

This is an interview with Gray Boylston, Republican chairman of Broward County, Florida. The interview was conducted in Fort Lauderdale, Florida on May 22, 1974 by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries. It was transcribed by Joe Jaros.

Jack Bass: You became active here when?

Gray Boylston: About fifteen years ago. It was just before the Goldwater election, I guess.

J.B.: And before the '60 presidential election?

Boylston: Let's see, what would fifteen years ago be? I'm trying to think of when I moved here, I got active when I moved.

J.B.: Yeah, well fifteen years ago, it would have been 1959, before the presidential election.

Boylston: O.K., I got going a little bit then, not too much.

J.B.: You became chairman when?

Boylston: I became state committeeman in '66, which is the state representative, which is theoretically over the county. In '66 and I guess through '69, I was the state committeeman from here and the state finance chairman. And at the same time, I was Claude Kirk's finance chairman when he ran for governor for the first time. And then I got a little unhappy about the way the county thing was running, there wasn't much communication between the county chairman and the state committeeman and through a series of events, I ran against the incumbent one. No, I really didn't, we forced him to resign. Because you know, we had a senatorial campaign down here, a primary between Carswell and Gurney and the guy that was the county chairman was forced to

resign because he took the job as state chairman for the Carswell campaign. Which didn't set very well for the county chairman to be taking part as a state chairman for a primary. So, he had a pet candidate that he thought he would put in and I wasn't too pleased about that, I happened to have been for Bill Cramer anyhow. So, I ran against him and beat him for county chairman in '66, no, that was when . . . '66 was state, this was just before the . . . .

J.B.: '70, I guess.

Boylston: '70. It would have been '70, yeah. Early '70 I suppose, something like that.

W.D.V.: And you have been county chairman since then?

Boylston: Yeah.

W.D.V.: How does the organization of this component in terms of staff and so on, compare with the other counties.

Boylston: I would suspect that by far it was the best in the state.

W.D.V.: Why is that?

Boylston: Because of a combination. We have more elected officials here than anywhere else, there's only one Democrat in the courthouse. We have a Congressman and the Congressman's office is across the hall. The minority leader in the senate's office is the last one down on the right, the guy who was the minority leader before him and the leader of the house of representatives office is upstairs and I've got some pretty good staff here and a lot of volunteers and I get a little more too, because the state office, when Bill Murphen was state chairman and I was finance chairman, used to be here. So, we built up a bunch of volunteers at that time. They work for the party for the state and they just converted basically to working for the party in the county.

I think that we probably have more money in our bank account, which helps a little. We have more Republicans to work on at the right time. In order of registration, Pinellas County has the most number of Republicans, we are the next and then surprisingly, Dade County and then Palm Beach. But the Pinellas Republicans are considerably older in average age and in philosophy, they are quite more liberal. This is quite a super conservative county and they are activists. So, we have the second most Republicans to work on and I suppose the most elected officials. In '66, we only had two Republicans, only they weren't in the courthouse. We had the sherrif and a commissioner. Burke wasn't in in '66, that's when he ran. We had Bill Stevens and the sherrif and a small claims judge in Hollywood, there were only three elected Republicans. Have you got one of our yearbooks, by the way, you should get one.

J.B.: How many of them are there now?

Boylston: Well, I'm just going to guess, but I would imagine about 45, 50, somewhere in there.

W.D.V.: Does a good part of your budget come out of the filing fees, to run this operation?

Boylston: No. None of my budget comes out of the filing fees.

W.D.V.: But you get a certain part of the return don't you?

Boylston: Yeah, but it all goes in . . . I keep two bank accounts. One that I call the Campaign Fund and basically, we put all the filing fees in the Campaign Fund. I prefer not to give it directly in cash to the candidates, although I have given them some. We'll do things on behalf of them, like pick up their bumper sticker bill and pick up this and pick up that, but our basic operating money comes out of, the closest thing

I can say is sustaining memberships, annual contributions, Lincoln Day dinners, you know, the normal fundraisers. Well, right now for instance, we haven't obviously gotten any filing fees, and what have we got in the bank, about \$23,000 or \$24,000?

Second Respondent: \$26,000.

Boylston: \$26,000.

W.D.V.: Are you the only county that does that, that puts all the filing fees back in?

Boylston: No, I think that a lot of them do that. Most of the counties that you go around to don't really have any staff or offices.

W.D.V.: Who else has a staff?

Boylston: Dade County has a rather good one. I think Pinellas has some. Orange County . . . .

W.D.V.: Do they follow the same practice?

Boylston: Somewhat the same, yeah. I'm sure . . . I know that we give away for instance, at campaign time or spend on behalf of the candidates, way more than the filing fees. That's the real reason that we raise money. When we get through now, as Spud says, we have \$26,000, I don't know what we'll have when we start raising special campaign funds and filing fees, but when we get through with the election in November, we'll probably only have enough money in the bank to see our operating expenses for six months ahead of us. In other words, we'll just take everything and throw it into the campaign fund. (showing yearbook) That'll give you a pretty good idea who the Republicans are. That's last years'. We put one of those out. Obviously, we raise a few bucks on that. We only had one big dinner this year. The year before, we decided for a variety of reasons that Lincoln was a good guy, so we had three Lincoln Day dinners. We had one

in the north, one in the west and one in the south of the county.

And we raised pretty good funds . . . .

W.D.V.: How do you feel generally about the practice of diverting those filing fees back to the party organizations? Because there are very few states that do that?

Boylston: I know that there are very few states, of course, in other states, they have other gimmicks. You go to Ohio and you will find out that most of the elected officials kick in about 4% a year of their salary to run the party. That's considerably more than the filing fee. Or 5% I think it is now.

W.D.V.: Yeah, but this almost amounts to a kind of public appropriation.

Boylston: Yeah, yeah, in a way it does. Although . . . no, I don't think so. Because candidates in the place you are talking about don't pay for the elections. What they are doing is giving . . . our filing fee is based on 5% of your first year's salary and the candidate has to raise that private money or it is out of his pocket money. So it is really the candidates themselves putting it in and the legislature voted this. Frankly, it wouldn't hurt me . . . I 'd just as soon . . . I don't want to see the state grab that money, charge them a filing fee and put it in their pocket and put it in their general funds and waste it. If they had no filing fee or had some other system, it wouldn't bother me half as much as it would the Democrats. Because the Democrats basically in Florida . . . .

Second Respondent: That's their program.

Boylston: It's what they've lived off of. We don't have that many and the big part of it has disappeared anyhow, because our judges became non-partisan two years ago. If you want to see where the big filing fees are, you take 5% of a judge's salary all over the state. Well, I didn't

scream at all, because it hurt the Democrats like hell. Because they had judges running everywhere in the state of Florida. Now see, part goes to a county depending on the county office and part goes to the state, depending on the state office. But as far as being hurt, the Democrats would be hurt far worse than we are, because they run more candidates around the state. But I don't see anything wrong with the filing fee system. The legislature voted it in and they voted it in because they wanted to support their party by giving them part of it and it was a more painless way to do it during campaign time I suppose, than to have people hit them over the head for it all the rest of the time. The only reason that we run this party is for the candidates and they are throwing in their contribution basically, about all we get out of them basically, with a few exceptions, is that filing fee that they pay when they run. And a lot of offices are four year offices, so that's 5% of their first year salary and yet they are in for four years. Whereas if you go to Ohio, they'll make them do it every year, 5% of their salary. So, I don't see anything wrong with the system, although I don't care anything about fighting for it one way or the other. All that it would mean with the candidates is that we would just have that much less to give back to them. And as I say, I don't like to give it back in money except for rare instances. I might with a single race like a Congressman, but with a group of legislators, I'll say, "Look, I'll pick up the bumper stickers, or postage, a few things. I want to see the bills and be sure what it's going for and then I'll tell you how much I'll pick up."

W.D.V.: During the last eight years that you have been involved with this, when was the biggest period of growth. Was it from '66 to '68, or . . . .

Boylston: Yeah.

W.D.V.: That two years?

Boylston: Yeah, '66 to '68.

W.D.V.: Did it level off after that point?

Boylston: Now, you have to be careful here. Are you talking state or are you talking county?

W.D.V.: County.

Boylston: I guess ~~that~~ '66 is still . . . .

Second Respondent: '72 is a big year.

Boylston: Spud, we elected pretty near everybody in that special election in '67. We elected . . . .

Second Respondent: Yeah.

Boylston: I would say '66 to '68 was our biggest two year period of growth.

W.D.V.: How do you account for that growth? What happened to it?

Boylston: A combination. We didn't have much Republican organization before that. We put a Republican organization in. In '66, we elected a Republican governor. We had a little bit of a sweep, and as you guys know, I'm sure that more people lose elections than do win them. The Democrats had a bunch of bad candidates. Their candidate for governor didn't have a prayer, we just had a combination of things going our way.

W.D.V.: Since then, it has sort of leveled off . . . .

Boylston: Also so remember that this county is a rapid growth county. You are sitting in the largest annual growth of any county in the United States. And it is an expensive county. Jerry Thomas, I don't know if you've met him, he's running for governor. Jerry spoke at our county committee meeting the other Monday night, when the room had 250 or 300

people in the room. Jerry asked how many people . . . now, these were active political workers . . . how many people in that room were born in Florida. There were eight people in that room that put up their hands and out of the eight, Jerry was one and his wife was one. So, there were only six people in that whole room that were even born in Florida. Now, when I moved here, this county had about 120,000 or 130,000 people in it. Now it has got 900,000 people. And for that period, at least until '70, most of the people that moved down here were Republican. Our registration goes up like this. We're out-registered. . . . we were out-registered ten to one when I moved here. Now it is about three to two.

W.D.V.: Moved here from where?

Boylston: I moved here from Michigan, although I've lived . . . I'm really not from anywhere. After I got out of college and went into the Navy, I've lived all over the place. I was very active in Michigan in politics too. But our big growth during that period was Republicans from Ohio, Pennsylvania, the Midwest and they were Republicans . . . there is a change coming. This county won't always be a Republican stronghold. Dade County isn't. The only thing that is throwing it off balance down there is the Cuban vote. If it weren't for the Cuban situation, Dade would be much more Democrat. But sometime, we are going to have a solid megalopolis or whatever it is, all the way from Dade County all the way through to Palm Beach and as our growth goes west, there's one development west of Hollywood planned now for 50,000 housing units that are retired electrical workers from Boston and New York. Well, you know that those are not going to be Republicans. So, as we get bigger and expand and get further . . . it's a very strange phenomena in Florida, with the exception

of Miami Beach, I've discovered that Republicans like salt water and the nearer that you go the ocean, the more Republican it is and the further you get away from it, the less it is.

W.D.V.: How do you explain that?

Boylston: Property is more expensive near the ocean. (Laughter.)

J.B.: What role did you play when you were in Michigan, politically?

Boylston: I was the treasurer of a Congressional district, precinct committee . . . .

W.D.V.: Which one?

Boylston: The Fourteenth. At the time, it was Grosse Point, a part of Detroit.

W.D.V.: Dick Durant.

Boylston: Dick Durant and I were the one that put together the organization that Durant had. Dick Durant, and I.

W.D.V.: I was George Romney's executive assistant.

Boylston: Is that right? Well, Dick and I . . . of course, I had left before the Romney things, but that was a nothing district there. Dick and I, , Rocky *Custe* you'd probably know.

W.D.V.: Rocky and I served on the constitutional convention together.

Boylston: Yeah, Rocky is a regular down here. Fact is . . . (to secretary) Has his car been fixed yet?

Secretary: No, let me call right now.

W.D.V.: Is he here?

Boylston: He comes in and out all the time, I think that he's playing with my secretary.

Secretary: Well, he said that he would be here yesterday or today.

Boylston: Well, the thing that I was really involved with him, the original

thing, we had this thing called the Republican Voters Associated, it began about 1952, that Rocky . . . we ran him for Congress once, way before Durant. We had Durant, Heenan and myself. Heenan was quite active. Oh, quite a bunch of us that tried to make that district work, we were never able to carry it except with Bob Walter<sup>down</sup>. Who was down here a few weeks ago too.

W.D.V.: Well, are the politics up there any different than they are down here in Broward County?

Boylston: Quite a bit different.

W.D.V.: How.

Boylston: Funny thing is that when I first got down here, there was a violent Republican fight going on in the newspapers, I don't know how much else they were doing, between two guys, a guy named Basil LaVerne, who was the state committeeman, and Bert Peterson, who later ran for governor and who was the county chairman. And the Republicans were divided into Petersons or LaVernes. And oh, the fight was just something to behold. Well, I had just left one of those in the Fourteenth and as you understand, we are used to liberal-conservative fights in the Fourteenth. And I decided that I was a conservative, so I'd better find out which team I was on. Well, I read everything and I found out that it was entirely different. It wasn't a question of which was which. They both had to be conservatives, it was who was going to be the boss. That was what the fight was and it took me nearly a year to find out which side I was on. And after I did, the fight was resolved.

J.B.: Was that sort of basically what the whole 1970 fight was about?

Boylston: Where?

J.B. and W.D.V.: Here.

Boylston: You mean the senatorial thing?

W.D.V.: Right.

Boylston: No.

J.B.: Ideology wasn't involved?

Boylston: No. Practically not at all, surprisingly.

Second Respondent: Our big fight was over a double-cross.

Boylston: Bill Cramer had wanted to run in '66 for the United States Senate.

And Ed Gurney felt that he would like to run. Cramer was the senior one and several people started meeting together. Gurney had a bunch of logical reasons why he had to make the move then. Everybody agreed, including the governor who was there at the time. "O.K., Gurney, you go ahead and run this time and then you back Cramer next time." Everybody agreed and shook hands and they went out and we had no fight in '66 or '68, and Gurney went in. I was still finance chairman after he went in and I used Gurney, a little bit differently than his recent troubles. Gurney and Cramer and I, virtually just the three of us, we would pick up somebody else here and there, covered the state of Florida, cocktail parties, dinners, we just made a tour all around, raising money for the state party. And the way it started out, I would introduce Ed Gurney, the new U.S. Senator and get a big cheer and it was a Gurney audience, and then Gurney would introduce Cramer as the next U.S. Senator. And we raised quite a lot of money for the state party. And as I say, they would shake hands and the agreement had gone on before this. Then, somehow or other, a rather large split developed between the party chairman, the party itself and the governor. And Gurney was on the opposite side from the governor and linked in with the party. Then, all of a sudden this new thing comes up, and Gurney flip-flops and jumps into bed with Kirk. There was some ideology

involved only in that there was a group that was pretty damn mad when Kirk voted for Nelson Rockefeller at that convention. Matter of fact, I came across something the other day . . . but anyhow, Kirk got pretty much and he and Gurney got in bed together and somehow or another, they thought that it would be a great coup to run Carswell for the U.S. Senate seat. He had just been turned down and they thought that it was a great political thing and they thought they would run him for that Senate seat and all the promises and everything were broken. And this territory had always been Cramer territory, because Cramer was the first elected Republican in Florida. And when they needed any help around here in Washington, any politician and anything that you wanted to go to a Congressman for, Cramer was the Congressman for the whole state of Florida. The only one. And this organization in Broward was one of the older ones, although it wasn't old. So, they knew Cramer well. I remember fifteen or twelve years ago at a county committee meeting over here with Cramer, and he walked through the room and everybody knew him and he knew half of them. So, the split developed over this double-cross with a couple of candidates.

W.D.V.: How badly did that hurt the party?

Boylston: We lost the Senate seat.

W.D.V.: Are you still feeling the effects of it? Why do you think that Gurney did it? We heard one speculation, it was felt that he didn't want competition in the Senate from anyone else.

Boylston: I've heard that story, I don't know if it's right or not.

I don't think so. Gurney may have legitimately thought that Carswell had a better chance of winning. Gurney and Cramer were never close

friends. When they were in the House, it was no question that Cramer was the leading Congressman and I'm sure that if Gurney had stepped into the Senate two years later, he probably would have pushed ahead of Gurney in the inside hierarchy somewhat, I don't know. Cramer has been a national committeeman forever. You know, he is the lawyer still for the national committee.

Second Respondent: Wouldn't you say it was jealousy?

Boylston: A little bit.

J.B.: Was it anything else?

W.D.V.: Did Kirk feel that?

Boylston: I would think so. Bob Lee, who ran Kirk's first and second campaign and he . . . .

W.D.V.: The thing was thrown together almost overnight between Kirk, Gurney and Carswell?

Boylston: I'm sure that it was. A bunch of things I was going to show you, a scratch pad, they were all over the place the other day. One enterprising young woman . . . I guess that I used them all for scratch pads, Gurney during the convention in '68 kept Claude Kirk's ballot on the Rockefeller deal . . . incidentally, it was a unit rule delegation that . . . ( tape inaudible at this point, due to typewriter in office) . . . and he agreed to this rule and the Rockefeller thing wasn't popular at all in Florida, in this area and they photostated and printed up that ballot and signature signed "Claude Kirk" . . . (tape inaudible due to typewriter) . . . I tell you, those things went around this state like mad. And see, we might have had a different situation if the primary rules hadn't been changed. Our primaries used to be in what, April?

Second Respondent: May.

Boylston: May. And if you had a primary fight, you could get the troops pretty well back together by November. They changed our election system and have our primaries in September and we only have one month afterwards. They were so boiling mad at each other, I doubt if . . . there were a hell of a lot of people that were anti-Claude Kirk and they voted . . . (tape inaudible due to office noise) . . . and part of being mad at Claude Kirk was this Cramer-Carswell deal. And there were a hell of a lot of people that had worked for Carswell that voted for Lawton Chiles rather than vote for Cramer in that general election. And we ended up losing a governor and losing a Senator because of it. It was just horrible politics. (tape inaudible)

W.D.V.: So, in Broward County, the party really grew in a spurt from '66 to '68 and then kind of levelled off and you see . . . .

Boylston: No, well, I guess that's right. Well, when you total everything up, we've got all the offices and then what do you do from there.

J.B.: Are there any Democrats in the legislative delegation?

Boylston: Yeah, again, that was a freak. In 1967, we won them all. '66 was the election and then the courts threw it out and in 1967, we had a special election and in that special election, we won them all. Well, we did in '66, but we had a bunch of lousy candidates. And we got to clean our own house, which was kind of a lucky break, in '67 in the special. And the Democrats got very disturbed about that. So, when they reapportioned the legislature in . . . for the '70 election, the Democrats obviously controlled the reapportioning in Tallahassee. They began their reapportioning in Broward County and if you want to see what they did, come here . . . (tape turned off) . . . as an

appointed Democrat in there that the governor just had to remove, the only Democrat in the courthouse was just removed from office for perjury and a few things. So, he appointed another Democrat, the long timer was removed. He was the only elected one in there and now we have one Democrat county commissioner out of five and there we had a Republican who died and the governor appointed another Democrat. So, we've got virtually all of them that's possible. So, our growth period is '66 to '68, as far as electing officers, it levelled off as soon as we got them all.

J.B.: How is the county organized, I mean, how is the Republican organization . . . .

Boylston: It's a normal precinct organization. From the chairman to a board of directors to ( tape inaudible due to office noise) . . .what we call our district leaders, we're going to change the system, and then precinct committee. We're one of these . . . now, Dade and Palm Beach County work differently.

J.B.: What sort of activity is there on the precinct level?

Boylston: Well, we meet monthly, not all of them do by a long shot, with full committee. We run an education program, we're talking about a training school right now. Is that the precinct list?

Second Respondent: We don't have the pages numbered in here, when you are dealing with advertising, you don't know whether you are going to have ten pages or twenty.

Boylston: But we have speakers, we have been trying to have a speaker and we had Jerry Thomas here. We meet every third Monday in the month, and have for years and normally in the off election years, don't meet in the summer and in on election ones, we do. We run precinct training

schools like we are putting together now. I just had Spud working over a sheet for precinct committee assignments. We keep the precinct pretty full, keep them busy selling tickets to fund dinners, have them organized now. We have twenty-nine Republican clubs in the county. Club presidents and vice-presidents met yesterday for lunch with the board of the executive committee and we are keeping them hanging together so that we don't get any of these fights that we did four years ago. And we give them a job, like as soon as the legislature is up, we throw a non fund raising, break even for all the Republican office holders, Tallahassee on down. (tape inaudible due to office typewriter) . . . we have the primary and then the general election and then the 26th of October (tape inaudible) an outside thing and bring candidates in.

W.D.V.: Do you have more activity going on in this county than in any of the others?

Boylston: Oh, I would say so. Orange is pretty active, but we probably do more.

W.D.V.: In both parties?

Boylston: No, the Democrats are in shambles here. They just voted their chairman out of office and aren't quite sure who the new chairman is or the vice-chairman is and they are split into four or five wings. They never had an organization here, they didn't have to. If you know anything about politics in most of the South, it is quite different from a place like Michigan. (tape inaudible due to office typewriter) . . . coming from Congressional districts. They only met once and then they elected a chairman and elected what was referred to as a fifteen man board and then that ran the thing until the next election. The reason that the Democrats

don't have a party here and never had one, is identical to the reason that the Republicans never had one in Maine. I've worked in Maine quite a lot. The Democrats always won here. The first year that I arrived down here, there were four or five Democrats running in a primary for governor and Ted Gate was the one that spent the least of all, he spent a million dollars in the Democratic primary, and he was the least.

Then, once the primary was over, they go home . . . (tape inaudible due to typewriter) So, you never built a party. You built some individual parties, you'll find that the three best organizations in the state are that of the comptroller, the secretary of agriculture, and the lieutenant governor's organization, which is what really put the governor in. Because they had individual organizations. Once the primary was over, they need the Democratic party, they didn't care who the chairman was. They just went home, because the show was all over and hell, the elections were over in May and they never even cared about November. We still don't have their people opposed everywhere. So, you can never build a party, you built individual parties for candidates. We were able to build up against something and finally build up a party and it's exactly what happened in Maine. Once the Republicans won a primary, the show was over. They didn't have any party in Maine. They still don't, they haven't been able to put it together yet. The Democrats built up a party there against the Republicans. It's just exactly the same. So, when you have a one party system, the one party is not a party.

J.B.: So, how did you begin building, with precinct organizations?

Boylston: I would say that we always try to say that we do it by precinct organization, but the fact is that you do it by candidates.

Caliber of candidates, that's what did it.

(interruption on tape.)

. . . but I'd say that the biggest thing that we have to build around . . . when you get new workers into a party, our precinct people mostly have been precinct people up north or somewhere else. But the way that you get new people in is primarily through new attractive candidates. Our best results have been frankly Democrats of the individually run same old party action . . . (tape inaudible due to office typewriter) . . . a guy in the senate that I know got 71%. (tape inaudible due to office typewriter) . . . I'd file his papers and he couldn't believe it and he had to run. He's a neuro surgeon, a brain surgeon, the biggest one in town. It cost him a thousand dollars a day everyday that he's up there in session. We have just whipped up some pretty good candidates. We had lawyers, doctors, we had every other damn thing that we could think of. We had the biggest stock broker in town, president of

, we put him on the county commission. (tape inaudible)

And the Democrats ran the same old party hat and we just whomped them. But basically, it's the candidates. Then, the workers that would come in with any of those guys, we would try to hold them, and then they would float into party circles.

J.B.: How about insofar as election day organization?

Boylston: Election what?

J.B.: Election day organization, getting out the vote.

Boylston: Same old thing that everybody else does, we have some precincts that work like the dickens, using normal procedures.

Now, we have an advantage that we never had in Michigan. In the Fourteenth District, we spent 95% of our precinct trying to find out

the party affiliation of the voters. And then on election day, you would go through the procedures of getting them there. We don't have to do that here in the South and certainly in Florida. We register by party, we get the new precinct list and get a pile of names in and we know in every precinct who is registered and what the party affiliation is and how many there are. So, the big part of the up North precinct business is done. So, on the election day, we check off the Republicans against the Republicans and those that haven't voted, we give them a call about two o'clock in the afternoon and get them to the polls. Now, you can't do that in a lot of states. But where you have party registration and the lists are readily available, there it is. We turn out a far higher percentage of the registered Republicans than the Democrats turn out a percentage of Democrats. In this county, almost half the Democrats vote Republican and they don't know which half it is. Only know that they are registered Democrats. But there are two periods, they came down here before the '66 period when we began to win, we have had some reregistration since then. Not too many, it was an effort, you had to come all the way down to Florida and . . . (tape inaudible due to office typewriter) And people came down here and they found out that there wasn't anybody on the ballot. In November, there was a Republican. So, they registered as a Democrat even when they were Republican up North because the so-called liberal-conservative battle took place in the Democratic primary and then the show was over. So, they all registered as Democrats. Now, many of those have registered. And then there was another period, I can't remember the year, but a lot of Republicans that were registered as Republicans switched over and registered as Democrats to vote in the Democratic primary the year that

Claude Pepper ran against George Smathers for the United States Senate. The Republicans hated Claude Pepper so much that they reregistered as Democrats to vote for Smathers and there hasn't been any reason to get them reregistered back. They still vote Republican in November. Which makes it considerably easier for us in the primary and makes an awful mess for the Democrats. If they had an organization . . . the Democratic chairman lives or at least used to live in my precinct across the street from me. And he always wanted to get me to put on a registration drive where we could get people in our precinct registered in their true party and I never would cooperate with him. Because the precincts votes 86% Republican and then it was about 46% registered Republican. And he said that he was just getting sick and tired of driving Democrats to the polls that voted for me. Well, I wasn't about to help on that. I don't want any registration drives here.

W.D.V.: Some say that there is a realignment going on.

Boylston: There is.

W.D.V.: Which way is it going?

Boylston: The realignment down here is going, aligning along a party label basis rather than along a liberal-conservative basis. As in Jerry Thomas who was president of the senate as a Democrat, resigning and registering.

W.D.V.: Do you see large numbers of disaffected, conservative Democrats voting in the Republican party?

Boylston: I see them being very selective.

W.D.V.: I don't mean registering, I mean voting.

Boylston: Very selectively. I've counted absentee ballots down here

and looked them over and you wouldn't believe it, you never see a straight ballot. In Michigan, you can pull a one lever ticket or on a paper ballot or an absentee ballot, you can put one mark on there to vote the party. You can't do that in Florida. There's no straight party voting here. And I don't believe that I saw in the last bunch of absentee ballots, you can't tell, we vote machines here and everything, but you can see it on paper ballots and the Democrat chairman and I always go in and challenge a few and look at them all and I don't believe that I saw one of them that was a straight ticket. There would have been if there could have been a place for one mark, but all of a sudden, they will go down and pop over for somebody and vote. I think that there is more ticket splitting going on now all over the country than there ever was before. And they think that they are doing it on who is the best man, whether they are or not, who knows, but it's who they think is the best man and who they think the best man is is the guy they saw the most on the boob tube.

J.B.: Assuming that Senator Gurney . . . .

Boylston: He's speaking Friday in town.

J.B.: Assuming that there is no indictment, to what extent will his participation in the interparty fight in 1970 hurt him this year?

Boylston: Badly. In this way. I don't think it will hurt so much, it's the voters that will hurt him and the worers. His hard core workers in this county, the biggest number of them that he had in '66, will vote for him, but I doubt if they will raise the money and knock on the doors and do the work for him that they did before. They like the way that he has voted in Washington, his original people, but they don't like the split and the other things. So, they will vote for him because they like the way

he has voted in Washington, most of them like the way he looked on the Watergate committee, but I don't think that they are going to be busfing their tails for him and I think their first assumption was rather large.

W.D.V.: How about Paula Hawkins against him?

Boylston: Head to head in a primary? I think that Ed Gurney would win it. That is, assuming that he is not under indictment. He's got a lot of hard core friends down here. The other potential is Lou ~

the Congressman. He was the Congressman that took Gurney's Congressional seat and I would say that if it had to be head to head between him and Gurney, Gurney would beat him. If he is not under indictment. Or let's put it this way. If the grand jury has dismissed and does not indict him, if it is still hanging over his head, then I don't know. If I were the Democrats, I would drag that thing on and keep that thing going until after filing day and hop it between the filing date and the primary.

W.D.V.: The state party, much like the county party, had a spurt about '66 to '68 and kind of levelled off both in office holders and registration.

Boylston: right.

W.D.V.: What do you see going in the future?

Boylston: Nothing is going up basically with the realignment of the northern Florida Democrats with the Republicans.

W.D.V.: You mean conservative Democrats voting in the Republican party.

Boylston: Uh-huh. The thing that is counter-balancing is more people coming down here that are probably more liberal, moving in.

W.D.V.: You mean Republicans or Democrats?

Boylston: Both. A newer volume of population. What do we have, 20,000 a month or something like that moving into town. Right now, there are 53,000 ~~condominiums~~ condominiums in this county that will be sold sometime.

A couple of hundred thousand more on the drawing board. It's a mass of headaches. You should be a precinct organizer here. How many did we get in the last . . . .

Second Respondent: Fifty-seven.

Boylston: Fifty-seven new precincts. Now, whoever heard of fifty-seven new precincts in . . . .

W.D.V.: In one year?

Boylston: Yeah. Whoever heard of that in Michigan or somewhere? Hell, we built one of these condominiums which was damn near a precinct in itself .

W.D.V.: Well, do you see steady growth for the Republican party statewide?

Boylston: I see steady growth for the Republican party statewide and I see it dropping off here. I think that we have almost . . . I think that we are going to go a little higher, I think that we have almost reached our peak, though. Here at least.

J.B.: I was just noticing the statement by the sherrif in his program from last February saying . . . I mean, it's in this context sort of thing, but he said that he thought that the President would meet his hour of crisis and emerge strengthened. Do you think that the events of the last three months have changed that situation?

Boylston: You have to look at that. In 1968, the sherrif was the . . . our sherrif is a little bit type of different sherrif. He is a retired lawyer from New York with a lot of money and loves politics. Wouldn't know which end of the gun barrel to look at. Although, he has done pretty well, it's an administrative job. In 1968, Ed was the state chairman for Nixon. In 1972, he was the head of the host committee, which put on the thousand dollar dinners for Nixon, raised most of the Nixon money in Florida. So, I imagine that that had something to do with his statement. However, I think something else, I think that Spud here wrote the add for him and the

sherrif signed it, didn't you?

Second Respondent: Something like that. (laughter.)

W.D.V.: I probably should have asked you the question. (Laughter.)

Have the events of the last year set things back? In terms of candidate recruitment or money or anything else?

Boylston: Certainly. It hasn't affected us too badly in the county and not too badly in the state, but I think that the national party it has. It hasn't affected us moneywise at all. In fact, if you want to know the truth, we even made some money out of it. But I think that voter-wise . . . it hasn't set us back in recruitment of candidates and it hasn't set us back in money, but it may set us back in votes in November.

Second Respondent: See, the Democrats have got their Watergate up there in Tallahassee.

Boylston: See, they've got four cabinet officers that are probably going to be indicted and as I say, the only Democrat that was elected in Broward County has just been removed from office. You know, we can keep up with them on that. But when it comes to the general public in November . . . I don't know. They may just vote against everybody that's in office, whether they are Democrats or Republicans. I don't have a handle on it this time yet. I have seen a couple of polls, though. You can take a poll today and it isn't worth a damn two days from now.

Second Respondent: You see a little in the city elections, the municipality elections, this voting the "ins" out.

Boylston: Yeah.

Second Respondent: Whatever party. That may be a trend, I don't know.

W.D.V.: Is there anybody in the party now that approaches a statewide leader?

Boylston: What do you mean, "Approaches?"

W.D.V.: Well, you could say if there was a Republican who is a statewide leader.

Boylston and Second Respondent: Tommy Thomas.

Second Respondent: Yeah, very much so.

Boylston: He has a few people that he will listen to quite a lot.

W.D.V.: He has been able to pull it together.

Boylston: Yeah, pretty much. He hasn't had enough money to proper staff and properly do things. I guess that I was as instrumental as anybody in putting Tommy on the job. The former chairman I put in the job, and the one before that, I worked with and was the finance chairman for. We made a big mistake on ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ . . . Bill Murphen, who did more than any other chairman to make the Republicans a state party here. There wasn't any state party. And it was a bunch of YRs basically, who have now become 40 year olds that got together and . . . .

W.D.V.: They are still in the YRs.

Boylston: No, they arent. Not this bunch. A couple of them are, one of them is. But the basic rest of them, Lou Frye the Congressmen was one of them, there was a whole bunch, and they got together to take over the state party because they would meet once a year and elect chairmen and go home and do absolutely nothing. In fact, the chairman before that had a deal. He owned a bakery in Fort Myers and he made a deal with the Democrats. "I'll sell you all the bread and baked goods for the prisons and leave you alone." Well, the Young Republicans really started it and they got cranked up and went around the state and talked people into running. The only way that you can take it over is to run people for state committees. And we

got enough votes. I what of outside the Young Republicans, but I ran here as part of their organization, of the organization to take over the state committee. And we elected, we got enough votes frankly, to win the election. We got one guy to withdraw in a three way race, and we had the votes. The only problem that was typical of Young Republicans in Palm Beach, we knew all of a sudden that we were going to have the votes, but we didn't have anybody that wanted to be chairman. And we kind of thought that it ought to be Lou Frye and Lou weasled out of it. I think that's how he got to be a Congressmen, he weaseled out and thought that it was easier to be in Congress than it was to be state chairman. And the only other one besides me who wouldn't take it, I wouldn't take it, was Bill Murphen, you owned two drugstores and wasn't tied down to his desk like some of the other people. As long as he was on a telephone. Well, we put him in as state chairman and he did the most of anybody in the state to build the Republican party from 1966 until 1969 when he resigned. And he resigned to go to Washington as the number two man in the Small Business Administration. We got together, I was finance chairman and I was not interested in the thing and there wasn't anybody else on the committee who we could probably elect who knew much about it. And I guess that it was my fault more than anybody, at least it is blamed on me by the troops. We picked a guy named Duke Crittenden who had been the campaign chairman for Ed Gurney, who could afford the job, Orlando was a night place. The only thing was that he wasn't on the state committee. And I talked Lou Frye into resigning and the county chairman up there into appointing Crittenden as a state committeeman when he resigned and then went to the meeting and sold Crittenden as the chairman. I was still finance chairman.

After about three months, I became a little disenchanted. In fact, one of the things they did, they decided that they had a finance director that would work for me. I had done it all myself or had volunteers before and they sent a young guy, Larry Williams, to see me. And that was about the crowning blow. I said, "You hire him and I quit." Now, my old friends are all in jail and I'm not. But Crittenden turned out to be a disaster, because he got tied in so totally with Gurney. It seemed like a good idea at the time, but it didn't work. So, he ran for chairman again last time and we got together and decided that we better throw him out and get another chairman and so we talked Tommy Thomas into running. What was left of the old group, plus some new ones, elected Tommy as chairman. The state committee had been under Murphen here, well, it was in this building. Then, we moved it to Orlando because that was convenient for Crittenden, which was a pretty good area for it, in fact one of the best places. And then, under Tommy, he lives in Panama City and Tallahassee was nearer for him. . . plus, it has some advantages in the press corps and knowing what is going on in the legislature and a few things like that. The disadvantage being that they can't get volunteers over the weekend down there, or in Orlando. Or things donated the way you can down here. I think that when we took over in '66, everything was donated. They have had to buy things. And if Jerry Thomas were elected governor, there are some candidates, most of them that get elected learn to walk on water immediately. Some take a little longer and some never learn to walk on water. And my feeling is that Jerry Thomas would not be the walk on water type and as governor try to take over the party. He is close to Tommy and Tommy Thomas would still be the party leader rather than the governor. We had this with Claude Kirk the other way around. He decided that he was going to be the party and

the party was not about to be Claude Kirk.

J.B.: Do you see the Republican party in Florida say five or ten years from now, being more conservative than it is now?

Boylston: No, I see it being less.

J.B.: That's because of . . . .

(End of tape.)