

Elizabeth Gritter  
6/15/04  
Memphis TN

Hunter Lane, Jr., draft transcript

Topics covered: Edward Crump, Shelby County Democratic Club, William Ingram, City government in 1940s through 1970s, Bussing, School desegregation, black vote, Henry Loeb, race relations, black leaders

HL: Well, I think to set a backdrop for Memphis politics in the 1950s and 1960s, you need to look at politics before in Memphis. As you may have been informed, we had a very effective, all inclusive political machine here headed up by Crump. He was sort of the "uncrowned king." He was a fantastic organizer. During the years he wasn't in office, he provided honest government – in the sense no graft. Of course a dictatorship is never honest. It pervaded the whole social structure. Crump even controlled people who ran for Parent Teachers Association offices. It was just thoroughly controlled. He had a lot of contemporaries who were leaders in the city one way or another and helped a lot of it. There is a statue in Overton Park "great public benefactor." My dad was opposed to Crump – not out of personal animosity but didn't like being controlled in that way. Not an open situation where you didn't get punished or passed over for jobs if you weren't Crump. There were a growing no. who opposed Crump. He provided honest government but did reprehensible things to do. He was really against organized labor. There were rumors that he had labor leaders beaten up. Edmund Orgill was another one of the real leaders and relatively small group but they get chipping away. In 1948, they sponsored Estes Kefauver for the Senate. Crump's man was in the race too. That was the first real chink in Crump's armor. From then on, there were more insurgents or opposition was more successful. [Interruption.] Anyhow, this group gradually took on more momentum and more success. Labor community was virulently anti-Crump b/c Crump was not for labor. At that time blacks were not a factor in part because most blacks didn't vote. The preachers, particularly those by large congregations, were contacted by Crump people and slipped cash by Crump. They campaigned from the pulpit. There weren't any black political organizations that had influence. There really weren't any. There were lots of individuals but no well organized outfits in the political. That came about really year I ran 1963, the first first time well organized, effective black political organization called the Shelby County Democratic Club. A lot of young people like Russell Sugarmon, AW Willis and all kinds, Jesse Turner, Maxine Smith, they were all kind of names that became household words later on. They put together this organization. What was different about it: first of all, a lot of smart people organizing it. They put together a ward and precinct organizations. Instead of getting money on front end from candidates in order to endorse them which is what the preachers did and a lot of organizations did, they interviewed candidates and then made a decision. Then, you were expected to help with their campaigning expenses. I dealt with them on two separate elections. I ran for mayor in 1967. I didn't detect any under-the-table – it was a straight deal. [Interruption]. That was the most significant thing that happened in Memphis

politics as far as I was concerned. By 1963, they had ward and precinct, they were highly organized. If you got their endorsement which I was fortunate to get mainly because my opposition was Crump guy no racial sensitivity, I think I won by about 40,000 votes. You could identify them as black votes if you want to look at it that way. From then on, the SCDC lasted for years. It brought in new people. They never were allied but fellow travelers, people who thought same way. Burch being one of them. Crump died in 1954 and his organization sort of fell apart after that. They didn't field any candidates and the old holdovers like I ran against didn't have constituency to speak of without Crump.

HL: You want me to talk about years I was in city government, 1963 or 64 through 1967. The election that year was interesting. The favorite of all the power structure in Memphis – both newspapers, every kind of Chamber of Commerce, every kind of CEO (), all for a guy named William W. Farris. He wasn't personally attractive but he was an able guy. He was short and had a bad leg. He had been an asst to Orgill. He knew his way around. Everybody thought he was a shoo-in. His opponent was William B. Ingram, a city judge. He was a maverick in every sense of the word. He was one of the few judges who conducted his court not a police court. That was a real departure. Early days you get a good deal on the sentence. This applied to black people because most frequent visitors. Stunned everybody by winning the election. He proceeded to spit in the eye of these people who supported Farris?

We had a mayor and four commissioners. Mayor really didn't have a great deal of power, he had more appointive power. By virtue of being mayor, he was king of the hill. But on legislative phase, he had one vote like rest of us. He was prisoner of World War II. He took great pleasure in giving people a bad time, particularly reporters people who had something to do with the establishment. He tried to appoint some outrageous people. Many instances of bad judgment to say the least. He didn't work in harmony – didn't try with rest of commission. One of the commissioners was a guy named Claude Armour, who'd been a Crump man. There was another first-time elected person named Pete Sisson who was director of public works. Jimmy Moore, "affable duds." He had been a professional baseball player. He was Hollywood handsome. IN fact, he'd been to Hollywood. Everyone loved Jimmy. He really didn't take it too seriously. It was a job, he wasn't a politician. My dad had been a big-league player so I got a long fine with Jimmy. The commission government was a terrible system of governing. The same people who ran departments and day to day administration of government and voted on budget – no checks and balances except for each other. You didn't have an independent body looking at budgets. One of the reasons for that was that government expenditures were far less then and costs were less so we didn't have tax deficit problem.

One of the big fights was under War on Poverty during Johnson Administration. It was a federally funded program. It had a lot of good intent and a lot of good aims. We didn't approve a program for a couple years because nobody agreed on who was to man the CAA. Ingram it was all in his power to appoint people. We had more or as much poverty than any city in the country per capita. Finally, so many people got on him. He got a large number of black votes in this election – that's what elected him. Although it was a mutual repudiation between him and the Shelby County Democratic Club, he didn't like them and they didn't endorse him. So, the responsible black politicians repudiated him. He made contacts of his own – preachers and others of power. He

maintained the favor of the majority of the black community throughout his term although War on Poverty thing directly hurt the black community. I never did understand their support for him. We muddled through there for a while. At that point b/c all these elected jobs were at large no possibility of blacks being elected to city government. A precious few wre appointed to anything. Ingram did appoint some black supporters and I did too -- I brought in some people who were recommended by the Shelby County Democratic Club.

In about late 1966, the need for a change in the system of government became more and more evident. So, there was a group of good citizens who got together and they wrote a new city charter. POP. They worked for a long time to put together it. A lot of them wanted change. They compromised and it went on the ballot in 1967. The fact that Ingram had been disruptive factor for new system of government was Ingram. Ingram was violently against it, but he ran for mayor. I ran. Ingram and the former mayor, Henry Loeb, dumb, hard-headed, very popular. Answering every letter he got. Fixing potholes. He had been commission of public works. He was needed at laundry. He came back into politics. Seven candidates, and Ingram and Loeb were the top vote getters. Loeb -- not very intelligent person and extremely single-minded and hard headed. No real deep intelligence. He did hire people to help him out. Kind of like Bush as far as I'm concerned. Loeb won and shortly thereafter the Martin Luther King came to town and the garbage strike took place. Public lawyers union. Still on the books but it's just ignored. Why they don't repeal it, I guess it's not politically correct to it. I won't get into Loeb's regime but I was back trying to practice law them. I did run again in 1971 and I was elected to the school board to my everlasting regret b/c 72 was the year busing went into effective. It was "hell on wheels" as one of our people called it. It was terrible, a lot of strain. Bussing was almost universally unpopular. Bussing was the only solution. We didn't have racially mixed neighborhood really.

So you were for it?

Well, we had a court order. There were a lot of pretty mean people who were against bussing. Our mayor -- Wyeth Chandler -- cut off the gasoline. Every politician in time. Boyhood friend of mine and still a friend but he was very conservative and bigoted not too strong a word. He received no black support to speak of when he ran for mayor. He catered to the anti-busing people. Everybody did. People working for dogcatcher.

Q. Why so unpopular?

A. Several reason. Took white kids out of their nice schools and transported to ghetto, and number two -- it was a total change in education system. I think of myself, maybe on the Liberal end of moderate, I guess, I am, I was for busing b/c it was ordained thing by federal court, but we all could see the problems. It was very expensive, that was a factor. It just generally just upset the (). It was the only way we could have desegregated school system in Memphis. Prior school board was at large, this time by district. M. Smiht on it. NAACP was suing the school board at that time, nobody called her on that. That went on virtually for whole time I was on school board 4 years, we spent very little time dealing with curriculum, teacher improvement, and everything school boards supposed to do. I had a cross burned in my yard by anti-bus people. They'd get bus and burn it and bury the bus one time. Weren't all thugs, there were a lot of decent people violent



against it. A lot of it was racial hatred. They believed black children didn't have intellect of white children, that they were dirty and unruly. I think it's been proven that there's no intellectual gap but they were dirty. Mother working two jobs.

Q. Did bussing accomplish its purpose?

A. Well Not really b/c I think the first year that we lost 50,000 students out of total of 140,000 black and white students. Segregationist academies popped up, church private schools. To that extent, busing didn't work. It wasn't a mixture. Public schools now – over 80 percent blacks. Most of segregationist academies fell by wayside. A lot of people moved out to county. Fayette, DeSoto County, etc.

White flight to suburbs take place same time busing.

Yes, that was original impetus for it and it continued. Of course, DeSoto is one of fastest growing counties and also there's Tunic with gambling.

Q. Were you involved with 1959 election?

A. I was a campaign manager for one of the candidates, Lewis T. He ran against John T. "Buddy" Dwyer. Crump still had some clout then. It was waning. His organization – people stepped in there. There were no super leaders like Crump but there were a lot of people who lived under Crump. As far as racial polarization, it might seem incredible but the Shelby County Democratic Club had not come into existence then. Might've had some beginning. Russell Sugarmon was not only highly educated, wise beyond years, just nice guy. You couldn't pick a better candidate. Harvard Law educated, he really had the credential. Being from Grand Rapids you probably can't conceive how deeply anti-black feeling was. Most people and I'm one of them who were raised out there – we call it "the golden ghetto" we had very little contact with blacks. We had a maid. There was a guy come around selling vegetables off a truck. We had no inkling of what went on in 362 the black community and what problems there were just kind of generally conceived as relatively happy people who had adjusted to their station in life. Changed when came back from Army, Eastern education. Then again, there was sort of a knee jerk reaction when NAACP leaders became more aggressive. You couldn't ignore them anymore. There was great outrage. I belong to a country club and these are pretty financially successful people. You couldn't imagine the outrage -- they would've burned Maxine at the stake. They challenged everything. The tactic used by NAACP -- It was all rhetoric. White people just took it for granted--. Had very little contact with blacks except ministers – some churches made contact through ministers. As far as any whites who tried to bring blacks into 20<sup>th</sup> century, very few, Burch is one of them. Even Edmund Orgill who was anti-Crump, he was a very successful businessperson. He had a jagged personality, not likeable. He was an honorable guy. He wasn't a good back-slapping good old guy. When he was elected he kept the city attorney who had been Crump appointee – outraged his followers. I worked real hard for him. Orgill didn't appoint any blacks to any jobs. I really don't know why b/c I don't think he was bigoted – It was a practical situation. Generally he was a man of principle. He didn't see it as a right thing to do. I never talked to him about it.

Q. I talked to Sam Hollis, who said Orgill was very racially progressive.

A. He was compared to most white people. I may be wrong. There weren't any showcase blacks he appointed. I'm not even sure. At that time, there wasn't any identifiable – as far as leaders were preachers, some people make a little money get votes out. No massive well organized black political group. The point is I don't know how dependent Orgill was on their vote. I don't think it was a matter of you owe us something. He ran against Loeb next term and I think he was going to be beat anyhow. He had to drop out of the race b/c artery problem or minor stroke. Loeb won in 1959. That's right. Loeb had been director of public works for that time. He ran in 1959 against Orgill who was the incumbent mayor. He served a couple of years.

Q. How did you come to experience a change in racial consciousness?

A. It was a lot of things. We had some very able black lawyers. They wouldn't let them sit on benches of court. I saw the injustice of that firsthand and spoke out against it. I met people like Sugarmon, Willis, people like that. They were first educated blacks of any competence that I had anything to do with -- that certainly changed my view. Like I say, I knew our maid, our knew our garbagemen. I should've known others existed but I never had any contact.

Q. Did you meet them through law practice?

A. No, I met them through politics entirely. Although I did have a lot of black clients. My dad was a personal bankruptcy expert. He's a typical example. My dad was committed, very Christian person in that he read scriptures and went to church. He was a good man. Most of his money was made from black people. He was just as adamant about racial equality as you can imagine. He was raised in a medium income. He didn't have any experiences with blacks. He was typical – people who should've had some concern were just few and far between. Maxine was a hard charger, that antagonized people. Sometimes she went to the extreme. Evolution kind of thing. Realized they were honorable people. That's why I ran for school board because I knew black schools were really being shortchanged. I was hoping to make a difference as far as upgrading the black schools but that wasn't necessary as it turned out.

Q. Why opposition to school but not voting?

A. Well, I think it affected black people's children, most precious possession. They did have an exaggerated attitude toward being in predominate black schools. I kept my kids in public schools. Black teachers were poor, couldn't speak good English, promiscuity among younger blacks and didn't exist or not as open as in white schools. Generally, people thought of black people as almost subhuman. Not that bad, but certainly not as God's children. As black political movement got going, there was a greater effort of white community to get to know them because they were a threat. All a power thing. Had it not been for political success we probably never would've had any voluntary desegregation of any extent.

Q. Intersection between black electoral activity and civil rights gain.

A. Put in national context, just getting started in 1950s. Civil rights movement and political movement were really closely tied in. The people who were working for equality, they realized they had to get it as practical matter through politics by either

electing own people or supporting someone who would help them. I can't think of anyone involved in civil rights movement who was not involved in political movement. 603. "As long as they weren't able to elect anybody or influence anyone, they were just voices crying in the wilderness." A lot of sound and fury down there but no clout. Shelby County Democratic Club was formed. "It either had to be through the political process or by revolution."

## Side 2

Q. I came across a report written in 1964 he said more progress to racial integration in Memphis than any other city.

A. That doesn't speak well of the others.

Q. Jesse Turner said it was all token.

A. Exactly. There was some dialogue. I put a black on a board. I hired a couple. I admit it was tokenism, I just wanted to pay my dues for their support. There were a lot of blk building contractors hadn't been to Georgia Teach.

Q. Did people in these appointment, hold much power or policymaking the boards?

A. Potentially but it never was exercised. Usually a board like that. I'll give you an example - housing authority board which I served on. At that time, the director made it go. Board very rarely crossed him. Generally speaking boards were pretty passive organizations. Part time board didn't get into it unless something missed. But that was a start. A. Maceo Walker was a good man but he was never in mainstream in political resurgence. I'm sure he gave a lot of money. I wouldn't call him an Uncle Tom.

Q. How did civil rights play out in commission. Did you have power over parks being desegregated.

A. Absolute power. WE had park commissions, etc. We were the essential decisionmakers, but there again we had a person educated in park X. IN matters of desegregation, we had to decide. I came out for desegregating the city swimming pools. Next to busing, that was the most violent reaction I got. WE got all these calls, it's almost ludicrous. "Niggers have venereal disease." They were truly concerned about medical effects

They were closed for a long time.

Yes. But then Jimmy Moore - this is one area - where he got involved. They worked something out.

Q. Parks versus commission. Watson v. Memphis.

A. At that time only blacks one day to zoo and only one golf course they could go to. I don't recall that decision but obviously that didn't have much merit. It was not needed. Most of these things you went ahead and do it and know have outcry. Rather than do it gradually. Blacks weren't going to have that and whites just as unhappy as you did gradually as in one swoop. This gradualism was not a good idea with anything.

Q. Mr. Hollis thought gradual integration was good.

A. There's something to say for that. Except for being Administration assistant for Orgill, Hollis never in political forefront. He did get involved more than people of his status. He never ran for office. He has continued to do a lot of low-profile things like working for an organization named PIPE. Something in public education, helped raise private funds for projects in schools.

Q. Were people on city commission overall for segregation or people for it or debates about it?

A. I was prime example. I got more black support and they elected me but I wasn't any fiery leader. I didn't really expound on public much on the fairness of desegregation. I didn't say much about it. Most of people who were in public office didn't – it was kind of like political suicide to get too far out there. There were very few people in the white community who liked the idea – most of them were violent opposed to the idea. To the extent of my involvement initially was keeping in touch with black leaders and knowing where they were coming from and understanding their position on things. They had been denied so long, screwed over for so long, they were naturally bitter, even guys like Sugarmon and Willis. They didn't want to wait along much longer. I don't think they would have led any revolts. They were ready to take street action like in 1968 with garbage strike. That could've happened earlier. If Dr. King... I think things changed to the extent that picketing was a real alternative. Saw wisdom of not doing that sooner. I'm pretty sure didn't want to come in too strong too quickly. Finally got to the point that they took to the streets – garbage workers. Like the white community, Shelby County Democratic Club but vast majority were not involved directly in political decisions but relatively few were leading the charge.. Garbage strikers clear not being paid enough. Garbage strike did more to unite blacks than anything else. Rallying point for black community probably more so than before. There again whites couldn't conceive of blacks conducting orderly march, that it wouldn't get out of hand – when threatened to march in a white area. And first march it did get out of hand. I think of garbage workers hadn't come on, something else would've come on to get CRM at faster pace. Tokenism didn't satisfy them anymore. Understandably, didn't just want showcase thing of one blacks appointed.

Q. Seems with integration and blacks in public office it still hasn't effected underlying social dynamics where whites hold political and economic power.

A. You're exactly right. There are certainly more affluent blacks than in 1960s. Many many more black lawyers. Of course main change is black members of elected body. You look at elected and appointed office – they're practically all black now. White people bitch about it but fact is there time has come. There have been some crooks but not many, not more than there were in white government. Head of MLGW, head of housing authority, you name it, blacks have it.

Do you think blacks in public office has been a good thing, contributed to black-white getting better.

I think it's a mix. Still a lot of racial animosity. A big slice of them back then came from rural backgrounds, Mississippi. Beginning in 70s with school they're moving all back.



That contributed to it – people who moved to Mphs for jobs mainly who were unenlightened when came to racial attitudes, used to status of blacks with fieldhand. I'd say familiarity doesn't always breed contempt, familiarity helps. The majority of blacks have done a good job and precious little scandal. I don't think any more negative feeling about black councilman as with whites. Only controversial things get anybody's attention. Yeah I'd say their presence definitely has been a plus and it's helped civil rights movement. Before they were elected, blacks didn't have any direct voice. It's a whole new ball game. Herenton was his first black mayor and it's his fourth term. He's put all these blacks in public office.

Do you think rise of black public officials now would've been impossible w/o rise of SDCD.

Well, that was the start. I know SDCD doesn't exist. It was born out of necessity. Now no need for me. In all fairness to whites, they're still the rednecks who will never vote for black but a lot of people now examine candidates regardless of their race. It's: which black are we going to elect – this one or this one. Particularly people who have to deal with government, we want to get on winning team in case we need anything. I think we've turned the corner. I don't think there's going to be turning back pages. You have majority black population now. Not much of majority – 55 percent. But a lot of them more inclined to go to polls whereas in white community a lot of this – we just have to make a choice between blacks, don't care to do that, not interested, don't want to get involved in city government anymore. When annex an area always a lot of protest. Mayor of county government is first class guy, was public defender. Fact we have separate city-county government. Happily they don't vote on racial lines all the time, he's talking about city-county government. Some fiscally conservative blacks and white whites.

What was interaction with SDCD like?

I was interviewed by them when I ran. They talked to me about my qualifications and my attitudes. I don't think they were thoroughly satisfied. I was new, they were new. They were looking for anybody to defeat guy I was ran against. So I got their votes. After I got elected I would hear from Sugarmon and others. "When are you going to take some action here." Sugarmon asked me to put him on MLGW board. One thing I've never forgiven myself for. I knew I didn't have votes. Sugarmon was symbol of aggressive black effort. He was tagged by people as enemy of the state. Known as leader. Didn't conform to line that people thought of blacks. I copped out. I could've made a line. Armour would've voted down, Ingram hated Dem club wouldn't have voted, Moore would have seen which way wind blowing – he would've consulted with his advisors and told him not to do it. He was nice guy but wimp when came to hard decisions. He wanted to be loved. Natural human instinct.

What were repercussions if appointed Sugarmon.

After watching him in action, most people in city would have seen he was superior guy. I was liaison man. City commission had members that sat on these board meetings. Sat on housing authority, MLGW to keep city commission advised about what was going on.



Why so controversial.

B/c in their minds he was such an inflammatory black leader. They probably, maybe, would've put some Uncle Tom.

He would've stirred things up.

I'm sure he would've, like found out blacks not hired for electricians. A lot sniffed out in terms of desegregation. He would've done it. He was a tough guy. Anybody hwo goes up to Haywood County and tries to sign up people to vote, you have be courageous.

Did SCDC pressure on you made an impact on your decision son CR?

It certainly made an impact on my attitude about blacks in general. I would've bene the most ungrateful and insensitive person if I had ignored they had put me in office. They would confide in me what they wanted to get done like swimming pools. I didn't have a lot of daily contct, even weekly. It wasn't constant interface. Sugarmon and the MLGW board. Deservedly, I got a lot of flack about that. There were other things. It was sort of that.

You said you copped out.

With perspective over 40 years, if I had guts to do it, I would propose his name and let them reject him. I knew he wasn't going to get nominated. I took the easy road. I'm not sure he would've gotten another vote. I would've gotten disfavor from white voters – that was a factor. You can't ignore the effect of things. At that point I didn't know – change in government system hadn't come bout – I didn't know whether I'd stay in politics or not. I hadn't made up my mind. Commission came in 1963 re: Sugarmon. I wanted to be well received among my friends. I was pretty naïve. I wasn't hardened. I was still concerned about popularity, human wants nd needs. With Sugarmon, knew I wanted to get crap from other people.

Do you think people on commission unhappy.

Yeah, they would've ben b/c I was smoking out their feelings, I ws putting them in awkward position. I had some people on MLGW board, one man came to me and said please don't put Sugarmon. He was a racist, they knew I was considering it. Id idn't get any reaction from city council members except that I knew--. Nobody told me they weren't going to. I just klnw from their past votes that they wouldn't.

Were you involved with Democratic Party activities?

I was with the Young Democrats and there was good bit of conflict among sons of old Crump people and new people. Actually my political philosophy wasn't well shaped. I voted for Nixon, hate to admit it. I just felt Nixon was better prepared. I don't tell many people that, needless to say. That was in 1960.

Were you involved in Nixon campaign at all.

No, I didn't go that far.

Q. When see Republican party coming into prominence here in Memphis?

A. Well, the blacks and a few white people were the only Republicans – Lincoln's party. The point is it wasn't until the Early 1960s that the Republican Party began to re-surge if that's the right word. A lot of people had always been Repub but () When Eisenhower came in, the party had been writing off the South, they saw it was opportunity. We had liberal Democrat presidents, Truman, he antagonized a lot of folks – well, he was the first. That's when Thurmond ran. Truman was despised by a lot of people in the South in Memphis particularly.

Civil rights.

Yeah, he desegregated the army, not too far people as far . That set the stage for a second party coming into power. There were bright Republicans who had never too involved, b/c Crump was a Democrat. You didn't beat him in those days. Donelson was one. There was a whole group. Of course, patronage at that time from Eisenhower. Republicans had something to offer but not much. They tried to make peace with the black Republican but that would've meant the black Repub. Giving up their connection in Washinton. They didn't have much success in that. In fact, they had a lot of conflict. I watched it from sidelines. I don't know how it took place, how Republicans went about increasing their status. To extent federal gov't enhance status they could. Also federal judges appointed. More wealthy, highly educated people with Repub, well heeled, like Repub. Are. Democrats more street. Now, we have two Repub. U.S. senators, a bunch of Congressman who are Repub, Repub governor before this wone. State is back and forth between Republican and Democrats. I don't think we've had a Democrat senator for some time.

Q. Were you involved with MCCR?

A. As I recall, it was the group that tried to effect better relations between blacks and whites. I don't think I was. I'm not sure. I could've been. As I recall, they were mostly – a lot of clergymen and some courgeos--. I wasn't apart of it. I was a sympathizer toward it. I didn't get active in it.

Q. 1964 civil rights act – impact, asked about

A. Voting rights wasn't any problem. We already had that. We had no poll tax. Blacks didn't vote not b/c couldn't but no interest, couldn't get anything out of elections. As far as lunch counters, out of that grew the War on Poverty programs, I told you about that already. I don't think that act really – it provided for open -- . I don't recall all the provisions but I think it provided for public facilities to be desegregated. It was just another mechanism for breaking down barriers. They dictated things that never would have happened otherwise. One thing led to another.

Tape 2 of 2

It came finally to the point that whether they like it or not black public officials and were going to have to accommodate it. The vast majority don't have contact with government except taxes unless they do something that affects people adversely.

It seems like most segregation to schools and pools.

Yeah, where whites have to give up something. There is a lot of latent racism now around still even among enlightened people.

Q. What think done to get rid of it?

A. I don't know; it's pretty ingrained. It's not nearly as bad as when Sguarmon was running for office. There they voted against Sugarmon b/c he was black. Now, it's a question about choosing between two black candidates. It's a matter of the heart. It all comes down to conviction. For most people, minor part of their existence. Don't talk about it at cocktail parties. Not a daily topic of conversation.

Do you remember in 1959 mobilization against him.

NO, I forgot Sugarmon ran then. My father was involved with anti-Crump people. I was in Orgill's campaign at that time. That was the year I was a campaign manager for Lewis T. I did both - worked for Lewis T. and Orgill. I went when I started out to make me assistant city attorney. He said I already get one, you join the Civic research committee. He kept city government in Crump's hands.

Did you joining CRC?

Yes.

What remember about it?

They were examining different forms of government. They weren't mobilizing to change anything like SCDC. They were just public information. Meeman was very much involved. He and Crump really had a shoot out, really despised each other. He was a little tiny guy. He was also () Crump. Nobody did that, so he could do that. hated Crump.

Q. How influential were newspapers back then and newspaper coverage for campaigns?

A. It's hard to say. Certainly being endorsed by newspaper worth something. Vast majority didn't subscribe to the papers much less read them. That was before TV so probably endorsement of paper meant a lot more. For those who read the paper and had some perspective on decisions? Newspapers were--. There was one conservative paper that spoke for the establishment and one evening paper. Two different points of view. First pretty well supported Crump. He generally was highly respected among black voters, kept status quo, kept taxes down, he didn't threaten them, weren't concerned with beating up labor leaders. Meeman was anti-Crump.

Q. After Orgill dropped out, were you involved with DCC or DCA.

A. I don't know what that it was. There were a lot of those things. Those were pretentious.

Q. Why do you think black voting allowed in Memphis, in Miss. All this resistance.

A. Had to read Chinese newspaper to qualify. I don't know. Since there were so many Miss and Arka at that time. Crmp realized there was a lot black voters and wanted them registered to vote b/c he could control through ministers. Potential force if they were



registered. Practical not philosophical decision. If he hadn't wanted them registered, they wouldn't have been registered.

Dramatic rise in black voting in 1950s, why that allowed.

I think blacks had a lot to do with registering voters, especially in the late 1950s. In the early 1950s, not a whole lot of assertion of demands for equality. Very few people probably realized – politicians probably realized – that blacks were increasing. It was kind of a low profile thing. Political scientists probably knew about it. I was also Rso's Pritchard's campaign manager. Really smart guy, he came from NJ. He was head of IR department. He had been an All Southwest Conference football player. He wanted to debate issues but his opponent who had been up there 20 years wouldn't engage about issues, just talk platitudes. He got beat bad. He ended up being president of two or three different universities. He's back here now. He had support of young war veterans and people like that. He would've been a great politician if he liked people.

Flighty intellectual. Ivory tower.  
That is a good description of it.

Q. What was campaigning like in those days?

A. If you were a Crump person, you didn't have to campaign too much. Just putting some signs out there. Organization took care of that. They had contacts at all levels that they could influence people by. They were working at it all the time. So if you were running against them, what you try to do to override their advantage – didn't work very often. After Crump died, chances got better. Bob James, just died, ran as Congress as a Republican against Cliff Davis (Crump appointed). He was an anti-communist, kind of like McCarthy, it was absolutely irro—well, I guess relevant to his race b/c he was in Congress. He built a bomb shelter in his backyards at about the time Cuban Missile Crisis going on. I lived by him. Ran in 1962. James was a Republican. That was an instance that the emerging Republican party, there was enough of them. It was a close race, he almost got election. They were getting organized by them. One thing they had was plenty of money. A lot of them were pretty wealthy people.

Q. Did a lot of people associate civil rights workers with communists.

A. Irresponsible conservative politicians put them on. They thought of every negative description they could. It wasn't a big factor, they pretty obviously weren't Communists.

Q. What about the role of civic clubs in campaign. How powerful

A. I used some examples earlier of Crump's influence. Any organization like a civic club, PTA, had some Crump people involved. There weren't many independent civic clubs. Most concerned about wanting neighborhood improvements – streets paved, etc. Not concerned about civil rights or improving city government. Yes, spoke to civic clubs in 1963 campaign. I went everywhere I could get votes.

Q. What was wrong with Dwyer?

A. He was ugly, not appealing, not too smart. He didn't reach out to black community. He had been relying on Crump organization his whole life. He misjudged the situation.

Small scandal in his building department. We made a big deal out of it, highly exaggerated. Dwyer unappealing nature. His department I found when I got in there was run pretty well. He had good subordinates. They became loyal to me.

Q. What were your responsibilities as commissioner of public service.

A. I had direct resp. for enforcement of housing code, building code. I was liaison person with a lot of separte city agencies like MLGW, Memphis Housing Authority. I was able to revise out-of-date building codes.

Q. Were their urban renewal efforts going on at that time?

A. Public housing well run at that time. Many, many whit epeople in PH. Many people wanted to get involved in it. Keep in mind this is after war and depression. PH was clean. A lot of urban renewsal going on – mos tof it pretty progressive and healthy. (He 250 goes on for some time about urban renewal and zoning.) . . . At that time Frayser lily white area, a lot of working class people. Housing there.

Racial component.

I'm sure that was a concern. They didn't say that.

How influential were SCDC, did white politicians have to pay attention to get elected. After 1963 election, yes. They didn't have to but were fools not to. We had legislative races, all sorts of race they were involved. Willis was elected to legislature at large. It was b/f Baker v. Carr which established one man one vote rule. For urban districts same representation as rural areas. Landmark decision for the whole country. As a result, they redistricted it and did give the city more representation. For example, before the decision a county district may have had 10,000 people and elected one squire and city district 100,000 people and elected one squire, so out of balance. Quarterly court was part time, not like city commission which was full time. WE had a blue ribbon quarterly court. In fact Jimmy Moore left his city commission midterm and won county commission position purely b/c he wanted to get away from controversy.