.

Any take formal leadership roles or more organizing grassroots. We've had 3 women be SC chairman of the party.

When was this?

Maybe late mid-1970s. My wife was on the state committee for ten years. She was elected to that so she took a leadership role there. Gwen A. Scumb was one of leaders from the very beginning, very much involved. We had a lot of women who were active and took leadership roles.

You were on first city council where there were blk members – good working relationship b/w white and black members?

Excellent of course we were forged together by fire. Everybody in same boat. Fred Davis is still a close friend of mind. WE talked about SS. Jim Netters still a good friend of mine. JO Patterson I never was close too and he was kind of weird duck and went on to become a minister. Relationships were good even among those who would not agree to settle strike. That one member whose wife – he ultimately became completely reconciled with the situation. He ran a number of times after that and was reelected. When I had – I say when my wife had the first party, it was one of the first mixed apties of its kind. It was in 67. About that same time, we had a party for someone who was black and had blacks and whites and got a huge amount I'd not say publicity but attention. Richest man around was Maceo Walker and he was our guest and very impressed. On 1st council, relationships were excellent and I don't think relationships on council are bad today. Relationships among legislature are good. They disagree on issues but no black-white issues at all so that's one of real pluses, it sets tone for community and makes a situation where white racists particularly are muffled. They don't speak out – know it's not the proper thing to say, even though they may be racist still internally.

I heard that tone is why KKK and WCC didn't develop in Memphis.

That's right. Nathan Bedford Forrest was one of early leafers and he was Memphian. The Klan here now. Cliff Davis longtime Congressman and Crump man they brought out on him that he was a member of the Klan. He wasn't defeated until 62. He was defeated in 64. He survived the Crump machine a long time. His great political claim to fame was that he was shot with Puerto Ricans. That was only accomplishment I know of him.

What think done differently so things would've have been as out of control with strike. IN retrospect, I would think that both of us – Downing Pryor and Jerred Blanchard and myself we needed to get involved and talk to business community. We didn't do that. I'd say that's the one thing I could've done. Problem was everywhere mayor went he got a standing ovation he didn't go where there was blacks, that fed his obstinacy. Many white leaders were very anti-union. They gradually began to realize it wasn't a union issue, it had become a racial issues and it was very bad. The ministers – some of them – got involved – the white ministers.

Why do you say gone and talked to business people.

I think I could've b/c I think I was pretty persuasive. I knew that many of them were not racists and that they were very anti-union. I think I could've explained to them that this has gone long past union issue and has become a racial issue that has divided community. I really only one in council who knew and talk to every big business leaders in town. I wrongly thought what I said publicly would provide that leadership. Press would seek me out after meetings. I got a huge amount of publicity and thought I was getting my message out. I was also trying not to get too far out to stickers side b/c I felt like I was in position that I could be bridge b/w them. If I got too far over, I would lose credibility. I expect what I said was restrained. You do things in life – one of my big failures is that. What we needed was people of influence calling up white council people to get them to--. We had two maybe three that said we agree with you but we don't think it's our business,

and they were right. Legally speaking, we never agreed that the council would get themselves involved in a labor dispute. Wasn't our responsibility, it was mayor. That was a big issue. I could never get them to agree b/c they said it's mayor's responsibility. We'll do what mayor says. The CA was a huge negative factor toward settlement. They were very anti-union. Ahlgren hated unions. It gave him nice place to hide. WE had to go out and re-sell story to newspaper and would've changed whole thing. We didn't sell our story to public sufficiently. I thought I could sell it to city council. He mentions he's thinking about writing memoirs.

Going to business leaders would've put pressure on Loeb and city council. Yes. Of course, when King shot, business leaders changed over night. They certainly realized that read papers around country that Memphis had this image of being a backwater, redneck town. Our leadership didn't care for that too much. I organized a breakfast group and we met every week for weeks and weeks trying to decide what Memphis was going to do to get back on track. I realized then that if I had talked to them sooner would've b/c everybody understood what had happened and what a huge setback it was for Memphis.

Anything else to add?

One of the things we learned from Crum is what happens when you have dictatorial leadership, you go through a period when city, community drifts b/c no one there who sets forward, jockeying period. 50s and 60s were that period. Democrat Party went through period when they didn't know who they were, they were () leadership, they were riding on momentum of traditional of Democrat votes, so very little leadership in community. We elected Ingram and that was a farce, he was totally unqualified. His campaign platform ran on - he dismissed black criminal charges, took their words over politicians. He got big black vote and he was Democrat and got white votes too and disaster. So that was period we went through. I think we learned that two-party system is better and that a desegregated community is by far the better. I hope that we will get back to a little more you might say spirit of bipartisanship after elected. AS I say when I was commissioner? I worked with Democrats extremely well. There was no bitterness. Today it's not that way anymore. In today's world, it's very partisan. In TN legislature is evenly divided and need coalitions. I think it produces better government. Real true meaning in politics is compromise. I find that when I look at different point of views, makes my side better, get a better result. That's what we need to get back to. I'm not sure how we're going to get back too. Worse curse of federal today is that money is so powerful, people elect themselves with their own money. Another thing that's bad is people, hand me downs from generation to generation (like Bush, Kennedys), it's created a political class and that's not what our republic is about—it's not about a political class, a ruling class. I think that's a very bad trend. I believe in democracy. Don't believe in polls, not an intelligent way to decide an issue. Issues need to be debated, put together. Results are better than one side getting with what it ones. Today sometimes I wonder why I am a Republican. I'm a strong supporter of Bush but some of the Republicans way over there on the () I found very hard to deal with them. They're hung up on issues that are really not issues of government.