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Interview

with

HOWARD N. LEE

May 5, 1995

by Joseph Mosnier

Indexed by Joseph Mosnier

The Southern Oral History Program
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

~~Original transcript on deposit at~~
~~The Southern Historical Collection~~
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SOHP Series: The North Carolina Politics Project**TAPE LOG**

(NB: This log is comprehensive and includes an Index for all three cassettes.)

Interviewee: HON. HOWARD N. [NATHANIEL] LEE

Interviewer: Joseph Mosnier

Interview Date: 5/5/95 (first of two sessions; Cassette 1 of 3)
5/11/95 (second of two sessions; Cassettes 2 and 3 of 3)

Location: Mr. Lee's residence, Chapel Hill, NC (both sessions)

Tape Nos.: 5.05.95-HL.1 [Cassette 1 of 3, sides A & B]
5.05.95-HL.2 [Cassette 2 of 3, sides A & B]
5.05.95-HL.3 [Cassette 3 of 3, sides A & B]
(approximate total length 220 minutes)

Topic: An oral history of Mr. Howard N. Lee, of Chapel Hill, NC. Mr. Lee has been a leading figure in African American and Democratic Party politics in North Carolina throughout the last thirty years. Elected mayor of Chapel Hill in 1969, Lee is said to be the first-ever black person elected mayor of a white-majority Southern city. Lee served as Chapel Hill's mayor 1969-1975; ran unsuccessfully for a seat in the United States House in 1972 and again in 1984; lost in a run-off election for the North Carolina Lieutenant Governorship in 1976; served as the only African American in Governor Jim Hunt's cabinet as Secretary of Natural and Economic Resources from 1977-1981; and represented the 16th District in the North Carolina Senate from 1990-1994. For many years Lee was active in the North Carolina Democratic Party, serving as Second Vice Chair from 1970-1972. He also served as a national Democratic Party committeeperson from 1972-1976.

Substantively, the interview is organized around three major themes: (1) the evolution of black political activity in North Carolina since the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, (2) the re-emergence of the state Republican Party in these years, and (3) the increasing prominence of certain cultural issues in the state's politics in the same period. The interview proceeds through these matters in roughly chronological fashion.

See Also: The Southern Historical Collection at UNC-Chapel Hill has two additional interviews of Lee from 1973 (Jack Bass) and 1975 (S. Miller).

Note: Cassette 1 includes the audio on both left and right audio tracks, whereas Cassettes 2 and 3, due to my oversight, includes audio only on the left track.

Comments: Only text in quotation marks is verbatim; all other text is paraphrased, including the interviewer's questions.

TAPE INDEXCounter Index Topic

[Cassette 1 of 3, Side A -- Tape No. 5.05.95-HL.1]

- 001 [Opening announcement.]
- 016 Interviewer sets out the general topics for conversation: (1) the evolution of black political activity in North Carolina since the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, (2) the re-emergence of the state Republican Party in these years, and (3) the increasing prominence of certain cultural issues in the state's politics in the same period.
- 027 Biographical sketch from birth [1934] in Lithonia, GA. Sketch of childhood family history.
- 040 Sketch of educational experiences: public schools in Lithonia; graduated high school 1953; then attended Clark College in Atlanta for three years before being asked to withdraw on account of poor academic performance. Went then to Fort Valley State College in Georgia, graduating with honors in 1959.
- 047 Lee than does two years of military service, including one year in Korea, before returning to Savannah, GA, where he meets and marries his wife. Works as probation officer in Savannah. Meets and works closely with Hosea Williams, who was active in civil rights causes and who later joined SCLC as "one of Dr. King's lieutenants." Lee's interest in civil rights issues grows and he is a movement supporter to the limit allowed by the constraints imposed by his job as a public employee.
- 056 Meets Dr. Frank Porter Graham, former UNC-Chapel Hill chancellor. Lee had applied to do a graduate program in social work at the University of Georgia, but Graham suggests that Lee apply to UNC-CH, and Lee does so and is accepted and offered a fellowship.
- 064 Lee arrives in Chapel Hill in 1964 to enter the two-year master's program in social work. [Interviewer: The prior year had been a very tumultuous one in Chapel Hill, with a number of large civil rights demonstrations.]
- 072 Lee's views on the need for finding ways to influence policy from within the system; protest alone could not accomplish all the change sought. Educated allies crucial to the movement. Protest a means to an end, not an end in itself. Why he sought graduate education.
- 090 Lee active in campus politics; after enrolling, quickly becomes President of the Student Association of Social Work. Lee believed social workers, in particular, should be active politically. Headed this organization for both years, and later becomes president of the North Carolina chapter of the National Association of Social Workers.
- 116 Lee's philosophy about the role of social workers. Saw need for much greater activism on the part of social workers.

- 130 How Lee judged the political landscape, particularly for African Americans, after the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Mostly judged black prospects then as quite bleak. Discovers that North Carolina was not as progressive as he had been led to believe.
- 144 Lee did see that blacks might now become voters who could trade bloc support for "crumbs," at least. With few exceptions, blacks not viable as candidates. But Lee does hope that, in time, increasing numbers of black voters may begin to have some influence.
- 161 Lee discusses the 1968 gubernatorial race by [first-ever black candidate for the North Carolina governorship] Dr. Reginald Hawkins of Charlotte. After King assassination, Lee becomes a coordinator for the Hawkins campaign in central and eastern NC. Hawkins wins one political subdivision in the state, Chapel Hill; Lee judged most of the white support for Hawkins as a manifestation of white guilt, a rather easy vote for someone who had no chance of winning.
- 188 Events leading to Lee's name being advanced as a candidate for mayor of Chapel Hill. Lee moves from skepticism about his chances, to a highly guarded optimism if a coalition of supporters can be built.
- 207 Lee had relatively high name recognition on account of press coverage related to his 1966 purchase of a home in one of Chapel Hill's white neighborhoods.
- 210 Lee describes black political leadership around the state ca. late 1960s. Discusses state NAACP leadership, and a further level of black persons working within the system but expected to exert a moderating influence on any outside black protest. The state at that time had no black political figures with an independent and strong base of support; all major black figures were tied to white political leaders on whom they depended for much of their strength.
- 256 Lee did not seek the advice and counsel of the state's black political leadership when running for mayor; he is sure they would have told him he should not run because he could not win, that his candidacy would undermine the effort to trade a unified black bloc vote for some influence. Only when Lee won in 1969 did Lee's faith greatly advance that there might be some real hope for a black/white liberal coalition in North Carolina politics. Certainly the organized black political leadership in the state had not thought such a successful coalition was possible.
- 289 [Interviewer: describe your sense of these 1968 events: Eva Clayton's run for U.S. Congress; Henry E. Frye's successful campaign for the North Carolina House, which made him the first black in the state's general assembly since 1899; and the challenge by a group of black North Carolinians under Dr. Reginald Hawkins' leadership to the seating of the state's delegation at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, an effort that led directly to later reforms in the state Democratic Party.]
- 300 Lee discusses Eva Clayton's 1968 run; he did not know her, but admired her candidacy and its role in inspiring black voters in her district. But it also pointed out the economic dependency of rural black voters in the state, who often were not at liberty to support black candidates.
- 327 Lee discusses Henry Frye's 1968 election; saw it as evidence that blacks might now in some urban contexts be viable candidates.

- 335 Lee discusses his effort to encourage Reginald Hawkins to build on his relative success in the 1968 gubernatorial primary [Hawkins took approx. 20% of the vote] and to push for much greater change in the state's Democratic Party. Discusses state Democratic Party convention in Raleigh in 1968 and his speech at the convention and subsequent press attention that Lee received.
- 380 Reginald Hawkins' challenge at the 1968 Democratic National Convention and subsequent reforms adopted by the national Democratic Party. As a consequence, Lee subsequently becomes [November 1970] a Second Vice Chair of the state Democratic Party when the state party reforms and reorganizes.
- 395 Lee describes black political activity and voting in rural NC settings ca. late 1960s, and reasons why North Carolina was dissimilar in this regard to other southern states. Discusses the exodus of talented young people to urban areas; dominant [patrician] attitudes of whites in agrarian communities and their ubiquitous economic influence in these communities; even black professionals -- clergy, undertakers -- in rural settings were dependent on white banks, so there was not an independent black business class. Hence blacks tended to sell their votes as a bloc in exchange for whatever favor they could gain rather than pushing harder.
- 463 Example: during Lee's 1972 run for U.S. Congress, a local black power broker in Weldon, NC, in Halifax Co., "sells" the county black vote to Lee's opponent, L. H. Fountain, for one dollar per vote.
- 471 Second example: when Lee was working with the Skipper Bowles [1972 state Democratic gubernatorial candidate] campaign as a statewide coordinator, Lee was presented with a suitcase of money and "was told, 'This is how you're going to get the black vote -- take it out.' I refused to do it...."
- 476 Lee notes that in his own campaigns, even as a black candidate, rural black voters were reluctant to give up the money usually provided for their vote in exchange for the pride or satisfaction of voting for a black candidate. "You could certainly understand it when you looked at the conditions under which folk lived." But his was not the case in urban areas, typically.
- 490 [Interviewer: describe your thoughts on winning the mayor's race in 1969, and soon after as you are routinely heralded by journalists as the state's leading black political figure.] Winning the mayoralty gave Lee a significant measure of "legitimacy." Describes pressures to be seen as a responsible leader of substance, a "good mayor" who "produced."
- 527 How he was seen: some blacks saw him as a messiah after Nov. 1970 when Lee becomes the state Democratic Party's Second Vice Chair. But some tensions arose when Lee refused to be a "black spokesman"; some blacks were frustrated by Lee's stance in this regard.
- 562 By ca. 1970, Lee did not yet think time was right for a black candidate to succeed in a statewide election. He was hopeful that the election of the right white candidates would lay the groundwork for later statewide races by blacks, however, and "the [state] Democratic Party certainly offered the best chance for that."

- 570 Lee describes the factionalized character of the state Democratic Party in the early 1970s, and the resulting problems. Traces "the beginning of the downfall of the [state] Democratic Party" from the 1972 events that revealed that personal ambitions had eclipsed party loyalty, key examples of which were "young [state] congressman" Nick Galifianakis's successful primary challenge to incumbent U.S. Senator B. Everett Jordan and Skipper Bowles' refusal to mend fences with defeated Democratic gubernatorial rival Pat Taylor and his allies.
- 613 Ca. 1972, the state Democratic Party "was so strong, was so assured of itself, was so confident, that it thought it was impenetrable." Hence when the 1972 primaries were over and such primary winners as Galifianakis and Bowles refused to court their defeated Democratic rivals for support in the general election, for the first time Democrats in the state began crossing over to vote Republican in important numbers.
- 626 Many whites learned in 1972, Lee says, that it didn't hurt their interests to elect Republicans like Gov. James Holshouser and Senator Jesse Helms. In turn, liberals, moderates and progressive Democratic Party members developed the attitude "'to hell with them, we don't need them, we can build the party with out them'" and increasingly began to adopt positions that drove more conservative Democrats over to the Republican Party. As state Democratic Party became increasingly liberal, he more voters it lost to the Republicans.
- 650 State Democratic Party leaders thought they could build a new coalition of liberals, moderates, and progressives, including young voters. Lee was not uncomfortable with this strategic choice at the time since it harmonized with his own politics and seemed to enhance opportunities for his own political future.
- 680 Lee describes his 1972 U.S. Congressional race against L. H. Fountain.

[Cassette 1 of 3, Side B -- Tape No. 5.05.95-HL.1]

- 001 [Opening announcement.]
- 003 Lee describes his 1972 U.S. Congressional race against Democratic primary rival L. H. Fountain (cont'd), and how the state legislature restructured the 4th Congressional District during redistricting expressly to undermine Lee's prospects in the race.
- 021 Lee judged Fountain, as "quite a gentle man" who did not openly race-bait in the campaign, though race was a factor.
- 029 Discusses his campaign; notes he was a "novice" who "did not know what I was doing" as he struggled with money, gaining white supporters and staff, and so forth.
- 036 But his race helped spark many other black men and women to run throughout the 4th District in various local elections, including in Orange County, which in 1972 elected its first black and its first woman members of the County Board of Commissioners. Lee judges his 1972 campaign as having a very important impact on later black political activity in the 4th District and elsewhere.

- 063 Lee learned a great deal during the 1972 campaign, and after losing in the primary immediately took his organization and went to work for the Skipper Bowles gubernatorial campaign. Bowles promised to appoint Lee Secretary of the NC Dept. of Human Resources.
- 068 Lee notes, as an aside, that his was the first of two important near-misses in his political life; the second was his loss as an incumbent in the November 1994 state Senate race in the 16th District, where had he won he would have become Chair of the NC Senate Appropriations Committee, in which role he would have been the first-ever black person also.
- 078 Lee's views on the role of women in the state Democratic Party ca. late 1960s -- early 1970s. Many historically had been "worker bees" in the Party; Lee believes that their participation in the civil rights movement prompted women to push harder by this time for greater roles. Lee had always thought that women and minorities would be natural coalition partners; women began in these years to present themselves as candidates, which was still easier for them to do than it was for minorities. Discusses Margaret Harper of Southport, NC, who ran for lieutenant governor in the 1972 state Democratic primary after years of work on behalf of the state Democratic Party. Harper's loss to Jim Hunt prompted her to consider leaving the party, but supporters of women rallied to her and soon women were more demanding about their roles, began wielding more influence, and began working more closely with minorities within the state Democratic Party.
- 122 End of Side B, Cassette 1.

Counter Index Topic

[Cassette 2 of 3, Side A -- Tape No. 5.05.95-HL.2]

- 001 [Opening announcement. Interview continues from the earlier first session.]
- 010 Lee reflects on the 1972 election -- "an extremely important year for the Republican Party and the beginning of the dismantling of the Democratic Party"
- 020 Nick Galifianakis's challenge to B. Everett Jordan for the U.S. Senate seat in the Democratic primary; beginnings of crossover vote, here for Jesse Helms.
- 033 Second event of similar outcome: the Democrat gubernatorial primary contest between Hargrove "Skipper" Bowles and Pat Taylor, and Bowles later loss to Republican Jim Holshouser. Description of tactical errors by Bowles after his primary victory. For the first time, North Carolina experiences significant crossover voting and the major two electoral positions are lost by the state Democratic Party.
- 064 Democrat Jim Hunt, an "upstart", prevails in the Lieutenant Governor's race, and thus becomes the leading elected Democrat in North Carolina, a circumstance that launches his career.

Tape Index -- Howard N. Lee Interview

- 075 State Democratic Party's response to the 1972 losses. Party begins to focus on "coalition building."
- 086 Republican Party in NC begins, in contrast, to make plain appeals to whites.
- 102 NC Democratic Party's strong focus on ideologically based issues leads for first time to Democratic candidates choosing not to run on the Party's platform; Jim Hunt is the first to do this.
- 104 Hunt begins to create his own, independent political organization, bleeding off money and support from the Democratic Party. Party effectively capitulates to Hunt's maneuvers, since Bowles declines subsequently to contest Hunt's effort to take the reins. Lee thus sees Hunt as responsible in an important way for the beginnings of the state Democratic Party's slide.
- 118 Bowles might well have contested Hunt's efforts, but his wife's illness and their later divorce, respectively, cut Bowles access to money and hurt his political image in North Carolina.
- 144 On Lee's thoughts ca. 1972 on the issue of class, which he judged ultimately more significant than race. Tensions among working class whites and blacks remained, particularly as civil rights issues got attention, though unions attempted to unify working people across racial lines.
- 170 Lee thought then that the state Democratic Party's excessively close ties to industrialists, particularly on the issue of the undesirability of unions, hurt its ties to working people. The party could have focused on social issues of interest to working people.
- 198 At the same time, Lee says, the state Democratic Party did a poor job selecting the issues it would champion; liberals carried the day and the Party embraced too many contentious issues.
- 214 The Party also did a poor job choosing candidates who could appeal to voters across class lines. At this point the business community in North Carolina began to transfer its backing to the state GOP. In Lee's view, the Democratic Party failed to recognize the political dangers of losing its capacity to hold the loyalty of the business community.
- 230 On the Democratic Party's internal struggle over its course. "It was quite a bloodletting most of the time among Democrats."
- 265 Democratic Party candidates begin to face the trouble of being identified with too wide and contentious a range of issues.
- 275 Still, the Party saw 1972 as a "fluke," a one-time phenomenon. Nixon's coattails were taken to have led, as an "accident," to Helms' election in 1972. And 1976 seemed to confirm this, with the return in NC to a Democratic governor and lieutenant governor. Hunt's election in 1976 seemed to provide renewed Party unity; the Party once more felt fairly "smug."
- 310 [Interviewer: Which were the most divisive issues before the Party?] Lee: labor issues, including the minimum wage and "right-to-work" laws; poverty issues; and "the usual civil rights issues." Education, in contrast, not a hot issue. The

Tape Index -- Howard N. Lee Interview

- Equal Rights Amendment would emerge later in the 1970s as a live and contentious issue.
- 350 Responses in the black community to the first stirrings of ERA.
- 362 Lee's 1976 primary campaign for the state Lieutenant Governorship against Jimmy Green, the latter prevailing in a run-off. How Lee regarded the question of race in the campaign; how Green "did everything he could to keep race in front of the voters."
- 400 Anecdote: Lee winning the support of a man who had been head of the local Citizens' Council and member of the Klan. Example of Lee winning greater support among whites as they got to know him as an "individual."
- 425 Late rumor started by the Green campaign: that if Lee were elected Lt. Governor, that blacks would then arrange the assassination of Jim Hunt so that a black person would be governor. This rumor actually hurt Lee significantly in the last five days of the primary campaign. Still, Lee chooses not to regard race as the factor responsible for his loss; his philosophy on the issue of race discourages him from this conclusion.
- 460 Further racial appeals by Green in the campaign. Further explanation by Lee of his view on the role of race in North Carolina elections. In the 1976 primary run-off, low black voter turnout hurt Lee; 200,000 blacks did not vote, and Lee lost by 60,000 votes.
- 515 Lee's views on the legitimacy of North Carolina's run-off system; he has "vacillated" on the second primary question, but concludes that the system as structured is "not so bad" and not fatally disadvantageous to black candidates (in the latter instance witness Eva Clayton's successful run-off bid in her race for U.S. Congress).
- 620 Lee's appointment by Jim Hunt as Secretary of Natural Resources and Economic Development.
- 635 [Question inserted: Was there much appreciation at the time, ca. the mid-1970s, of what the subsequent ramifications of the demographic and economic shifts taking place in NC?] Lee: very little appreciation of the shifts underway; agricultural interests and agriculture was still foremost in most minds, with military activities a second focus.
- 696 [End of Side A, Cassette 2.]
- [Cassette 2 of 3, Side B -- Tape No. 5.05.95-HL.2]
- 001 [Opening announcement.]
- 003 Lee's reflections on his appointment as Secretary of Natural Resources and Economic Development. Symbolic importance of his appointment to black aspirations.

- 009 Lee forced to walk a "tightrope" between blacks and whites; he has fought efforts to make him a "black spokesman," in part because Lee does not believe any one person can speak for so large a group.
- 028 How Lee negotiated the issue of representing "black" interests in his role as Secretary; how he refused to be drawn in to certain tense situations in various North Carolina communities as a "black mediator." Rejected efforts to be forced into the role of "black messiah"; instead attempted to help local leaders to act.
- 051 Lee did not hesitate, just the same, to take strong positions where, for example, he discovered disparities in the provision of utilities or other public services between white and black communities as a matter for which he had "responsibility," and he would use his authority to work for equal service for all citizens.
- 080 One example of challenges of the position in relation to the issue of race: meeting with a room full of white fishermen from coastal NC; won them over after initially encountering "stone-faced silence."
- 125 Key issues during his tenure as Secretary: toxic waste dumping (Lee describes the effort of the governor's office to grab the spotlight on this issue); whether the Commonwealth of Virginia would get water out of Lake Gaston; and water quality issues in the state.
- 175 Context of his resignation in 1981 as Secretary. Describes his relationship with the governor's office and with Jim Hunt, which was not always smooth; also discusses the CETA controversy, "padded grants" for state AFL-CIO head Wilbur Hobby, results of an internal audit of the CETA program, press coverage especially by reporter Pat Stith at the *Raleigh News & Observer* and Jesse Helms effort to use the effort to attack Lee and Hunt.
- 248 Under pressure from press coverage and Helms' attacks, Hunt tries unsuccessfully to reassign Lee; the legislature removes funds from the Dept. of Natural Resources and Economic Affairs; Lee's letter of resignation, which Hunt first wanted to reject, is leaked to the press by the governor's office and Lee resigns. Lee describes tensions with Hunt.
- 280 Lee's relationship with Hunt and with his staff in the governor's office. Background on their relationship from their days as Young Democrats. Hunt's desire to position himself for the 1984 U.S. Senate race, and Hunt's fears of facing criticism from Jesse Helms if Lee, an African American, was still on his cabinet. Note, Lee points out, that Hunt later did keep black persons out of the spotlight during his 1984 campaign.
- 307 Lee mentions in this context that during 1980, when Lee and Hunt were "jockeying" over whether Lee would be reassigned or reappointed, Lee used his black contacts around the state to "turn up the heat" on Hunt, which Lee judges the reason for his reappointment. Lee further describes his relationship over the years with Jim Hunt; believes that Hunt initially thought that Lee would fail quickly in the role of Secretary.
- 348 Lee's contacts, black and white, who pressured Hunt in 1980 to retain Lee as Secretary.

- 380 Lee faults himself for too readily giving political credit for his successes as Secretary to the governor.
- 390 The ERA fight in the late 1970s; Lee's position on ERA; responses within the black community to ERA. Lee's philosophy on ERA was that advances for women, even if gains fall mostly to white women, can only serve in the long run to help advance the cause of other minority groups.
- 433 ERA "exposed more demagogues" than any issue Lee encountered.
- 449 Lee's views shift over time, and he later thought women were making a mistake by seeking a constitutional amendment; statutes might have been more effective than an amendment, he now thinks.
- 478 The silence of the state's black leadership, largely male, on ERA; black women, in contrast, supported ERA. Black institutions dealt with this tension by ignoring the issue.
- 500 The 1980 election. Lee's views on the state Democratic Party's poor candidate selection through the late 1970s culminating in 1980. Conservative Democrats effectively ignored by and shut out of the Party.
- 542 State's Republican Party approaches Lee in 1983 about switching parties.
- 558 Example of the Democratic Party's poor candidate selection: the 1984 candidacy of Rufus Edmisten to oppose incumbent Republican governor Jim Martin.
- 570 Increasing tensions within the Democratic Party over its direction, with liberals and conservatives at odds.
- 592 With Hunt running in 1984 against Helms for the U.S. Senate seat, the state Democratic Party was largely rudderless. The general weakness in the 1984 race of Democratic candidates at both the state and national levels.
- 629 1984 "was probably the turning point in the life of the Democratic Party." Lee believes the losses that occurred in 1984 had their roots in the 1972 election and Jim Hunt's subsequent effort to build a separate political organization that siphoned money and support from the state Democratic Party.
- 648 "By 1984, the Democratic Party had no talent. By 1984, the Democratic Party had no money. The Democratic Party was a shell of itself. It was drained of everything. And because of succession there had not been any new leadership emerging because there was no turnover." Younger prospects had gone over either to the Jim Hunt organization or to the Republican Party.
- 678 The "whole future" of the state Democratic Party was staked entirely to the fortunes of Jim Hunt in the 1984 race, even while Hunt was looking out only for his own interests.
- 690 These events are what brought the state Democratic Party to its "demise."
- 696 [End of Side B, Cassette 2.]

Counter Index Topic

[Cassette 3 of 3, Side A -- Tape No. 5.05.95-HL.3]

- 001 [Opening announcement.]
- 003 Survey of results of 1984 elections: "it was a devastating year."
- 015 Effects of the loss on the Hunt organization, and ramifications for the Democratic Party. 1984 was the year of the "great blow" for the Party.
- 024 The Hunt-Helms race in 1984. This race "changed politics in North Carolina forever." Reflections on the race; importance of money; use of attack ads; and rise of Jesse Helms' organization, the Congressional Club.
- 041 Because of the Democratic Party losses at the top levels, the legislature now for the first time was the site of NC's key Democratic leaders: House Speaker Liston Ramsey, Lt. Gov. Bob Jordan.
- 060 Lee's 1984 race for the U.S. Congress. Primary race against Democrat incumbent Ike Andrews, who had been arrested earlier for drunk driving. Hunt promised Lee support. Andrews changed his mind, decided to run again in 1984 after Lee had announced, expecting that Andrews would not run again after the arrest. Details of the primary contest, including the role of race in the contest after the Andrews camp succeeded in getting a second black candidate on the ballot. Andrews prevailed by a "very thin" margin.
- 105 Reapportionment in NC after the 1980 census and its implications. The *Gingles* case. Lee has been sympathetic with the goal of full black political participation, certainly, but has had misgivings about special districting.
- 132 Lee's views of single-member districts, which he feared would create an increasing number of Republican successes. *Gingles* had some of this effect in the 1990s, Lee says, almost precisely as he had anticipated.
- 158 *Gingles* raised the issue of fairness of access for minorities, and it had a positive impact on increasing the number of successful black candidates both locally and at the state level, though perhaps, Lee thinks, some of these gains would have come in any case. Lee describes his doubts about the long-term wisdom of such redistricting.
- 212 The GOP favored *Gingles*, because its goal from the early 1980s was to isolate minorities from the Democratic Party. The GOP "outmaneuvered" a "smug" Democratic Party on this issue. The Democratic Party became the victim of "the visible black," "the Jesse Jacksons, who were running around threatening to do things," "the black caucus," the "loudmouth," and was "appearing to be so black."
- 242 "...the Democratic Party was kind of like an animal feeding on itself; it was destroying itself; and the GOP was very much like a cunning animal that had discerned what was going on and it was pouncing on it with every, every step. And for the next ten years you could see this occurring. I sometimes look back

and don't know why I didn't go Republican, because had I gone Republican I could be whatever I wanted to be today. As a matter of fact, the Republicans most recently approached me and said, 'If you join our party you can run for any position you want except governor or U.S. Senate this year. Next year you can run for U.S. Senate.'

- 255 Why Lee has stayed with the Democratic Party rather than going over to the GOP. But at some point he may still reconsider.
- 276 Views of NC's black political leadership on affiliation with the GOP. Lee sees no more unified black vote in NC. "We're on the early edges of a new renaissance. Blacks who are conservative are now willing to openly admit they are conservative. Blacks who have identified with the Republican Party are now will to say, 'I am a Republican, period.'"
- 294 Lee sees increasing black frustration with black criminality and rates of teenage childbearing. Sees increasing symmetry between black opinions on these and related issues and Republican arguments on welfare and other social issues.
- 342 The symbolic importance of Clarence Thomas' confirmation to the U.S. Supreme Court.
- 359 Views on the fallout from the 1988 legislative elections in NC. Lee goes back to *Gingles* for root cause of GOP gains in the 1988 statehouse elections. Very few candidates were running on the state Democratic Party platform; these "maverick" Democrats were running on their own. Meanwhile, Republicans were beginning all to run on the same party platform. So you had this group of maverick conservative Democrats enter the House, and Democratic speaker Liston Ramsey largely shunned them.
- 408 Joe Mavretic's alliance with Republican House members and 1989 coup to depose House Speaker Liston Ramsey. Republicans saw this as a tremendous opportunity to break up the old system of complete Democratic control of the state legislature.
- 430 Most black members remained loyal to Ramsey; one, C. R. Edwards, broke away and supported Mavretic, and "the other blacks crucified him." This episode prompted many blacks to see the Black Caucus as unduly punitive.
- 448 The Mavretic coup marked the full eclipse of the Democratic Party. Since 1988, the Democratic Party in NC has been "leaderless." The leader of the Party became the Party chair. Meanwhile, the Republican Party grew rapidly, with "wholesale switching" of Democrats to the GOP.
- 469 Lee's reflections on Dan Blue. Blue "is a very skilled politician," "ready to be Speaker" when he took on the position. Few people know that Blue was asked but refused to challenge Liston Ramsey in 1988.
- 497 Lee's involvement in the State Senate beginning in February 1990, when he is chosen to fill the vacated seat of Wanda Hunt in the 16th State Senate District.
- 514 Lee in late 1989 was considering running in 1990 for the U.S. Senate; met with Harvey Gantt, and Gantt "misrepresented" how much money he had raised, thus discouraging Lee from pursuing this idea.

- 525 Details of Lee's efforts to win support in his bid to fill the vacated state Senate seat.
- 556 Lee wins reelection in November 1990. His influence is considerable during the next two two-year terms, in part because Henson Barnes brought him within the Senate's circle of influence.
- 580 Lee succeeds in getting legislation passed that "nobody ever dreamed would get through": statute allowing local school districts to eliminate corporal punishment; new rules allowing local governmental authorities more budget flexibility; new money for the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work; etc.
- 605 In Lee's second term, 1993-95, he was ranked the "ninth most effective" member of the Senate out of fifty.
- 612 Had he won reelection in 1994, he would have become the first-ever black chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee.
- 616 Still, as a Senator, he was able to represent symbolically how far black North Carolinians have come, particularly since Lee has always been elected from white-majority districts.
- 633 Sees it incumbent on black and women candidates to win over the voters no matter what their race or gender.
- 663 Perspective on Harvey Gantt and his 1990 U.S. Senate race against Jesse Helms. Likes Gantt, but says he is often perceived as being "a bit arrogant."

[Cassette 3 of 3, Side B -- Tape No. 5.05.95-HL.3]

- 001 [Opening announcement.]
- 002 Discussion of Harvey Gantt's race against Helms, including Lee's sense of Gantt's mistakes in the campaign. Lee thought Gantt was wrong to run openly as a "liberal" which showed how "out of touch" Gantt was with NC's voters. Lee thinks Gantt largely beat himself; Gantt resisted the suggestion of "moderates" that he tone down his campaign.
- 040 Lee notes that Helms excels at constituent service and is always a "gentleman," though Lee "doesn't agree with him."
- 057 What most disappointed Lee was how Gantt "disappeared" after the race and abandoned his followers and failed to help them nurse their wounds. As a consequence that Gantt "does not deserve another crack at running for anything."
- 070 Lee's predictions about how the 1996 U.S. Senate race in NC will shape up among Democrats. Lee thinks Gantt will be nominated, but is even less likely to win in the present conservative atmosphere than before. Thinks Gantt could become the greatest-ever "anchor" dragging down the fortunes of all Democratic candidates in NC in 1996.

- 090 Lee's reflections on the recent Helms' split with the Congressional Club: "I don't think it means anything. ...The Congressional Club did not make Jesse Helms; Jesse Helms made the Congressional Club. ... the Congressional Club has lost its glow and will be very ineffective."
- 110 Cultural issues and their ramifications in NC politics: busing (Lee sees busing as having "detrimental" impact on public schools and on the black community; "frankly, I think we missed the boat on that one").
- 143 The emergence of the Moral Majority and evangelical Christianity in politics. "I certainly think that Republicans took a page out of the history of blacks" by recognizing the institutional strength of churches and their potential impact on politics.
- 168 The failure of the Democratic Party to go after the votes of religiously affiliated groups, on account of church-state concerns.
- 180 The dispute between the University of North Carolina-HEW [United States Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare; suit proceeded from the early 1970s through 1977]. "I've always thought that UNC miscalculated on that one." But HEW also failed to appreciate the political bind faced by UNC-system leadership in this challenge. Lee's bind as mayor of Chapel Hill on this issue.
- 232 The effort to establish the King Holiday in North Carolina. Lee believes the effort succeeded in important part because all the state legislative districts at that point still included sizable black minorities, so white legislators chose to support the holiday. Lee thinks that with the subsequent redistricting the effort would have failed. Sees the holiday as a very important symbolic gain for blacks, with important and valuable ramifications for black morale.
- 271 Lee discusses the ongoing centrality of economic parity in the struggle to achieve greater societal integration. Lee's views on affirmative action, which he supports with reservations: "it should only guarantee access."
- 340 How the GOP has very successfully taken issues created by Democrats and turning them on the Democrats in elections and otherwise. The GOP's successful effort to isolate minority voters from close ties to mainstream Democrats, which the Democrats never saw coming. "[Democrats] are victims of our own doing in affirmative action; we are victims of our own undoing" with our economic program and support for redistricting.
- 384 Lee can foresee a day when the GOP moderates its position on affirmative action as more blacks enter the Republican Party.
- 395 [End of Side B of third and final cassette.]