

Interview with Arthur Shores, mayor pro tem, Birmingham, Alabama,
July 17, 1974, conducted by Jack Bass ~~and Walter de Vries~~, transcribed
by Linda Killen.

Jack Bass: If you would, I'd like you to tell me just a little bit
about your own background, just a summary. Are you a native of Birming-
ham?

Shores: Yeah, I'm a native of Birmingham, was educated in Birming-
ham. Tallalu [?] college. University of Kansas. Attained a couple of
honorary degrees from ^{Miles} ~~Mills~~ College, College. I'm married
with two children. One's an associate clinical psychologist at the
medical center. And my younger daughter, who is outside pinchhitting
for my secretary who is on a vacation, has a master's in social work
and she's doing work on her doctorate at the University of Illinois.
My wife's a former school teacher, so she's a housewife now.

J.B.: And the beginnings of your political involvement began when?

Shores: Well, the first time I ran for public office was in 1942.
I ran for the legislature and at that time, of course, it was merely
to encourage blacks to register because we had less than 1,000 voters
in this county, entire county.

J.B.: How many are there now in Jefferson county?

Shores: About 80,000 I guess now. About 80,000 in Jefferson county
now. And then of course in 1952--I believe it was '52--six of us filed
for the county executive Democratic committee and we were denied the
right to qualify, so we filed a suit in federal court and got an injuc-
tion against the entire election. In which election the governor of

the state, Senator and sheriff. . . . In fact the entire state election was enjoined. And then of course they permitted us. . . as a settlement they permitted us to qualify and run for the county executive Democratic committee. And the six of us won. Of course after that I ran for the legislature again. Made a creditable showing that time. Got some approximately 60,000 votes in the run off, but it wasn't quite enough to be elected.

J.B.: When was that?

Shores: That was in 1964 I believe it was. '64. Then of course in 1968 there was a vacancy on the city council and I was appointed to fill an unexpired term of a man on the council who had died.

J.B.: The appointment was made by whom?

Shores: By the city council. Then of course the following year I ran for election and was elected by the second highest vote of all candidates running. And this year. . . . No, these years get by so. . . it was last year. . . in the run off, I was elected again for a second four year term. Also was elected president pro tem of the city council. In the last primary I ran for the state executive Democratic committee and had no opposition. So this is my second term on the state executive Democratic committee. I was also a member of the 1968 delegation to the national Democratic convention in Chicago and in '72 I was a delegate to the convention in Miami. The '68 convention, I was one of the two persons from Alabama who was a member of the credentials committee. So I guess that sort of brings you up to date.

J.B.: All right. And in addition to your political involvement, how about other civil rights activities?

Shores: Well, you probably have heard that for about 15 years I

was the only black lawyer in the state practicing. And all of the early civil rights cases, matter of equalization of teachers' salaries, suits against board of registrars to require them to register blacks, voiding zoning ordinances. Whereas in the South you had laws or zoning ordinances in cities that restricted the use and occupancy of property based on race. Whereas in the North you had restricted . During the 1963 demonstrations, I represented King in the groups here in Birmingham and also one of the lawyers who represented him in Montgomery. But here we had over 3,000 who were arrested and I was council for.

J.B.: Was Charles Morgan still here then?

Shores: Yes. Charles Morgan was still here then.

J.B.: Did you work with him at all?

Shores: Yes we worked with him, or he worked with us on the case against the election officials when we filed application to injoin the state election.

J.B.: Am I correct that your house was bombed?

Shores: Twice. Yeah, house been bombed twice. And there were a couple of attempts.

J.B.: How much damage was there?

Shores: Well, about \$18,000 damage in the two bombings.

J.B.: Were you home at the time?

Shores: I was home each time.

J.B.: When you were asleep, or what?

Shores: No. The first time I was back in my recreation room, which was at the far end of the house. My house is 106 feet long, ranch style house. And no one was injured. The far end of the house was damaged. And two weeks later I was sitting in my living room and decided I would

go out on the porch and kind of watch. And just as I got up to go outside. . . . If I'd been a moment or two earlier, the glass would have caught me full in the face. Just as I got up to go outside. My front door was blown in. That time my wife was injured. She had retired. She had a concussion. Brain concussion. But that was the only injury. My daughter was in Europe at the time.

J.B.: What year was that?

Shores: That was in '63. Both times in '63.

J.B.: Were any arrests ever made on those?

Shores: No, I don't believe there ever was. And yet I'm not too sure. It seems as though they did pick somebody up for questioning.

J.B.: How did you feel about that. . .

Shores: Well, the only thing it did was to anger me that I couldn't at least get a pot shot at the persons who were perpetrating these bombings. I was never frightened or anything. But as I say, it angered me that I couldn't retal--I wasn't of the nonviolent type. I had a sufficient arsenal there at my house that if I had gotten a chance I would have retaliated in kind. But I never was able to. . . .

J.B.: Did your wife have any permanent. . .

Shores: No, no. No permanent injury. And later, on a Sunday morning, during '63 also, I was, started to church. There's a Catholic church about one block from my home and persons who had gone out from mass were coming back said that we found a box of dynamite with a time in it to go off at a certain time. I said well, I might look around the church that I was attending, which was right across the street from there. And it occurred to me, I said I better go and look around my own home. And went back and there was a box with 48 sticks of dynamite, just

enough out of the box to set a time clock in it. And it was set to go off at 12 o'clock. And they had to send over to ^{Anniston} ~~Anderson~~, to army camp over there, to get some demolition experts to come and deactivate it. So they got there five minutes before 12. The officers had come and had everybody to move out of that block. There was that much dynamite. . . the force. . . anybody in the block would probably. . . would have destroyed their houses. So that was the last attempt on my house. Immediately after '63, then in '64 you had the civil rights act and in '65 the voter rights act and things really began to change. This city. . . no comparison now in this city with what it was prior to 1963.

J.B.: How is it now?

Shores: Well, just like any metropolitan city. Much better than. . . it's not considered one of the 20 most segregated cities in the country. And prior to that it was considered one of the worst cities for race relations in the whole country. Three years ago the city was awarded the distinction of being one of the so-called All American cities. There were no blacks on any of the boards or commissions. And of course, as you probably have found out, we've got two blacks out of five on the city board of education. There are two of us that are on the council and we were elected at large out of our districts.

J.B.: Out of how many?

Shores: Two out of nine.

J.B.: So that means both of you have to have white support.

Shores: Oh yes.

J.B.: How do you campaign in a white community?

Shores: Well, I campaign in a white community on the basis of trying to have them to know that we're going to represent the citizens of

city for the best interests of the citizens and the city. And the services that the city's required to give, they'll all get a fair shake. And I had the distinction, they tell me, that I've been able to get more done for them than anybody else prior to my being elected to the council. That is, certain city services. . . .

J.B.: What would be some examples?

Shores: Well, the matter of. . . for the first four years I was chairman of the public works committee. I had charge of streets, street lighting, traffic engineering, where they wanted a traffic light and where they wanted some paving done or sewers installed.

J.B.: Did that make a real difference, particularly in black areas?

Shores: Oh yes, yes it did. Then of course so far as the blacks were concerned, as has happened in this city like in many other cities, whites would move out of certain sections and blacks are moving in. And where blacks moved in they begin to build apartments and blacks were under the impression that it was single family . . . property was zoned for single family. And of course I had an ordinance passed to require sales to indicate how the property was zoned. Whether it was single family or multiple family. The majority of the employees in the public works department--street, sanitation--were black. And they were denied many of the things that the employees who were under civil service. For instance, a person that had been working for 10 or 15 years received the same pay as a person who was hired today. No distinction. They had no sick leave and that sort of thing. The few whites who was in that department along with blacks came to me and I had them to meet with the entire council and we had that situation changed. So, you say, I have represented all of the citizens. Make no distinction. But in many

instances where blacks were short changed I did see that they got a fair shake.

J.B.: Tell me a little about. . . what's it called?

Shores: Operation Birmingham. Operation New Birmingham?

J.B.: Right, Operation New Birmingham.

Shores: Well, Operation New Birmingham had its origin in that a group of blacks listed several things that really needed attending to in the city. One, there were no blacks on the police force. And by concerted effort. . . it was through Operation New Birmingham that we were able to get blacks on. So now we have about 38.

J.B.: This was beginning when?

Shores: Oh, it was shortly after this. . . '63. I don't know exactly.

J.B.: Were you involved directly in Operation New Birmingham?

Shores: Oh yes. Still am. I'm on the board of directors and on the executive committee.

J.B.: Was that sort of a prelude before your appointment to city council? Your involvement in Operation New Birmingham.

Shores: Uh. . . yes, I was a member of Operation New Birmingham at the time.

J.B.: What are some of the other areas of concern? Let me ask you-- get back to the police. That's 38 out of how many?

Shores: Oh, 500. Between 5 and 600.

J.B.: Are you satisfied with that rate of progress?

Shores: No, we also had an ordinance passed requiring the city to institute what is known as an affirmative action program for not only hiring in the police department but in all of the departments. And to make periodic reports as to how it's coming along. Now one of the problems really was getting blacks to apply. See, blacks have had sort of reluctance

to come [into] police work. And those who did have the qualifications were in the position to get better paying jobs than being paid by the police department. But now they are able to. . . they're gradually increasing the number.

J.B.: How about the fire department?

Shores: Well, it's been. . . it's very slow. I don't think we have over two in the fire department. There haven't been applicants. For so long. . . I mean blacks have been conditioned on certain jobs that its just been hard to interest them in certain jobs. I might also mention that after the last primaries you had several contests or challenges by defeated candidates. And I have served as one of the hearing officers, or members to determine. The last one we had was two persons where one was nominated for supreme court and the defeated challenger. . . . That was the last hearing we have had.

J.B.: Was the hearing held before the Democratic executive committee?

Shores: Yes.

J.B.: How many people serve on the hearing?

Shores: Five.

J.B.: So how would you characterize the state Democratic party today?

Shores: Well, under Bob Vance's leadership, I would say it's fairly liberal in that it's been loyal to the national Democratic party and it was one of the first states to have its plan, so far as including blacks, young and women. . . . One of the first states and its plan has been used as a model by some of the other states. In the last Democratic convention about a third of the delegates were black. And now we've got, well, in this county, about a third of the members of the county Democratic

committee are black.

J.B.: And what's the population ratio?

Shores: About 38%.

J.B.: So it's pretty much on line.

Shores: Yeah. And we have elected nine members of the state legislature. Two of the senate and seven in the house, from this county. Out of 27. But out of that 27 now, all are not in Jefferson county because under the redistricting plan some of them run across county lines. So blacks have fairly good representation.

J.B.: What is the black political organization in Jefferson county?

Shores: The Progressive Democratic Council.

J.B.: Is the Progressive Democratic Council affiliated--

Shores: With the Alabama Democratic Conference.

J.B.: Right.

Shores: I was the first president of the Alabama Democratic Conference. For 26 years I was president of the Jefferson County Progressive Democratic Council. Finally gave it up because I felt that some younger person should have an opportunity.

J.B.: Who is president now?

Shores: David Hood, a young lawyer who began his practice in my office and incidentally graduated from high school when I was principal of the high school.

J.B.: You were principal of the high school for how long?

Shores: For ten years.

J.B.: And you went to law school during that time?

Shores: Yes. Started out down at Bessemer, 12 miles from here.

J.B.: So you were how old when you got your law degree?

Shores: I was 33 years old. I'll be 70 in September.

J.B.: Well, I would have guessed you about 55, maybe.

Shores: Well, I've been very active, enjoyed excellent health. And now, as I say, I'm as active as many of the young lawyers and who have more complaints than I have. I exercise. . . frequently, religiously, rather. . . exercise religiously. The grey that I have just started about four years ago.

J.B.: I think I might call you the Strom Thurman of Alabama, Mr Shores. [laughter.]

Shores: Yeah, old Strom Thurman is really going strong up there. Like Justice Douglas.

J.B.: Let me get the name again.

Shores: The Jefferson County Progressive Democratic Council.

J.B.: The Jefferson County Progressive Democratic Council, does it usually follow the same recommendations. . .

Shores: Oh yes, of the Alabama Democratic Conference. Yeah.

J.B.: How about in local candidates?

Shores: The Alabama Democratic Conference doesn't enter into our deliberations so far as the local candidates are concerned.

J.B.: But does the Jefferson County group interview all candidates?

Shores: Yeah.

J.B.: Does it interview Republicans as well as Democrats?

Shores: No.

J.B.: It is a partisan organization.

Shores: Right.

J.B.: So in effect, it amounts to a black caucus within the Democratic party.

Shores: Right, that's it exactly.

J.B.: And it's been that way for how long?

Shores: Well, for I guess 30 years or more. At least 30 years.

J.B.: How many of the white legislators from Jefferson county under the new apportionment plan come from all white districts?

Shores: I'm not too sure.

J.B.: Well, I presume there some that. . . .

Shores: Oh yes.

J.B.: Does a majority come from biracial districts?

Shores: No. There may be a few blacks in some of the districts, but the majority of the whites, the majority of them, come from predominately white districts.

J.B.: But that have some blacks in them?

Shores: Oh yes. Just like the blacks come from predominant black district, but they have some whites. In some of them it's pretty close.

J.B.: How does the organization function from the standpoint of. . . . Okay, it interviews candidates, right?

Shores: Well, we have what is known as a screening and research committee that does that.

J.B.: How many people serve on that?

Shores: Well, we try to get an individual from each precinct or district. We've got some 35 or more precinct or district organizations. And each district organization sends three members of the council. The council meets regularly once a month. And this research committee sets a time and place to interview candidates and then it makes its recommendations.

J.B.: How many members serve on that committee?

Shores: Well, ordinarily about 10 or 15. It has been increased recently because the membership of units have increased. We've had several

additions to the units. So it makes recommendations to the council. Then the council. . . . I mean some members of the council still may prefer some other candidate. But once. . . . See, these recommendations are voted on by the council, on recommendation of the committee. Then after they are voted upon and we decide, make a decision, then we put out our sample ballots. And these ballots are followed--

J.B.: How do you distribute the sample ballots?

Shores: Well, each precinct is given so many ballots, depending on the number of voters in that particular district. And they distribute them. They have a meeting and in that meeting they distribute them to the various unit leaders and they're taken around in various churches. So they're pretty widely distributed.

J.B.: It's not by mail.

Shores: No, no, not by mail.

J.B.: How about in actually getting out the vote? Are carpools provided?

Shores: Well, yes, carpools, telephone committees.

J.B.: Does the ballot include a telephone number if you need transportation?

Shores: No, that's left up to each particular unit. Some units are better organized than others. Not all of them have carpools. Some of the larger units have car pools. Telephone committees. Some of them have babysitters, that sort of thing.

J.B.: How are the costs absorbed for the printing, carpools. . . .

Shores: Well, each unit is assessed an amount depending on the size of the unit. The representatives each month pay. . . at each meeting they pay \$1. And then, of course, at the beginning of the year, each unit is

assessed \$15. And then, prior to each election, a budget is made as to what is required for the cost of ballots and distributing ballots and each unit is assessed that amount. Now on occasion some affair is given from which funds may be realized. A banquet where we'll have an outstanding Democrat to come in and speak. And that way we are able to raise. . . .

J.B.: Do you get any funds from organized labor?

Shores: No.

J.B.: I understand that occasionally. . .

Shores: The Alabama Democratic Conference, I understand, has received funds from certain labor organizations.

J.B.: How about any from the state Democratic party?

Shores: No, not from the state Democratic party.

J.B.: But the funds are raised internally. Are the candidates that you endorsed asked to help pay for. . .

Shores: No. What we do. . . the candidates that we support. . . from time to time we have made contributions to them. No, we don't like to solicit anything from any of the candidates at all.

J.B.: That's unusual in black politics in the South, as you probably know.

Shores: Yes it is. Right.

J.B.: That's why I'm very interested in it.

Shores: We were organized on the basis of not requesting any help or funds from anybody that we support. And we support them. We try to support them not only with our vote but make contributions to their candidacy.

J.B.: Now was that policy set at the beginning?

Shores: At the very beginning. And there have been times when we would--

J.B.: You were involved in the very beginning?

Shores: Oh yes.

J.B.: Go ahead.

Shores: There have been times when we would find, say, an individual who would try and go to a candidate and say "Now, if you will give me so much for gas or". . . in other words, try to shake the candidate down. And candidates would go ahead and make contributions. But whenever we found an individual doing that we would expose him. And we always had candidates to know that we did not expect them to provide us with funds, but to the best of our ability, if we agreed to support them or would endorse them, we would not only support them with our votes but to the best of our financial means, we would make contributions to their candidacy. So in that way you couldn't have a candidate coming up afterwards. . . matters affecting you. . . saying that "Well, you've been paid off already."

J.B.: So how responsive have you found the candidates over the years?

Shores: Very responsive, very responsive. And of course, if you will talk with any of the candidates in this county they will tell you that we have the best organized group. And they solicit our support, many of them before they will even qualify. They say that if you think there's a possibility of my getting the black vote or the endorsement of the Jefferson County Progressive Democratic Council, I'll qualify and run. But if you think there's not much of a chance, I won't qualify. And all the thing we tell them, we never commit ourselves. We tell them

we'll give you a fair shake. That's all.

J.B.: What kind of questions do you ask. . .

Shores: A candidate?

J.B.: Right. Does the organization take positions on issues or does it have a platform of legislation?

Shores: Well, we take a position on certain issues, like home rule, like consolidation. That is, locally, consolidation. Certain tax measures come up. The issues that--

J.B.: Let us say on the sales tax.

Shores: Well, we have supported sales taxes and the increase on the ad valorem tax for, so far as it for education. The problems that we feel are beneficial to our district and some beneficial to the state, we take a stand on.

J.B.: The reason I'm asking about the taxes is some people maintain the sales tax is a regressive tax and therefore the burden falls on--

Shores: The poor people, yeah.

J.B.: And a lot more black people are poor people. But is it the organization's position that blacks are willing to pay their share of taxes?

Shores: Yes.

J.B.: Is that why they support the sales tax?

Shores: Well, they feel. . . . We have to sell them on the benefits that will accrue as a result of the sales tax. And that the only way that the government can provide the services that they expect is through taxation. And of course you never get 100% approval. But we've been able to sell them on sales tax.

J.B.: Has there been any attempt to shift the tax burden?

Shores: No.

J.B.: Did the group support George Wallace in 1958?

Shores: No.

J.B.: Against Patterson?

Shores: No. In 1958? Oh yeah, against Patterson. Yes, yes.

J.B.: How was Wallace viewed at that time?

Shores: Well, he was viewed as a liberal at that time and has been. In Jim ^{Folsom} ~~Fulsome~~'s administration he was. . . . And as you know, Big Jim was considered one of our most liberal governors. And he was, I understand, Jim's floor leader. I tried a case before Gov Wallace when he was circuit judge many years ago before he went into the legislature. And I've never been before a judge who was as cordial and as sociable as Wallace. And I'm sure you've heard that when he ran against Patterson there were relatively no black votes that amount to anything and the candidate who could holler nigger the loudest and promise to maintain the status quo was the candidate who was elected. And Patterson just outdid Wallace on that score. And I'm sure you've heard that when Wallace ran the second time one of his opening statements was that he'd been out segged before and he wouldn't be again. So he went on that theme and as a result he gathered all the members of the Klan, the white citizens council and that sort of thing and was elected. And he followed through. He promised to maintain the status quo. Segregation. Today, tomorrow and forever. And that put him into office. But now he says that times have changed, and they have. So he's seeking to portray a different image now.

J.B.: Why do you think he's trying to portray a different image?

Shores: Well, I mean it's politically expedient. The same as it

was when he was elected as governor. You've got a large number of black votes and he's seeking apparently and has sought, heretofore, to portray a national image where he feels would help his chances for national office. So it's just political expedience.

J.B.: Do you think he's changed personally?

Shores: Well, I couldn't say. To tell the truth, I wouldn't say, although he's the very epitome of racism from his attitude apparently through the last several years. But if he were sincere to begin with as a liberal, I would assume that he feels now that he can go back to the stance that he once had. In other words, politicians, as you've probably been able to ascertain, cater to what their constituency wanted. We had a Congressman here. Very liberal. Luther Pat [?]. At the time the anti-poll tax bill was before Congress. He voted against it. I mean he voted against the poll tax and for the anti-poll tax bill. He came up for re-election and he was defeated. So, I mean it's just political expediency that has motivated individuals to do what they feel their constituency want done. Otherwise, you'll find a few that will say "Well, from a conscience standpoint, I will not do thus and so." But it means that they commit political suicide, unless there's a chance of winning over their constituency.

J.B.: Did you support Wallace this past time?

Shores: No I didn't.

J.B.: What was your reaction to those blacks that did, who did openly endorse. . .

Shores: Well, the blacks who openly endorsed Wallace. . . again was political expediency. The mayors of Pritchard and Tuskegee. I believe the branch down at Greene county. Well, it was an opportunity. . . .

Wallace is the governor of this state, and he had millions of dollars in revenue sharing and opportunities to help these cities and he has actually done it. During the funds being distributed on this LEPA, law enforcement, Tuskegee got a nice slice. And I understand he was instrumental in helping them to get in some industry. So you can see they've done the same thing that he did prior.

J.B.: Is it your view then that one used the other equally?

Shores: Yes.

J.B.: I mean the endorsement. . . of course a value to Wallace in so far as enhancing his national image.

Shores: Sure, that's right. And you noticed that Evers endorsed Wallace in Mississippi.

J.B.: Do you understand why Evers did that?

Shores: Well, Evers felt that the man could change and that times have changed and that the man could be sincere.

J.B.: How would you feel if George Wallace were on the presidential ticket in 1972?

Shores: I don't know. If he were the Democratic candidate, I would support him, as a Democrat.

J.B.: Would you like to see him on the ticket?

Shores: I'd much rather see somebody else on the ticket. There are others that I've had some association with, like Jackson, the Senator from Washington, like president of Duke University--

J.B.: Sanford?

Shores: Sanford. And of course Ted Kennedy, Muskie, Humphrey, all of them I'd rather see.

J.B.: How about if one of them, or someone else were presidential

candidate, how about vice presidential candidate?

Shores: Well, of course I say if he were the Democratic nominee for vice presidential candidate, I'd support him.

J.B.: Would you support his being on there as vice president?

Shores: I wouldn't work for it, no.

J.B.: Suppose it was someone from the South. Who would you rather see?

Shores: Sanford, or let's see. . . names slip right now. . . the governor of Florida

J.B.: Askew.

Shores: Yes, Askew and Jimmy Carter of Georgia. As you say, the image that Wallace has portrayed. . . . I think he'd have a hard time being sold to blacks nationally. Although as I say what he has done has been the result of political expedience. When he stood in the school house door, they said. . . . But last year he crowned a black queen down at the University of Alabama.

J.B.: How about the action at the Selma bridge and sending troopers to Tuskegee?

Shores: Well, as I say, he was doing what he promised to do. Maintain the status quo of segregation.

J.B.: The violence here in 1963. Do you attribute that to a climate created by Wallace?

Shores: By Wallace and by Bull Connor over here in Birmingham and by the sheriff down there in ^{Dallas} ~~Allee~~ [Dallas?] county. That's where the heat of the thing was. I think it was attributed to the three of them. But it was the greatest boon that happened to the civil rights issue. To have had shown on television what was happening. Like the dogs and the

hose pipes here. This pricked the conscience of the people all over this country so we had no trouble getting a rather stiff civil rights law, legislation. And then at the march from Selma toward Montgomery, when they were met with these electric cattle prods there on the bridge. And we got through right easily the voter rights act. And of course that was really the greatest thing that has happened to blacks. In Alabama. . . I think Alabama is now third in the union among states with black elected officials. We've got four black sheriffs in Alabama. Something you don't have anywhere else in the country. And of course I believe Mississippi is first. I'm not sure that Arkansas is second and we're third now. At one time we were second. . . in the number of black elected officials. And that came as a result of the 1965 Voter Rights Act.

J.B.: Do you think that's the irony of George Wallace?

Shores: Well, it might be considered that, but it was a great. . . . I mean he's considered. . . George Wallace and Bull Connor and Jim Clark were considered the greatest help that we have received in the whole civil rights thrust. They're the ones who brought it about. More quickly and completely than anything else that was done.

J.B.: I think Sheriff Clark and Bull Connor both have retired a fairly long time ago.

Shores: Yes. Bull is deceased now.

J.B.: Right. But he retired before he--

Shores: No, no. Right up to the time. . . almost up to his death he held public office.

J.B.: Is that right? I didn't realize that.

Shores: Oh yeah, he was president of the public service commission. Bull was another one who was. . . I mean he was politically expedient.

But it's amazing how Birmingham. . . as I say, it was one of the worst places in this country. How it changed. The power structure had a lot to do with it. I mean they realized that if this city were to move forward. . . . Industry wouldn't come it. It wouldn't come in to a place where there's chances of riots and civil strife. They began to realize that and the city worked to see that it did change. And I must say it's changed. Now every Monday some 45 to 60 black and white citizens meet for breakfast. Members of the power structure, that is. Presidents of the bank, big industries, professionals, labor leaders, educators and just rank and file plain people meet for breakfast every Monday morning.

J.B.: How are the rank and file people selected?

Shores: From various organizations like the Urban League, NAACP, like the Alabama Council for Human Relations and the Alabama Council for Christian Movement. That's the one that took the place of the NAACP when the NAACP was enjoined in this state. That was organization, which became an affiliate of King's SCLC. And the civil leagues, which is a grass root organization throughout the county, members are selected there.

J.B.: You go to these meetings.

Shores: Oh yes.

J.B.: Whats a typical meeting like?

Shores: Well, I mean, the press is barred. As a result, of course, a statement is given at the end of each meeting. Various problems affecting the community. As I say, it started off about getting blacks interested in becoming members of the police force. Then we had a problem of food stamps. We devised a plan that went to Washington to see about making it more easy to distribute food stamps where it had been. . .

a large county like this, where there's just one place for the people to come. And we established a bus that would go from district to district and set up another distribution point. There are certain problems in the school system that the group would discuss and make recommendations. And various problems. The matter of housing and recreation. Just various problems where we felt that conditions should be ameliorated. Such a broad spectrum. Like the superintendent of schools. Both the county and city. The chief of police and the sheriff. They're members of this group and meet. Problems effecting various agencies of government. We meet and discuss them. And the mayor, members of the county commission, the chairman of the senate delegation, the chairman of the house delegation. One problem we took up was the matter of getting blacks represented on the personnel board which selects the members of the board. . . oh, gosh, I didn't realize it was this late. . . that set up the examinations and the director of the civil service board here. There were no blacks and the law was set up where it was impossible for a black to become a member. For instance, the federal judges, the probate judge, the president of certain labor organizations, the presidents of the white colleges, Safford and Birmingham Southern. So the CAC. . . I was made chairman of the committee to have legislation passed to change that. And as I say, we had the chairman of our senate delegation, chairman of the house delegation. And the law was changed so we were able to get three blacks--

[End of side of tape.]

--and the president of Daniel Payne [?]. I mean that was legislation passed by the legislature. So those are just samples of things that were done. Gosh, I didn't realize it was this late. We've been at it for about an hour, almost an hour.

J.B.: You have to run, don't you. Could I ask you one last question, Mr Shores, because you're in a position to make, I think, an important evaluation here. Well, two things. First, the money for financing political activity among blacks, here, you say, comes from the black community. Does it come from financial organizations within the black community?

Shores: No.

J.B.: It's individuals.

Shores: That's right.

J.B.: What would be your advice to communities all over the South in so far as blacks are concerned?

Shores: Well if they could organize on such an organization as we have here.

J.B.: How about those who do turn to white politicians to finance political activities?

Shores: Well, I mean, as long as they can keep it clean, above board, and announce what they're getting, where it's coming from and how it's being used, I don't think there's anything wrong with it. But if they can do it without that, it gives them better clout when they go to these politicians or elected officials.

J.B.: What would you say to white politicians who are asked to contribute to or to help finance campaigns or campaign activities where there's no budget submitted, no bills. . . .

Shores: Oh, well, I wouldn't approve of that. Unless a person would, as you say, indicate what it was for and be willing to make some report as to how it's expended or how it's going to be expended. Open account that can be not where one person can have control.

J.B.: The Alabama Democratic Conference does get some funds from organized labor and I understand some from the state Democratic party.

Shores: Yeah.

J.B.: But do they get any from candidates?

Shores: No it doesn't. As far as I know it doesn't get any thing from candidates at all. The Alabama Democratic Conference has representation by virtue of the organization. . . support of the Democratic party in the executive Democratic committee. It has three members, by virtue of that. Just like the Senator or the governor's automatically a member. The president of the Alabama Democratic Conference plus two other at large persons are members.

J.B.: Let me ask you one last question and that is this. What do you see is the future role and strength of Dr Cashion's group, the loyalist Democratic party in Alabama.

Shores: He's gradually lost what little strength he had to begin with because he hasn't been able to actually make any impact in the national Democratic party. Twice he has, came forth with challenges and twice he has been rebuffed, defeated. So many of the white persons who supported him, financially, have seen that there's no future in his organization. Now he's going to a few counties where predominantly black and has been able to have candidates elected. But they could have been elected on any party ticket. Republicans, if they wanted to be Republicans, or loyal Democrats. But he just went in and sold them a bill of goods and take credit for what. . . many of the persons that were members of his group are no longer members of his group. They have come out as regular Democrats. See, it was an easy matter, a few years ago, for a black person. . . knowledgeable, articulate black person, to go

North with a story of how he's catching hell down here in the South and solicit funds and support. He's coming back down to change the situation here. It was an easy thing. Whites in the North were gullible. And so Dr Cashion made considerable inroads. I remember in 1968, if it had not been for us blacks who were delegates, the loyal Democrats would really have been unseated. Because we had to go from delegation to delegation. . . . And he had had the money to go all over this country and poison the mind of delegates that the party members were disloyal, discriminatory. And as a result they had their minds made up. But I was able, by my national connections, NAACP. . . . They came forward and said "Now if you are lined up with the loyal Democrats, we've known your stand over the years, and we're going to support you." So we really were able twice. . . the black delegation were able twice to really save the regular Democratic party from being kicked out. So Cashion, the support he receives now is just nominal. I foresee his group just gradually petering out altogether.

J.B.: And basically just being absorbed by the Democratic party and the Democratic Conference.

Shores: Yeah, right.

J.B.: Do you know of any other southern state that has anything equivalent to the Democratic Conference here?

Shores: No I don't. I sure don't. Or any state that has been as well organized as we have.

J.B.: What was King's role and influence in the development of black politics in Alabama?

Shores: Practically none. His greatest role was in his motivation of his direct action, nonviolence. Which was quite a role.

J.B.: Sort of dramatized the whole struggle.

Shores: Yes, that's right. I've been associated for 20 years with Marshall, who's on the Supreme Court now, and who's judge in the district court and others who. . . federal judgeships now. And over the years we went into the courts. But that was time consuming. You would win a case but it applied only. . . you got the precedent, but it applied only to the local situation. You would have to move from even city to city for integrating the schools or county to county or state to state. Like when blacks were denied the right to enter into the universities. I mean you get a decision to enter this state university here, but you still got to file a suit in an adjoining state. When they filed a suit in the University of Alabama there were riots. Had to close the school down. And didn't help the next, adjoining state. They had to do the same thing. Mississippi, Georgia. But when it came to direct action, finally saw the results of those civil rights legislation.

J.B.: How do you assess Bob Vance's role?

Shores: Bob Vance has done a terrific job in holding the Democratic party in Alabama within the loyal context of the national Democratic party. Bob is a wizard at being able to get things done. And as you see, from being elected chairman of all of the state executive Democratic committee chairmen. And he has been able to. . . . As strong as Wallace has been, he has been able to maintain--

J.B.: You serve on the state committee?

Shores: Yeah.

J.B.: Did you vote in this past election?

Shores: Sure, oh yeah.

J.B.: Could Vance have won in an open vote?

Shores: It's hard to say because there were candidates there who had indicated that if we had an open vote. . . that is, white office holders, white probate judges who were dependent upon certain favors from the governor. . . said that if we had an open vote, I fear that I'm going to have to vote [down?] on it.

[End of interview.]