

Interview with Alan Parker, president of the Exchange Bank, Tuskegee, Alabama, July 11, 1974, conducted by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries, transcribed by Linda Killen.

Jack Bass: -- tell me just a little about your own background and your political involvement when you were active.

Parker: Well, I grew up down in south Alabama along the Florida-Alabama line. My father was a tenant farmer. In 1929 I finished high school in May and came up to Montgomery started working at the First National Bank of Montgomery as a runner in July of that year. In 1941 I came over here. In the spring of '42 I went into the military service. Spent four years there. Came out in December of '46. Been here continuously. Really, I'm not an expert on politics by any manner or means. During the time when we were in transition here, switching from white politics dominating to black dominance, I served on the city council for three years and then served three years on what is now the county commission. Was chairman of the county commission. My involvement was simply because some people felt that I could be of assistance in switching from, changing teams, you might say, or changing horses or whatever you might have. I'm not a politician by nature. Have no love for it or desire for it or anything else. But there were some who felt that I could serve effectively in that capacity. That's the extent of my political experience.

J.B.: Am I correct that you were elected chairman of the county commissioners by a majority black commission?

Parker: No. At the time I was elected there was only one black on the commission. No, there were two blacks at that time. There were two

blacks on the commission and two whites. And a majority of those four elected me. It was three to -- the two blacks and one white voted for me. One white voted against me.

J.B.: Could you tell us a little what that transition was like. What things were like here before and during and since.

Parker: Well, of course, obviously anyone that had any feel--you're the one that grew up in the South?

J.B.: No, I did.

Parker: Where?

J.B.: South Carolina.

Parker: Well, you know there was a good deal of feeling. . . resentment I reckon you'd call it on the part of whites for the black people being enfranchised and then in particular when running for office. And Tuskegee was no different from the rest of them in the feeling that was involved. The only difference was that ours was complicated by the fact that we were so predominantly black in population. And there were a lot of whites who actually had fears. Fears of being. . . maybe call it recrimination if you want to, or retribution, or whatever you might want to call it. But there was a genuine fear that with a complete black power, the power completely in the hands of an overwhelming black majority that they would just sweep the whites aside and be pretty rough on them. I didn't share that feeling and I think that's why there were some who felt that maybe I could serve as a buffer in there and kind of help to bring about an orderly and less traumatic transition.

J.B.: You were first elected when?

Parker: Well, let's see. What year it was. We'll have to count backwards. The present mayor has been in office for two years and there was a four year term before that and a four year term before that was when

I was elected to the city council or whatever that is.

J.B.: Ten years ago.

Parker: Yeah, whatever that council--

J.B.: '64. And you served three years there and the next three years on the county commission?

Parker: That's right. I resigned from each of them. I resigned from the city council in order to take the chairmanship of the county commission and then I resigned there. . . . Resigned each case because I felt like my role had essentially been played and there was no further point in my staying on.

J.B.: Had you had any political role before that? None.

Walter De Vries: Why did they pick you? I mean why was the decision made that you should do it?

Parker: I think they felt. . . I think there were some who felt that I was not effected by the, lot of the prejudices that were shared by both sides. And in some respects I think both sides had some trust in me. They felt like that I'd be fair.

J.B.: Had you played any role in community affairs before then?

Parker: I reckon you might say that I had been a conciliator, if that's a good word to use, if there was any such thing as conciliating the opposites that existed at that time. Mediator or. . . . Yes, I had been active in trying to keep us from going off tangents on issues that were at that time.

J.B.: Did you have any active role in church activity?

Parker: Well, I've always been active in church work.

J.B.: Which church is that?

Parker: Church of Christ.

W.D.V.: What were some of the tangents that you kept people from

going off on?

Parker: Well. . . you really would have had to have been back here at that time and have a feel of the situation. People were afraid of the unknown. There was tremendous fear on the part of white people that if blacks took over they would just go out and start exterminating whites. That type of ridiculous things. None of which I shared, but at the same time you had to be patient and you had to deal with folks that way. You couldn't just. . . they couldn't be ignored. We had an active Ku Klux Klan here at that time and it was a factor that had to be taken into consideration. It wasn't always. . . when you were dealing with hotheads it wasn't always possible to apply reason or logic.

J.B.: Were the Klan members pretty much known? Who they were and so forth.

Parker: Yeah, I would say. They were known to the whites. I don't know if they were known to the blacks. Maybe blacks knew some of them but they wouldn't have known all of them.

J.B.: Did you see their attitudes change during this period?

Parker: Yeah. As far as I know, there is no Klan organization any more. Most of the extreme radicals have either gotten away from Tuskegee or they have completely changed.

J.B.: Can you give us an example of this sort of change? Not by naming an individual but how some individual might have done something then and how he might do something now.

Parker: Yeah. There were some of the most rabid segregationists at that time. And the ones that were whipping up the emotions of the people. That are now working side by side with blacks. I think that's the best illustration that I know of.

J.B.: Can you give us a specific example without identifying the

person by name. But an individual. . . what he was doing then, what he might be doing now.

Parker: Well, let me see if this black person is still working around here at the liquor store. [Interruption on tape.] One of the white people who still works in there, does work in there, was one of the most rabid and one of those involved in the Ku Klux Klan. We did have a black clerk working in there. I was trying to ascertain whether he's still there or not. But that was an illustration, two fellows working side by side [in a] state job when the black person was real active in the integration, the school movement, and the other fellow was extremely active in trying to prevent the blacks coming in to power. Both of them were extremists.

W.D.V.: Was the white man a Klansmen?

Parker: Well, I was never a member but I would say that the community looked on him as one of the leaders of the Klan, yes.

J.B.: And what is he doing now?

Parker: He's working right here in the state liquor store.

J.B.: Has his attitude changed?

Parker: Well, I just said that the two of them were in there working side by side. That wouldn't have taken place before.

J.B.: Oh, they weren't working side by side back then.

Parker: Oh no, no, no. They were at opposite poles. Opposite poles. But since that time. . . . That's what I was trying to get over, was since that time they have worked over there. Now whether this black fellow is still working there or not. . . . As I say, I don't go in there. I know he has been working there. Whether he's still working there I'm not certain.

W.D.V.: But your point is that the attitudes have changed that much

in ten years.

Parker: Right! To permit them to come together.

W.D.V.: Could you have foreseen that ten years ago?

Parker: No, I really wouldn't have thought that it would have gone to that extent, no.

W.D.V.: What caused it? Why?

Parker: Just the passing of time, I think for one thing. And exposure. As we find out things. . . . Well, I had this experience right here in our own organization. There were a lot of my personnel that just did not feel that they could work side by side with a black person in here. But they don't feel that way any more because they're shoulder to shoulder and the roof didn't cave in. That type thing, see. I think that people tend to fear the unknown. And once they see that the roof doesn't cave in on them, they have a tendency to adjust to it within themselves. I don't think it takes any [pounding?] from outside. I think they will just do it themselves.

W.D.V.: But you couldn't have foreseen that ten years ago?

Parker: No! You wouldn't have thought that it would come about that completely.

J.B.: How about the schools here? How are they?

Parker: Well, that's been an unfortunate thing. And I suppose that maybe they involved me in the schools was what brought me into these other things. I stood up from the very beginning, trying to preserve the public school system, and I took a lot of pounding for that. I took a lot of punishment all the way from the governor down. He personally singled me out for treatment and of course it has local repercussions. But our school system has completely resegregated itself now.

The only exception is the system in [unintelligible name Noteasulliva?].

[Repeat of the name] is a community about ten miles north of here in which they have grades, all the way from one to twelve, and they're about 50-50.

J.B.: That's in Macon county.

Parker: That's in Macon county. But the rest of the county, all the public system in 99.94% black and they have a private school here to which the local whites go.

J.B.: What's the name of that other community?

Parker: Notasulga.

J.B.: How do you spell that?

Parker: N-o-t-a-s-u-l-g-a

W.D.V.: What was the impact of Wallace. . . . You were in office during the time of, when he was very active in this. What was his impact on this local situation?

Parker: No, that started in '63. Our school problem started in '63. All right. There was a federal court order requiring that, I believe it was 13, blacks be admitted to Tuskegee High School down here. Of course the high school's been discontinued since then and consolidated with what was previously the all black high school out at Tuskegee Institute. But the federal court has ordered the schools to admit 13 black kids. We thought everything had been pretty well ironed out. The school administration had been unhappy about it but they were going along. The teachers were reconciled to it. The faculties, administrations, the county superintendent and everything was reconciled to it. That was the only school in the county that was going to be integrated the first year. The parents were all set to bring children down the day of the opening of school. At my house we just happened to have the tv on. Normally we

didn't turn the tv on that early. But for some reason--and I don't recall why--it was on. And about ten minutes before I was getting ready to bring my children to school, there was a flash on there that the governor had issued some kind of a proclamation number one--I remember that--forbidding the school to open. And that he had state troopers down there to see that his order was carried out. Well it turned out that that particular order had been served on the superintendent about six o'clock that morning. Superintendent [lived] just across the street from the school. And he not only closed that school but closed all the schools in the county. They were not to reopen until a subsequent order would be issued from the governor permitting them to reopen. I came on down anyway with the children, but they were routing traffic around. We couldn't even get to the school. And they had the building completely encircled with the state troopers. If I remember right, they stayed there about three or four days and physically prevented anybody from going into the school. That was where I came into play. I did try to espouse some reason and common sense when they were trying to resist the court order and trying to resist getting blacks in the school. I felt like it was--

[Interruption.]

--He says that black fellow that was active in the civil rights movement is still over there working side by side with that former Klansman who ten years ago would have died before he'd of done that. I felt like that several things were involved. One was the world wasn't coming to an end if we had black and white children going to school, because they had always played on the streets together. They played baseball and everything else. There was not going to be a great deal of difference if they

were sitting in class rooms. Next thing I felt. . . while some of the whites could afford a private school education, all of them couldn't do it and very few of the blacks could afford it. So it would have meant no education if we gave up public schools. Now as it happened, subsequent events, they wound up by eventually closing Tuskegee High School and all the whites wound up pulling out from the high school so that there was only 12 black kids wound up graduating at the high school level that year. Six of them graduated from Shorter [?] when they finally closed Tuskegee and six went to Notasulga. One, in the meantime, had dropped out. But we did get the school reopened for the next year and gradually schools came back and we maintained an integrated school for several years. But the year that they closed the high school down here and consolidated it with the Tuskegee Institute High, it did start very rapidly to resegregating. And it is completely resegregated now as far as Tuskegee's concerned.

W.D.V.: ^{How} Why did the governor single you out?

Parker: Well, for one thing, he punished me by withdrawing the state liquor store account from here which had been a very profitable account and very desirable account. He moved it across the street to my neighbor who was real active in organizing private schools. That was one way. The other way was by just word of mouth. Pointing out what a bad character I was by taking the stand I did.

J.B.: How did he actually do that. . . word of mouth. . . . I mean did he come down here? Did he call people up on the phone or write letters?

Parker: Oh, in comments to the people being down there and comments when he would be down here, too. He was very active in promoting the

private school here. Actually, he made some promises that I'm sure he thought he could keep at that time. He promised them public support but the courts finally defeated him in that and he was never able to do it. At one time the state board of education had ordered the local school board to issue checks in lieu of tuition and so forth to each one of the students attending the private schools. The federal courts successfully prevented that. Each time they would enjoin the board from carrying out those orders. So as far as I know--and I think this is correct--no checks were actually ever issued or cashed by any of the private school students. One thing he promised them is that they would subsidize it. You know, which. . . he wasn't able to do that. He did contribute

W.D.V.: How long did that harassment continue?

Parker: Oh, it gradually died out I'd say after the first year.

J.B.: Did you get the account back?

Parker: I don't want to talk about that now because that's. . . . I don't want to bring up old sores because I may lose it. Yeah, we got it back this year. But not until this year. And of course the governor has changed his attitude. . . . I don't even know that he knows that we've got it now. We got it through the present administrator down there. I'd just as soon you wouldn't go into that, because I've suffered enough on that score. I want to keep the account now that we've got it.

J.B.: Did he ever see you personally or did you ever see him personally? How about when you got on the city council and county commission? How did things work in so far as relating to state government?

Parker: I would say. . . and I think this would be an accurate way

of saying it. That we did not suffer, as far as the city or county, we did not suffer from racial involvement over here. I think Macon county did just as well as the other counties, as far as state funds are concerned. There're not a lot of things that are discretionary as far as that goes. When we went into these various community action programs and these various funded federal programs that had to be approved through the governor's office, we established a fairly good rapport with them and I don't think we suffered from prejudices that had previously existed. The governor could see the handwriting on the wall and. . . just as he's been talking now. I think he's a realist. And at the time he was taking the stand he was, that was the popular thing to do. If he expected to be extremely popular and stand in the school house door and all that kind of stuff, why that was the stand that was on the side of the majority. No question about it. That's what they wanted and he played it to the hilt. But I think he is smart enough to recognize when the handwriting started changing and I think he's changed with it. So as far as the city and the county, the time that I served on that, I don't think we suffered any from racial involvement.

J.B.: One of the big questions that we keep hearing. . . so we ask, too. . . has George Wallace really changed or has he merely adjusted to changing circumstances?

Parker: Well, of course, all you can judge by is the. . . what you see and the outside effects. Now, when it gets right down to it, these professional politicians--if they stay in office and survive--they have got to reflect popular feelings and majority opinion and so forth at that time. As Mr Churchill said one time, before you can be a statesman you've first got to get elected. And that's where a politician comes in.

I think that all these people spend a lot of effort and a lot of time trying to ascertain just what the public is thinking at the particular time. And I think most of them are just like these chameleons, that they want to reflect what will make them popular and what will keep them up there. And if you look at it in some respects, that's really the, one of the functions of a public official. Is to carry out the wishes of the people. If we believe in democracy, that's part of it. That's what it is. That's one way of looking at it.

W.D.V.: Do you think if the people of this county and city had a chance to go back to the days of 1962 they would do it?

Parker: Oh, they certainly wouldn't now, no.

W.D.V.: So you've got a really basic change then. It's not just something superficial.

Parker: Here in this county? Well, we got 83% black population. You know they wouldn't want to go back to the subservient position they--

W.D.V.: How about the whites?

Parker: Oh, the whites. Oh, I don't think they have as much care now as they did then. I suspect a lot of them, if they had their preference, everything else being equal, if they could turn the clock back I suspect that they would enjoy it. But I think they're realist enough to know that's not in the cards. And there's no such thing as. . . no point in. . . might as well wish for a [bigger dollars?], you know. I suspect that a lot of them would prefer the other system, if that's what you're saying. But I think they're realist enough to know that that would be completely out of the question.

J.B.: You quoted Churchill on to be a statesman one first has to get elected, but are you implying that George Wallace has become a statesman?

Parker: I don't know just where you cross the. . . I don't know where the line of demarcation is. I'm sure that he would like to be regarded as such.

J.B.: Do you regard him as such?

Parker: [Laughter.] Oh, I don't want to comment on that. He's our governor. I respect the office. And he's entitled to his opinions. I got [no/my?] personal animosity against the governor.

J.B.: Has he been good for Alabama?

Parker: I don't know. Alabama was a backward state when he came into office. It's still a backward state and I suspect it will remain backwards for the foreseeable future. As to whether somebody else would have done a better job, you've got no way of knowing because we didn't have anybody. So I don't really know. I supported Albert Brewer. Personally I thought he was a better governor and thought he would have done better this time. But that was just my opinion. I don't know. He might not have. There's no way of really knowing. I think it will be a long time before we catch up with some of the other states. . . if we catch up. I don't know as we'll ever catch up. But I think we're backwards in many ways and I don't blame that on the present governor. We were. . . that condition existed when he came into the picture. He simply played on a very popular issue that the majority of the voters were involved in and excited about. Probably by their own accounts now would be that they were much more agitated over it than they should have been. He just rode it to success.

J.B.: Do you think, then, that the politics of race is behind Alabama?

Parker: Yes, I really do. I don't believe that they would get as

worked up as they did during the Brewer-Wallace campaign. You see, Albert Brewer. . . if you've checked on that campaign. . . was running substantially ahead. And all the polls were showing that he was going to be elected handily. And the Wallace forces. . . and I don't know that the governor was entirely responsible for this. He had a lot of people with him that had a lot at stake. They would not stop at anything to carry their point. They, very effectively, worked on the racial prejudices and turned that election around. I doubt very seriously if those same methods would work any more. Doubt very seriously if they would. In the first place there are so many black people that are registered to vote now that the methods used to turn off the whites would boomerang as far as the black vote is concerned. So I don't know that politicians would try that any more. I think that in itself would have a tendency to boomerang.

W.D.V.: [How would all the black administrations worked?]?

Parker: Here? Well, I would say that they have done as well as the previous white administration.

W.D.V.: Is there any real difference between the two? In terms of the way they run the governments?

Parker: You wouldn't be able to tell it, if there is. I don't really know how to measure that.

W.D.V.: No dramatic differences?

Parker: I don't observe any.

W.D.V.: I was thinking in terms of property tax and the way they spend money and so on.

Parker: They have been a little loose in spending money. They've had more money to spend. Yeah, they've spent money, I would say, a little

more freely than the previous administration did and probably more freely than they should have. But there again, I don't know what another administration would have done under like circumstances.

W.D.V.: How about in the treatment of whites and blacks in terms of services?

Parker: I don't think there's any difference. I don't discern any difference.

W.D.V.: How about with the police?

Parker: I would say the police department is as efficient now as it was during the white administration. Police departments in most places are under criticism. We're had crime here. But of course you've got crime in other places. I don't know that our crime rate has increased in the past three years.

J.B.: Do blacks get better services now than they did ten years ago?

Parker: Better services in what respect?

J.B.: From local government.

Parker: I don't believe they get any better services than they did during the two previous white administrations. That was during the time of mayor [Keyvert?]. He was mayor for two terms. They definitely get better service now than they did prior to that, yes. No question about that. The public services were just like the schools. They were supposed to be separate but equal but they were separate and unequal. And the public services were unequal. Yes, I think that's fair.

W.D.V.: Any regrets about the role you played back then?

Parker: No. If I had to do it over again, I'd take the same stand. I felt like that what was basically right and just was right

and just. You don't change those things.

J.B.: What was your reaction to the current mayor's endorsement of the current governor?

Parker: Well there again. . . he's exactly like I was saying a while ago about politicians. He's realist enough to know that the current governor was certainly going to be elected. He's realist enough to know that that's who he's going to be dealing with. And, if he's honest, he wants to do the best he can for his community. And why should he deliberately alienate himself from the people that are going to be in office? If you look at it one way, he's stupid to cut off his approaches to the governor's office. I think the mayor was just plain practical, smart politics.

J.B.: Did it come as a surprise to you or not?

Parker: Not really, no. He supported Nixon two years before that. So I think he was smart enough to know this one was going to be elected and he realized that it would be nice to be on the receiving end of some of the gratuities from the Washington office. So, no, I think that's just being good politician. If I'd of been in his position, and wanted to serve the people, I think that's what I'd of done. You've got to deal with what you have. You don't deal with theories. You've got to deal with what's available.

W.D.V.: You going to get back into politics? Ever?

Parker: [No.?] There's no need for me now. My services were needed at a very unusual time and I don't foresee that situation ever arising again.

J.B.: ^{With} ~~was~~ race behind Alabama in terms of being a political force, where do you think the state's going. . . . What sort of governor do you

think the people in Alabama will elect next time? What are they going to be looking for?

Parker: Well, I assume that as long as Gov Wallace lives that either he or some member of his family will occupy the office. I don't know of any movement underfoot to unseat him. I've certainly not heard of it. If he should move on to Washington, as he aspires, why that would change the situation because the lieutenant governor, obviously, would move in at that time and you'd have a different kind of worms. I wouldn't try to forecast what will happen when Gov Wallace leaves the scene.

J.B.: Suppose he runs for the Senate, say, after the present term expires and leaves the scene in that sense. What kind of. . .?

Parker: He would probably designate a member of his family to run for governor. Would be my guess. I think his wife would probably be receptive to it. His son-in-law has stated that he wants to be governor some day. I would think that some member of his family would probably wind up. . . .

W.D.V.: Is his hold on the state that strong that he could just pass that on?

Parker: I think he could, yes.

W.D.V.: Why is that hold that strong?

Parker: It's a peculiar thing. I don't really know that I can answer that. I never knew why Mr Roosevelt's hold was as strong. He had some very strong people that had strong feelings against him but yet the vast majority, if he'd lived, would have been re-electing him right on 'til now. I don't know what it is that some people have the ability, magnetism or what ever you want to call it to attract people that way.

I just don't know.

W.D.V.: But you think he's got it.

Parker: I think he's got it. No question about it. An illustration of how he wins people. We've got a person that lives about 60 miles north of here. He and Wallace fought throughout four years that this fellow was in the state senate down there and now he's a strong supporter of the governor's. He has a way of attracting supporters and I don't know just exactly how to put your finger on it and identify it or diagnose it or name it. Whatever you want to say. But he has it. No question about that. Had it not been for the racial issue coming on, Jim Fulsome had it when he used to be in politics. Of course he killed himself, politically, over what would have appeared to be a very minor thing. He entertained Adam Clayton Powell in the governor's mansion and had a drink with him. And that finished him off. Gov Wallace is much too smart for anything like that. He just doesn't serve whiskey, officially, at his functions.

J.B.: We were curious about that. Was it--

Parker: You have to bring your own liquor, they tell me, when you go down there.

J.B.: Was it Fulsome's entertaining Powell or having a drink with him that was, proved to be so disastrous?

Parker: Well, it all happened at the same time and it's all one transaction.

J.B.: Suppose he'd had him over there and given him a cup of coffee. Would it have been different?

Parker: Well, I think it would have been the same thing. You know, it was the fraternizing that they weren't ready for.

J.B.: And having a drink just intensified it.

Parker: Right. That was something they were able to latch on to and play up to. Actually I don't even know if he had a drink with him. That was reported the case. I don't think he denied it. Jim likes to drink and of course Adam Clayton Powell liked to drink.

W.D.V.: It seems reasonable.

Parker: It seems very reasonable that it would take place. The press did report it slightly wrong. I forgotten whether they said it was bourbon or scotch, but which ever one they said, it was the other. Because the governor didn't drink which ever one it was. I forgotten now whether he drank scotch or whether he drank bourbon. But which ever it was, I remember at the time, the press reported one and he made the comment that he didn't drink which ever it was. And which is right.

That was a slip of reporting that didn't wash.

J.B.: [Unclear.] [Laughter.]

Parker: The press is always irresponsible but you can't ignore them because they'll dig up enough stuff that is factual. Just like on the Watergate situation and the Washington Post. They may not have gotten everything exactly as it was, but they sure led to enough that you can't sweep it under the rug.

W.D.V.: How did the press treat you during those years?

Parker: I would say fair. We had tv folks in that were always wanting you to say something. The newspaper people were fair. One fellow. . . I don't know how you word it now. . . back there when things were really controversial here. . . he quoted my views on some things and he said that they might prove to be correct over the long term but they

were certainly unpopular at the present time. I thought that was accurate. It might not be popular, but it was. . . I thought that was an accurate way of putting it.

W.D.V.: You been in this area now about 25 years.

Parker: I came over in '41.

W.D.V.: More than 25 then. Is the change in race relations the biggest thing that's occurred socially, politically?

Parker: Yeah.

W.D.V.: Overshadows everything else?

Parker: Yeah. Otherwise, we're pretty much the same people. Now that has had more ramifications than you think it has, though. That has changed the social life of the community and pattern, that type thing. And of course economically we have had some change because we've switched from a rural crop [one crop?] economy to more cattle and things, more diversified agriculture.

That would have taken place regardless, I suppose. You see your farm labor situation is entirely different from what it used to be. Where you used to have a lot of people out there that would pick cotton and so forth, now you just have maybe one operator. And he might pick several hundred acres where previously you had individuals out there picking by hand. That type thing. You don't have people living on the farm like you used to have [under contract say?]. The farm population has diminished substantially. Fewer but larger farms.

J.B.: Is there any degree of social intercourse between the races? I mean. . . social functions.

Parker: That is rather limited. There is some, but it's rather limited.

J.B.: Is it limited to any particular age group or economic group?

Parker: Uh. . . I wouldn't say that. . . . Well, let me see how to phrase that. New people who have come into the community don't have the same inhibitions that older natives would have. There would be some instances in which the older natives just wouldn't associate on a social basis on any kind of a plane. But that's not true of very many people any more. I'd say that.

J.B.: [How about the mayor's wife?] That must have been a traumatic experience for a lot of people in the community, older people.

Parker: Well, it was more traumatic for people over in the adjoining county, where she came from, where she grew up, than it was for people here. She had worked in an integrated office here. She had worked for the welfare department here. Pension security department they call it. And was pretty well accustomed to associating with people all over the county. It wasn't a tremendous shock to people in this county. But over there where she grew up, it was a shock, yes.

J.B.: Has she had any problems in so far as acceptance here?

Parker: Yeah. In fairness I think I would have to say that yes. Some resentment on the part of blacks, particularly black women, that he would marry a white girl. And there is some resentment on the part of a lot of whites that she would marry him. Yeah. I suspect that he has run into more evident opposition. . . that is more people who would say cutting things about her among blacks than there has been among whites. I think the whites would probably be more restrained and they talk about it among themselves but they wouldn't say anything public to him about it. But there has been blacks that would get on the radio and talk about it. That type thing.

J.B.: Do blacks here accept his endorsement of Wallace and this sort of thing?

Parker: I think some of them had to go along with him because the governor came within 300 votes of carrying this county. Yes, I think that indicated that quite a few of them went along with him. There were some that didn't. There were some that violently disagreed with him. By violent I'm talking about emotional violence, not talking about physical violence. But obviously a lot of them went along or it wouldn't have been as close as it was.

J.B.: Do you have anything else you wanted to ask?

W.D.V.: No, I don't think so.

J.B.: Is there anything else you might want to comment on that would give us some insights?

Parker: I just say, I'm not a politician and when you get down to identifying folks, don't identify me as a politician. Because I try to do a fairly decent job over here in the bank and I certainly have no aspirations to be and no qualifications for being a politician.

[Interruption on tape.]

I didn't get that far, either. I think that as far as banking, that our attempt to always judge people as individuals and not judge them by their color has had something to do with our success. We've always tried to be fair in having our services available to all of those that were entitled to them. An illustration. I was talking a while ago about the Klan being active. We had the bank account of the Klan at the same time we had the bank account of the NAACP. And we think that we rendered just as good service to one as we did the other.

W.D.V.: Did you commingle the funds. . .

[End of side of tape.]

J.B.: During that time as a child, when you were growing up, what

was shaping your attitudes on race?

Parker: It just never occurred to me. We just didn't have any. Nobody talked about it. It wasn't an issue at that time. Now you had a completely segregated school system. Nobody brought it up. There was no agitation for or against. It just didn't come up. Nobody thought about it.

J.B.: In terms of questioning segregation it didn't come up, but I mean on just as treating blacks as people.

Parker: Well, it still just wasn't an issue. That would probably seem impossible to you, but I just don't ever remember it becoming an issue until, well, let's see. . . . Well, I suppose when it first started coming into prominence in Alabama would have been. . . well, I reckon along during the '40s when voting started being agitated about. It would have been along in the '40s. I just can't recall race really ever being an issue before then. Now you might say were the black people happy to be completely disfranchised? I'm sure they must not have been happy but they were not putting forth any effort to change it.

J.B.: Do you recall your father saying anything about race or black people one way or another? Were there black tenant farmers in that section?

Parker: Not a whole lot. There were a few. But not very many. And that, of course, may be one reason why it just never did. . . the issue never surfaced. Because there were not a great deal. . . there were a few, but not very many. But even after I came to Montgomery and during the depression, there was just no agitation over race. Not until the voting efforts started coming forth did it really become something that people talk about, something that concerns them. Each side just

accepted their status as it was and didn't do anything about it. Blacks were completely subservient. No question about that. They had a menial role. No such thing as blacks working in a lot of areas where they work now. But everybody accepted the statue quo, status quo, whatever you want to call it.

[End of interview.]