

Interview with State Representative Richard Mays, one of the first three black legislators in the Arkansas legislature, June 12, 1974, Little Rock, Arkansas, conducted by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries, transcribed by Linda Killen.

Jack Bass: How about first if you could just tell us a little bit about your own background. And how you got involved in politics.

Mays: Well, this is my home. Little Rock is my home. I've lived here, with the exception of a few years during my early childhood when I lived in Tucson, Arizona. Went to high school here. Went to Howard University. Went to law school at Fayetteville, University of Arkansas. I worked a year with the Department of Justice in Washington, criminal division, organized crime and racketeering section. Came back here and worked as a deputy prosecuting attorney for a year. Went into private practice with this law firm. Formed a corporation.

J.B.: Deputy prosecuting attorney here?

Mays: Right.

J.B.: Is that in the US attorney's office?

Mays: Deputy prosecuting attorney of Pulaski for the prosecuting attorney for Pulaski and Parry counties. So I left the federal government and went to work for the county government.

J.B.: What year was this?

Mays: Well, I worked. . . . Graduated from law school in '65, '68. Worked with the Justice Department '68, '69 basically. '70, '71 deputy prosecuting attorney here locally. So I left Washington, came back here. At that time you could practice privately to some extent at the same time that you were performing your duties as deputy prosecuting

attorney. That's ceased. Really there was too much of a work load at that time to be able to do very much private practice. So I worked there for about a year. Joined this firm. Established a _____ in this firm. Started working together. '71 through '73. Although there were some other gentlemen here at that time when I came, I've been practicing here as a lawyer since '71, I'd say. And I ran for the legislature in '72. They redistricted this legislative area and in redistricting they came up with single. . . with three member districts in this area. Basically the governor, the secretary of state and the attorney general voted on the lines. And where we had been a multi-member district, we were divided into five three member districts in the house of representatives and five single member districts in the senate. And one of the single member districts was approximately 60% black and one of the three member districts was approximately 60% black. There was a district in Pine Bluff which was majority black. A senatorial district in Helena and that area which is 51, 52, 53% black. And there's another district, house district, in Pine Bluff which is 49, 50% black. At any rate, three blacks were elected to the house of representatives for the first time in the 20th century, since Reconstruction, in 1972. And one black was elected to the senate, for the first time in the 20th century, since Reconstruction, in 1972.

J.B.: Arkansas was the last state of the old confederacy in which blacks got elected to the legislature this century. Am I correct in that?

Mays: Yes, to my knowledge. My understanding was it was the last state in the United States to have black membership--

Walter De Vries: Do you have any speculation as to why that is the case?

Mays: Well, the basis for the electoral districts--

W.D.V.: No, the reason why no blacks have been elected prior to 1972.

Mays: Well, you had no black majorities or any significant black minorities. In other words, all the districts were basically weighted toward the white majority. And . . . this was probably intentional. The lines had not been redrawn and therefore there was no likelihood. People vote basically along racial lines. And they still do. I don't know. Now, 60% or 59% black in this district and 41% white, you do have whites voting for blacks. This district has two blacks representing the district. Two blacks and one white. So we still have one white who was able to get a sufficient number of black votes and retain sufficient strength in the white community to get elected. So specifically responding to your question, the reason was that people vote along racial lines and there were no black majorities.

W.D.V.: Plus the district was a lot larger.

Mays: The districts period were a lot larger. This district was a multi-member district where you had a sizeable black population. That black population was generally diluted, in terms of voting strength, by the concept of voting strength.

J.B.: When did you get active in Democratic politics?

Mays: Basically, when I ran for office.

W.D.V.: '72?

Mays: '72, yeah. I had not really been active in any way. . . . I had some association with persons who had been active. With Gov Rockefeller. But I graduated from law school in '68. Really did not return to the state until about '69 or '70. And I had little or no input into the Democratic party prior to that time. I got somewhat active during

the campaign which the Republicans ran for the senate and house of representatives in 1970. This was during the at large district era and you had two blacks to run as Republicans for the senate and for the house of representatives. And one black at that time, Sam Sparks, ran what was considered to be at that time a pretty good race because he did receive what was then considered to be significant white support. He lost, but he carried a few white precincts and got good support in the black community.

W.D.V.: When you won that election in 1972 you must have had a set of perceptions or attitudes about how it would be like to be the first black in the house of representatives, or one of the first. Did it turn out the way you thought, or hadn't you really. . . .?

Mays: Well, it was probably much more significant to me than it was to the total community. I dealt with it as significant because of the absence of any black participation. But it was uneventful, basically. The legislators were basically congenial, cordial, most. And those who were not, were basically silent. Did not evidence any real disenchantment with my presence or the presence of the other blacks. The position did not really provide the forum that I thought possibly it could have provided. I don't think the black legislators were that noticeable in the last legislative session. We just blended in. There was really not that much attention even paid to the fact that this was the first time that blacks had been members in that body. And we were basically treated like white legislators. I'm not saying whether this is good or bad, but there was no big fanfare. Very difficult for a state representative period to gain very much credibility his first term. I didn't have that much of an idea about what assignment I wanted. But I guessed.

Judiciary. I preferred the Judiciary committee. That was my first preference. And I did get that assignment. Legislative affairs committee was the other assignment. I didn't know anything about it. Not a very substantive committee. But you get one substantive committee and one blah, one other committee.

W.D.V.: How about the bills that you sponsored and co-sponsored?

Mays: Bills that I sponsored. We got together initially and

[Interruption on tape.]

Where were we?

W.D.V.: The bills that you sponsored.

Mays: Oh yes. Bills. You know, we jointly sponsored several bills. The bills that I dealt with individually were bills that I thought I might be able to get passed. They were fairly neutral bills dealing with defects that I thought were in the law. Basically formulated because of my involvement in law practice. One bill was a bill to make uninsured motorists protection mandatory for common carriers. I thought the bill at this time. . . or still. . . . If you are a passenger on a bus or a passenger in a cab and you are injured by an uninsured motorist, you had no effective way to recover. In fact these companies did not, or do not, carry medical pay for the passengers. So I thought that was very defective and I thought it was relevant because of the busing, school busing. You have these common carriers carry a lot of young people. Because we have a substantial busing in our school program. So I felt that this kind of protection would be, you know, consumer oriented. The bill did pass the house of representatives and I learned a little bit more about the session. By the way, my major was political science. My minor was business administration. So somewhat familiar with, you know, government. And the bill passed the house. I learned that a lot of people do

not necessarily vote for your bill. It was one of these bills that passed. . . . I think it got 65 votes. Lot of people just were present, didn't vote. Didn't get many votes against it. Went to the senate and the lobby came. Sen Max Howell, who's a senator here, was somewhat disenchanted with me because I had not supported another bill that he'd indicated a preference for and possibly too because of various other interests which he had some involvement with because of his extensive legislative tenure. Indicated that a hearing should be held and we held a hearing and everybody with a bus of any kind, carrier

[Interruption on tape.]

Now that was one bill.

J.B.: So the bus lobbyists came?

Mays: Yeah, the bus lobbyists came. I had received a letter from Art Monroe who was insurance commissioner indicating that the rates would not be increased, at least initially, because there was no experience of rating there and no reason to believe that this requirement would cause a rate increase at that time. That was one of their main concerns. A letter from Art Monroe indicating that they would not increase, but the senators didn't choose, you know, to relate to that. He's a very young guy, pretty active guy--

[Interruption on tape.]

My opponent said I was too busy to serve as a legislator. [Laughter.] At any rate, so my point is, I got a little idea of the legislative process.

J.B.: Did the bill finally pass?

Mays: No, they referred the bill to, you know, the. . . . I don't know, they referred the bill to some committee for further evaluation.

They didn't kill it. They didn't know enough about it. It seemed to be positive. But Max Howell, you know, one of the senators was opposed to it. And I learned that the fact that a bill passes the house has no real credibility in the senate. You know, it's treated just like a bill that was initially introduced in the senate. But that bill. . . . I thought I could get that bill passed. I introduced another bill which I knew would not get passed requiring political subdivisions to carry liability insurance to protect them against torts, to insure their agents who may commit certain tortuous conducts. And I had in mind, you know, a few situations that I'd dealt with. Little kid got hurt on the playground because of defective equipment. And I had dealt with the case and wrote the city and the city denied You know, of course denied. . . . They said they didn't have any insurance coverage and of course they were not sueable under sovereign community in the state. So I had in mind that situation. And policemen who were involved in certain tortuous conduct. . . you know, generally not financially responsible. The city doesn't provide any substance financially. And then I got into a bill I introduced to limit the right of school boards to expell students for more than three days without certain limitations here and certain recognition of due process without the presence, you know, of very strong conduct. That bill didn't even get out of committee. This other bill, by the way, didn't get out of committee, either. And then the equal rights commission bill, which I basically. . . which I handled in committee and on the floor. And that bill, basically, was a bill which dealt with employ--very nebulous, vague bill. Basically supporting the concept of equal employment opportunity as opposed to really providing any really substantive relief. But giving the state a chance to affirm a policy, in my opinion, of a history of discrimination and to recognize that a set up

of structure in the state which would be somewhat involved in trying to work with that problem.

W.D.V.: Is this the only state that doesn't have a civil rights or human rights or equal opportunity commission, state wide, as a policy?

Mays: Not necessarily the only. I think there's some others. Very few, though. Most of the states around us do, I noticed during my research.

J.B.: That was defeated in the house?

Mays: Passed in the house. Basically got hung up in the senate. They amended the bill to death in the senate and when that bill came back we were not able to get that bill up for a vote in the house. But it came back only about a day or two before we recessed for six months. In effect, really adjourned. So we never passed the same bill. Both houses passed, both chambers passed a version of a bill, but the same bill was never passed. The version passed by the house was much stronger than the version passed by the senate.

J.B.: Is there going to be any attempt to get the governor to include that in his call?

Mays: This time? I haven't. . . . I understand Representative Wilkens went to talk to him. But the governor-elected indicated that he would sponsor the bill as an administration bill and we sort of gathered that an administration bill, at least in the house, receives priority in terms of treatment. So that it would be brought back up in the next legislative session and I understand Pryor will be behind it. I think it will pass the next time.

W.D.V.: You elected four blacks in 1972. The same four were re-nominated this year.

Mays: Well now, senator Jewell was not up for re-election.

W.D.V.: That's right. But the three in the house were renominated. But those blacks who did challenge whites in primaries, or incumbents, all of them lost. Is that correct?

Mays: Right. Only one, two challenged. One in a special election. Because one of the senators resigned his senate position because of an income tax problem. And they held a special election and he lost and then he did not challenge the guy who gained the seat in the special election in the primary. Cause I think he would have been up in the primary. Because the guy only had a two year term and the guy was running to complete the first term. I was up. . . . I mean, I was the only black candidate who had a contested race in the primary. The black in Pine Bluff was not contested and Dr Townsend, who is the other black who holds the house seat. . . . So that the white who holds the house seat here was challenged by two blacks and I was challenged by two blacks. [Unclear.] I got a little bit more baptism in politics this time. Learned a few more things about this district, I think. And politics and how it's going to work given the racial balance that it has at this time.

W.D.V.: You see more blacks running for the state legislature in the future?

Mays: Basically only in those seats which are. . . which have a majority black.

W.D.V.: Is there going to be a move to take the house to single member districts?

Mays: That move will probably not come about until 1980. Ten years from the. . . .

W.D.V.: Which would mean that the racial composition of the district

really isn't going to change that much. So you're not going to have that kind of switching balance.

Mays: No.

J.B.: You may pick up a few more.

Mays: We may. Two, three more. May. You know, not probable.

W.D.V.: So the blacks as a group within the legislature, you don't see it becoming. . . .

Mays: No I don't. I don't think as a group blacks will have a substantial representation for a while. And maybe when they do get substantial representation I'm not sure. . . . Although I think the same concerns will be. . . . We as a group have difficulty isolating the issues which cause us to stand out as a community. These issues are more sophisticated I think now than basically housing. They're not symbols. You don't have. . . the employment opportunities. They're kind of individual problems. They're not problems which are caused by active government, you know, action. As opposed to lack of government action to maybe eliminate the evils which developed as a result of the history of discrimination. So the black community which is a community because of the reaction of the white community to it. And individuals still, to a great extent, relative, escape the burdens which accompany being black. And to that extent we lose the black community. People who are moving westward tend to lose whatever identity they had with the black community. The only identity that I see a black man has with the black community is basically through his church. If he's one who has at least experienced a pretty good job opportunity with the federal government, which is probably the number one equal employer, ^{Bell} Southwestern [belt?] here in this community and to some extent the utilities, although I'm involved

in litigation in this area, so I'm a little more aware of where these employers are going. I don't see a total acceptance of equal. . . title [7?] under the 1964 Civil Rights Act by the private sector, yet. But my point is that blacks who have received equal employment opportunities, who move and have access to housing in those areas that are now traditionally white, lose their identity with the black community unless they maintain a church contact which is majority black.

W.D.V.: Or political?

Mays: Well, they vote in their districts so they generally vote for white candidates so that they would probably relate to the. . . . They relate to me, they relate to this district three, as a basis for representation. I'm sure that many of them relate to me more than they relate to their own representatives.

W.D.V.: I was going to ask you about that. What we found in some of the other states is that blacks who were elected and people outside their district, that is, from all over the state, saw them as their representative in the legislature. Do you find that's true in the last couple of years?

Mays: I think that's true. I think, based on invitations I've received. . . . I think a black man in the legislature at this time in Arkansas has a dual responsibility. I think he has a responsibility to the district, his electorate. But I think he also has a broader responsibility. He's looked upon as a black legislator and as a black legislator representing certain interest. I don't know if we can identify them with a great deal of accuracy. But these interests certainly extend over his geographical area he's representing. And he's considered a black leader. [Unclear.] This is probably the first time that blacks have had an opportunity to decide how [the produce?] will look.

What he will stand for, basically. The product being the political figure elected. So I think yes, he has. . . . And he may get a little bit more notoriety state wide. Little bit. At least in the black community. Not necessarily in the white community. But the media, you know, they basically deal with him as state representative. Maybe when Martin Luther King dies or something happens nationwide he will be contacted. The national black network, though, is developing I see. . . you know, gives you a little bit more recognition. It wants to get some input from you. So a black legislator does have a broader base, a larger number of people watching him, larger number of people relating to him, partially because he's black.

J.B.: There's now an association of southern black mayors. Is there anything on the horizon, or anything active, going on to develop any sort of similar association of southern black legislators?

Mays: There is an association of black legislators. Not necessarily southern. And there are meetings which are held. Last meeting was held in Chicago. They sent a list. . . they send you a list of all the black legislators. There is a loose association, yes. It's not extremely effective.

J.B.: Have you been to any meetings?

Mays: I haven't been to. . . . The only meeting I ever went to No, no, not for the black legislators.

W.D.V.: How about for black elected public officials?

Mays: I have not been to any meetings. The gal who called me, city councilman, Lester Hollingsworth has been, you know, to the meeting. At least in this community, you know, we have not. . . . I'm just joining it. And I had not really had any real knowledge of it except through

my close friend, who's on the city council.

So the only thing I went to a meeting in Atlanta, voter project, voter project. Dealing with southern legislators and trying to. . . . And that might be an effort to deal with black locally elected officials on a regional basis.

J.B.: How many people were there?

Mays: Not too many. Not. . . you know, not too many. Some of the black mayors was there and some of the legislators. . . from Tennessee. But not a whole lot, not representative. . . hum, not what I would consider representative. Of the black locally elected officials. There were many people there.

W.D.V.: Have the black legislators had any meetings together?

Mays: Yes, initially we had a meeting with the governor. I don't think that we as black legislators have really been effective in terms of acting as black legislators. And I'm not even sure that it's possible. . . First of all, Dr Townsend's. . . much older. Different product, in my opinion. He's a very good man but he's been working a long time in civil rights. The idea of a black caucus, named [?] black caucus. . . he was somewhat sensitive. Did not particularly care for that name. Representative Wilkens is a political science instructor. I think politically sophisticated. What I would consider to be an effective, black politician. Recognizes what needs to be done. Number one, to get elected. [Unclear.] You know, sends get well cards to persons in his district who are injured or hurt. When somebody dies, you know. . . . Does things to keep him ingratiated with his electorate and he always meets with the governors and. . . . But we're not working as a group. Now I initially wanted to. . . . I was one of the main, if not

the only mover to work together as a caucus. In fact I wanted to share our. . . . We had an expense account but that's a problem now.

and talked to Dr Jewell about it, initially. But I have not been able yet to get the fellows together. I think that because of our small number, you know, there's a tendency. . . . It's just been very difficult to get together and function as a black contingent. And then there's also a reluctance to do so by some of the members because they do not feel that this will work to our best advantage.

W.D.V.: Is there an effort to organize black elected officials in this state?

Mays: No. Has there been an effort? No.

W.D.V.: Is there an effort coming?

Mays: Maybe.

W.D.V.: Is there an identifiable black state leadership?

Mays: No. No, none in my opinion. The elected officials are just, you know, a fairly new breed. So we haven't had any real. . . . Although we're given credit for, I think, having the largest number. I think that is really an [overstatement?] In terms of impact. I don't think we have any impact. I don't think that. . . . Maybe because of issue. . . . There's not enough. . . . You know, the polarizing issues are not there again. But I saw nationally, with the black caucus, with the national Congressmen getting together, a basis for a national effort. Because I think that if they got together you have some real chance of getting black elected officials together period. But these issues now are becoming too sophisticated in terms, you know, determining whether or not they are adverse or positive for black people, you know. And there's too much disagreement within the black community. My strongest opposition

really came from the black community. One of the strongest. . . one of the persons who worked very, very strongly against me is the vice mayor, who you might want to talk to. You know, I've been knowing him all my life, but politically he and some of the traditional black organizations. . . . When I ran I was not endorsed by one of the traditional black organizations, who have traditionally been involved in politics, that is to say. Who've been involved with the white politician in terms of helping get out the vote and delivering the vote of the black community or trying to influence the vote of the black community in terms of candidates to support. And I think I'm perceived. . . . I don't know why these persons were. . . . I think that they were strongly opposed to me. I think it was greater opposition to me personally. I don't think I'm being subjective. There was greater activity in my race, for instance, than in Johnsons race. In terms of black participation either for or against. And I think this was so because. . . not because of anything I had done, necessarily, and not because. . . . Because I think I was very good. . . liberal white legislator as opposed to really being a black legislator. Partially because, one, we did not include any polarizing issues on the agenda. The death penalty bill was a bill/^{which I}[thought/fought?] nationwide, at least in the southern states in the legislature. Found blacks on one side and whites significantly on the other. A significant number on the other side. The equal rights commission bill. And I think that was about. . . . There was no black agenda. We didn't include a black agenda on the legislative program. The governor, however, did have a people's agenda, in my opinion, which had obvious benefits for blacks who fit in that general, economic, deprived category. The kindergarten program. The free text book program. The income tax reduction--actually,

this was a bill, too, I sponsored--reducing the income tax for lower income families. This was my first. . . you know, real. . . . This was an experience where I learned a little bit about politics and how it worked. Because the governor's aide called me and asked me whether or not I wanted to sponsor a bill. This was a bill to reduce income tax for lower income families. That was a bill which I could certainly relate to and certainly most of the people in my district would find to be a positive bill. So I said yes. So I was one of the sponsors. And basically the governor selected me as one of the sponsors. And I understand he selected senator Jewell in the senate. Therefore, this bill that I sponsored, or was a co-sponsor on, was enacted and became law. So this gives you a legislative record, theoretically, to run on. You know, only reason the bill passed was because the governor supported it, not because I had anything to do with sponsoring it. You know. I don't even think I got up and spoke for it. Didn't have to. You know, everybody was for the bill. Think it passed 100 to nothing in the house, or you know, passed by an extremely significant margin. But it does look on my record when I was running. . . one of the bills which I co-sponsored, which became law. So therefore, you know, you say "That's a bill that I passed." And it was a recognition. It gives you some insight into the influence the governor has over the legislature. How he can help certain legislators if he wants to, in terms of giving them a record to run on.

W.D.V.: Who in the governor's staff handles that sort of liaison?

Mays: Well, Bob Brown called me. I knew Bob Brown from the. . . . I've been knowing Bob Brown a [little/long] while anyway and met the governor, initially, when I was in the prosecuting attorney's office. But he called me on that.

J.B.: How do you find the governor when you meet with him? Was it just one meeting, or two meetings?

Mays: As a group. . . . Now I've been knowing the governor since he ran initially. I met him before he really got into the primary, through a friend of mine who ran for Congress up there. . . David Stewart. . . in the, I think that's the 4th district, 4th Congressional district. And always found him to be extremely personable, a very congenial person. Not one who. . . . Accommodating. Not one who's especially sensitive . . . I mean, I think he's sensitive to, you know, the plight of the common man. Not especially sensitive to the problems of discrimination or to the need to include blacks. And I say to include blacks because I think that--much like I argued for inclusion on juries--that those persons who have had a little exposure to blacks and who have a different language sometimes around blacks than they have when they're not around blacks, who have appreciation for the black cook and the black janitor but not for the black professional or for a black skilled employee or for a black teacher, who have, you know, limited concepts, and who, through integration can, I think, gain new dimension in terms of knowledge about blacks. I say that he's not sensitive to inclusion.

W.D.V.: Does that mean he doesn't appoint enough blacks?

Mays: Yes, in my opinion that's exactly what that means. Doesn't appoint enough blacks. Does not have a significant black on his staff who has his ear, who can at least apprise him, give him. . . . I think he made many mistakes simply because he didn't have communication. He did not have a man on his staff who could prevent him from doing certain things that he probably would not have done. He simply did it because of lack of information.

J.B.: What would be an example of that?

Mays: Oh, I think I had an example in mind at one time. One example would be, yeah, for instance, he appointed a black to a board and did not. . . re-appointed a person who was black and did not know the person was black. He could have made a. . . . Some of his speeches were simply [wrong?]. Some of his statements. . . . He met, you know, with a group, local group of leaders called the Round Table.

J.B.: [Unclear.]

Mays: Yeah. [Black leaders.] Professionals who basically work for the state government or federal government who, you know, are concerned about issues and meet together and formed this group called the Round Table. They generally meet with the governor. I would say bourgeois, middle class, you know, people. He made several statements. I can't recall now specifics, but which indicated that he did not have a knowledge of the black community. By that I mean he might make a comment about one person who might not, you know, might be a person who is generally disliked in the black community. Little intimate things. Little things. It's almost like having an opportunity to know your name or know a little bit about you and not use it, at all. Little PR things. He tried to reach out and get. . . . I thought he made an effort to reach out and get a new black as opposed to the old black. When I say new black for instance Dr Miller who was appointed to the board of directors of Arkansas. I think that in regard to his issue, the merger issue between Arkansas AN&M and University of Arkansas system. Without going into specifics I think that he got the black perspective and had it gotten it he would not have made some of the statements, some unnecessary statements that he made. He didn't understand what the issue was, at least in the black community.

Or didn't understand at least a certain perspective of that issue as held by many black leaders. So . . . you know, these kind of things. He was just, you know, not informed.

J.B.: Who advises him say in terms of black appointments and this sort of thing?

Mays: At first he had a white lady who was his number one liaison with the black community. You know, which indicates some insensitivity, you know, in my way of thinking. A person who says, you know, "I know how you blacks are. I'm white. But I know them." You know, you do have an identification problem sometimes. And if I'm running a business and I want to set up a structure that you can relate to, too, based on your history and your background, you know. Not necessarily have a picture of your mother. But I'm saying that depending on the environment I want something that you can relate to if I'm going to try to communicate with you.

J.B.: Who served that role?

Mays: I'm trying to think of her name. I don't think. . . . She was the wife of a doctor and she'd been active with the human relations council and with the Urban League, and you know, with. . . . She'd been active in the black community. Samuels. Mrs. Irene Samuels. So, you know, you had that kind of problem. Gov Rockefeller. . . . You know, he came behind Gov Rockefeller, who gave blacks, I think, pretty significant positions. Gov Rockefeller had several blacks, not just one. He had Simon Walker who is a well known black in this community. He had Cunningham, a guy named. . . who was aggressive and, you know, hard working person in any community. And then he had a friend of mine who's on the city board now, Lester Hollingsworth, and appointed him to a non-

traditionally black job. Advisor to the governor on prison affairs. And he had Sam Sparks who, you know. . . advisor to the governor. And he had several blacks around him.

J.B.: You think that Rockefeller was more sensitive?

Mays: I'm not sure that I can say that as a man he is more sensitive. You understand what I'm saying? I'm saying that he had people around him who certainly made him more sensitive. I personally believe Bumpers has good instincts, you know, in terms of his identity. I think he might identify a little bit more with the common issues than maybe Rockefeller could because of his background. I don't know. But I think in Rockefeller--

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--he was not as cut off and isolated as Bumpers was. And Bumpers presented a new problem for blacks. Bumpers was extremely popular. Bumpers never did just. . . . You know what I mean, he was a sophisticated governor. So it was difficult to put Bumpers in a hole, isolate him on an issue. And this is a problem the black community has now, in terms of staying alive. It's difficult to isolate those issues which cause the black community to remain a black community, those issues which set us aside, apart, from the white community. I mean we know them but it's difficult for us to feel them, you know. Equal employment opportunity is just too [difficult/typical?]. [Everything is open anyway.?] If you have sufficient people. . . . You have the same problem that you're going to have nationally with the organization of black elected officials. You have a mayor in Los Angeles who's black and mayor of an area which has only 17% black population. You know, this man has assimilated. You have a senator of Massachusetts with a black population of--I don't know-- maybe 5, 10%. This man has assimilated. You know, he's a liberal, but he

didn't join this caucus, this national black caucus. And we have, you know, maybe the mayor of Atlanta and you've got a significant white

and I learned that, too, in this last election. 41%.

Actually, I believe, voting 45%. You know. . . . You'd have a different kind of representative probably and a different kind of rhetoric probably if you had 100% black district. You follow me? So that. . . Clay, in St Louis. . . . I think that district is 51 or 52% white. So that when you find politicians, black politicians. . . . I see here developing with Bumpers, with this fellow Clinton up there in the 4th district, with *Jim Guy* Tucker. I see a progressive white, too.[?]

these persons are appealing to them, then I see, you know, in the next twenty years the probability that blacks will have assimilated more. There will be less organization. Because we're having difficulty isolating the issues now. You know, the black and white.

J.B.: So you see coalition politics developing more?

Mays: I sure do. I do. I really do.

J.B.: Is Bumpers symbolic of that or not?

Mays: Bumpers should have had, could have had more support in the black community had he. . . . He didn't need it. Not lost support in the white community, I think, had he been a little bit better educated. You know, he didn't do anything that was, didn't do anything to hurt the black community. Might have taken a few stands. . . you know, I noticed him going over

Made a pretty good statement of the black-white issue down there. I went down there. They wanted the national guard. Claimed it was a riot. It wasn't a riot. Bumpers said, well, you know, that's a problem that we

have. He didn't take sides. They were strong down there. They wanted sides taken. Eastern Arkansas. They wanted sides taken. Bumpers didn't take sides. It could have been easy to take sides, you know. And maybe. . . . So I'm saying. . . yeah, he's representative I think. But this demogogery has left, I think. And when you say nigger to black people, you know, it's not difficult for us. You don't have that politician anymore. You have people who are saying "Gentlemen." They may be doing some of the same things. [Something about these people not appropriating money] for social services. But he's got his reasoning, you know. He's not emphasizing the fact that he's not appropriating money for social services. He's saying "I'm appropriating money for highways." Or I'm appropriating money for this and that and just glides over the fact that he's not appropriating money for social services. You got these kinds of problems now.

J.B.: Is there any sort of coalition between blacks and organized labor in Arkansas?

Mays: Arkansas. . . organized. . . little bit. Labor is stronger here in this area than it is in most areas.

J.B.: You mean in Little Rock.

Mays: In Little Rock.

J.B.: As opposed to the rest of the state.

Mays: Right. Most of the state. It was pretty significant in my race, I think. I had organized labor support. And I had the teachers' support. And as I said I had all the black groups, you know, extensively. [Unclear.]

J.B.: Let me ask you a little bit more about your own background. What did your family do? Your parents.

Mays: My father is in real estate. He's a real estate broker. And he started operating his own business. My background would have to be, I'd say, economically, you know, at least middle class. Tantamount to middle class. I mean economically. Not necessarily culturally. He operated his own business. Made a good living. Not necessarily a whole lot of money. But he got into real estate and started making a little bit better than a good living before I graduated from high school.

J.B.: Which was when?

Mays: Which was in '61.

J.B.: Did you go to Central?

Mays: No, I went to Horace Mann.

J.B.: Was it integrated at that time?

Mays: It started. . . . Central was closed when I was in 9th grade, 10th grade. Well, it started integrating when I was in 9th grade. There was no meaningful integration in Little Rock when I graduated from high school. Meaning that Central was the only school that was integrated, you know.

J.B.: Horace Mann was still all black.

Mays: Horace Mann was still all black. I don't know if they had any blacks in . I don't know. Maybe one or two. But there was no meaningful integration when I graduated from high school.

J.B.: So your first meaningful integration. . . at least Howard had some white students. . . but being in a minority position in an integrated situation was in law school.

Mays: In law school. Except for the year I went to school in Tucson, Arizona. Which was in 3rd grade. But I was too young to appreciate integration, you know. I recognized that there was. . . I recognize it now, you know, in terms of my. . . . I was a minority. Mexicans [unclear]

were minority. The class was predominantly white. The teacher was white. But it was nothing that I, you know, really recognized. So my first meaningful classroom situation when I was mature and a significant minority. Because when I went to law school the first year I was the only black in law school. And the next year, you know, we had some other blacks. Two. But Arkansas had not graduated a black lawyer since the crop who came out in '54, '55, '56. About six came out together. [He lists a group of names--unclear] A guy named Hayes. And then boom. Nobody 'til I graduated in '68. Although we had one to attend later, but he was and went to Tulsa. In fact he was elected to the legislature there, but never in fact graduated. Passed the bar. Subsequently they learned that he hadn't graduated and ran into some difficulties. But I think the point that I. . . . I think that. . . . You know, I don't see the white accepting the black candidate, personally, in the next few years. I don't see myself as running necessarily for re-election in the next two years.

J.B.: Why not?

Mays: Because I don't think. . . . You know. . . . Because I do not see sufficient leverage in the state representative position. I see these positions as, you know, positions of some prestige. I enjoyed the legislative process itself. But I see the elected, the black elected, as wanting to do much more than the powers of this position really allow you to do. I see that they are positions which are positions of honor. The man who votes for me is the man who's concerned about neighborhood problems. Lack of curbs and gutters. Lack of paved streets. The fact that he has to cross the railroad crossing before he goes home. Lack of emergency facilities in the neighborhood. Health care. Problems which

are probably even more local than the state legislature. Problems which probably should be more effectively dealt with by the city council. But these are the issues and it's very difficult for a state legislator to deal with them. It's very difficult for him to get the forum to even articulate his views. You know, this is a forum to some extent. You know. . . occasionally. . . because I was a lawyer even more so than the fact that I was a legislator. . . . I'm probably on more programs in a way because of certain other activities that I've been involved in as a lawyer, a civil rights lawyer than as a state legislator. So I view it as an honor. I view it as a man who says "Look, you may be the most qualified candidate, Richard Mays, of the two or three, but you can't really do anything for us, either in terms of substance. We may feel that you are more symbolic of what we want. But it's still an honor that we're giving you and we have a right to take it away. We can give it to somebody who's best qualified because neither one of you can really be that effective in terms of changing our life styles." So it's an honor as far as we're concerned. I don't know if I personally like that situation. So I would want to run for a position--and I think I'm going to run for another position in the next two years.

W.D.V.: How about a black running for a state wide office?

Mays: I don't see that right away.

W.D.V.: When do you see it?

Mays: Well, now, we've had blacks running for it, you know. First of all, we had a black running for lieutenant governor. We had a black running for governor in the Republican primary against Rockefeller and he had 700 votes, you know. So we haven't had creditable blacks running for state wide office. And when I say credible blacks I mean one, for instance, who could get financial support for the

candidacy. A person who had even a strong base in their black community. You know, they've been persons who have not had any real respect in their community. They haven't had credibility in the black community. And, you know, they didn't have the money and it was not effective at all. Now we had a man who ran for county sheriff this time and he did put that sheriff's race in a run off. He got about 5,000 and that was enough because you had two strong white candidates. But he was not a man who was well known or well respected. You know, when you got a black man who says "I'm going to vote for you, believe it or not, because you're black". . . . You don't have a lot of black people who like to do that. That's why Johnston's in office. One reason . . . you had candidates who opposed him who were as qualified as he was this time. You know, qualified meaning black or very hung up on But last time, not only was he probably more qualified for his position at least subjectively but, you know, he took positions on issues which even I could identify with more. So if I voted for this other black candidate, I voted because he was black. . . . And blacks hate to do that probably more so than whites, because we are. . . . You know, the certain voting element of the black community. So I don't see. . . . I haven't seen. . . . Sam Sparks was the. . . . I haven't seen a black candidate go out and campaign for the white vote who had credibility in his community and had some substance. And Sam Sparks has been the last black candidate who campaigned for senator over in the district, over this county. He went into the white home and tried to get the vote and he had white support. And he talked to the white, you know, and said "Look, I want your support." And he had credibility in his own community. So you haven't had a black candidate to seek number one on a county wide basis since Sam Sparks, in my opinion,

the white vote. This is why I'm more concerned about running for another office myself next time. You know, people say senator. I don't see senator. . . . You know, first of all, you've got a black who's senator. Secondly, although senator Jewell and I are not extremely close politically because I felt senator Jewell in the last legislature worked more. . . . I'm not, I wasn't considered a Bumpers man. But I mean I could identify more with governor Bumpers because number one I felt he doesn't represent the same. . . you don't know who he represents. Coalition. I mean he's not identified with the old power faction. Which was kind of apparent when Fulbright ran. When he ran against Fulbright. The old power faction supported Fulbright. Not necessarily because they disliked Bumpers but because they couldn't, they didn't know him. Some of the same reasons that caused some of the old power factions in the black community to oppose me. They don't know me. Know me, but I don't play the same kind of. . . . They see I'm not playing the same kind of politics.

W.D.V.: Yeah, but that leaves just two opinions for you then.
State wide office or city.

Mays: Or county.

W.D.V.: Yes, or county. I meant city or county.

Mays: Right, county.

W.D.V.: You don't see this coming up state wide?

Mays: Not unless I'll be successful county wide. I could see myself. . . . In other words, I see possibly one other candidate who might hurt. . . . But you got to get money to run for any office. I never really raised any money. I kind of used my family and it's support . . . last race. I didn't have to use my funds. . . . Labor con-

tributed to my campaign and I got. . . you know, people, lawyers to send you money that you know. Not necessarily from the district, but from the community. I had some of the representatives who didn't run. Ft Smith sent me money. But you've got a financial problem to run county wide, state wide. So you've got to have some kind of contact with the white community or something to get state wide support. I do see. . . I've heard some talk about what I would consider to be credible candidates talking about running for lieutenant governor. But that position's got to be available and they can't beat Joe Per^ucell. And he's going to be there so you've got to have a vacancy to occur. I don't see that vacancy occurring on a state wide level next year, next election. Now I see a vacancy occurring on a county position, a county position. I see two vacancies occurring. I see Neal's seat being open and I see a big rush of pretty strong white candidates for that seat. And I see the prosecuting attorney's seat being open. And I see the county judge seat being open, really. So I see three county positions available in the next two years. Three. . . well, you know, two county positions and Congressional seat. So I see those as providing some possibility. Prosecuting attorney's office, county judge's office, Congressional seat. I see the Congressional seat as providing the least opportunity for a black because of the calibre of the whites who are going to be running. You know, people with already some established political reputation. I see Congress, too, very much like, in a way like I see the state representative here. I mean, it's an honor. I want to run in a race where the issue is there, too. That is, very much like the issue that was there for the whites in the race in Los Angeles. You know, you had a man who'd been in there, who'd been tainted, to some extent, with corruption as opposed to a man who was black who would run who seemed to be a good,

qualified candidate. So you've got to have some defect, in my opinion, almost. But I do see myself as running for one of those seats and then I want to leave. I don't think I can win. But I think it's good, based on what. . . . I think it's good to campaign in the white community. To walk up to a white and say "Look, I want your vote. I need your vote. I want your help. I need your support." "I can do this. I'm qualified for the position and not only that, I have certain concerns which I think should concern you for this position." I think this can be done more on a county basis than it can be done in Congress. Because I still see that as an honor, too. Given the fact that you're just as qualified, then the issue, you know, still may be "Why, I like this man better. I know this man. I don't know these other people. And you know, he's white, too. I'd rather have a white representing me."

J.B.: What's your opinion of Mills as a Congress in so far as relating to blacks?

Mays: Mills seems to be a pretty good politician in terms of relating to, you know, certain blacks who have leadership positions in the community. He seems to have been a pretty good politician. Much like he's been, apparently, a pretty good politician in terms of relating to the white community. I don't personally. . . . You know, I'm turned off a little by Mills, personally. So, you know, I don't know if I can be totally objective with him. He's too much of a politician. You know, I think a man [something about changing positions all the time], I don't know if he has any views anymore. He's just a man who's trying to stay alive in the system. He's just got power and, you know. . . .

J.B.: Did you support Bumpers against Fulbright?

Mays: Yes. I voted for Bumpers. I went out to support him. I gave him a campaign contribution. I think this is how blacks are going

to have to support, too.

Myself, I don't think I would ever get out and just work unless I really had a lot of confidence in the white guy. But, you know, my credibility means something to me, so I'm not going to just say "Look, black community, vote for this man." Like senator Jewell did for Fulbright. Especially in a race when it was. . . like that. [Had to stand up and say] "Look, vote against this man."

J.B.: Did you get active at all in Pryor's race?

Mays: When he ran against McClellan?

J.B.: Both times.

Mays: I was a little bit active when he was running against McClellan because, you know, I could say "Vote against that man." Although I've been reading. . . . McClellan is a master politician. I just think that he symbolizes a certain attitude that cannot continue. . . . You know, his symbol is larger than he is. And I don't care what he does. But yes, I was active first of all in Pryor's race and I thought we made a pretty substantial contribution to his race. I was active in terms of talking to friends and working against McClellan. And on election day they had a little endorsement thing that I was pushing. I was pretty active against McClellan and therefore for Pryor. In this election, no I really wasn't that active. I didn't really think Faubus had a chance. I just felt like, you know. . . . I see maybe I should have been a little more active. I don't know. But I really was not that active in Pryor's race. Didn't do anything.

J.B.: What's your reaction to Charles Evers' endorsement, not endorsement, but saying that he can accept George Wallace as a vice presidential candidate?

Mays: I think that's ridiculous. I think that's too much. I don't

think. . . . My first reaction is that that's a little bit too much flexibility for me. I think politicians have to stand for principles. You have to stand for something. And when you gain that much flexibility you lose any concept of principle. Now I think that a black should never support a Wallace. You know, maybe his son, but not him. Because I think that the question then becomes how bad do you have to treat a man before, you know, you lose him totally. I think to support a Wallace, or to endorse a Wallace is to endorse a symbol which is still serving to feed the political desires of many whites in that way. Many people support Wallace because of what he has been. Whites support him because of what he has been. Since they support him for that reason, then I'm obliged to oppose him for that same reason. Not necessarily saying he's the same man. He may be the most equal employment opportunity man in the world, but he can not erase in two or three days or in one move or in one year or two years what he spent, built a lifetime on. And I say therefore that I could not compromise on a Wallace candidate. Much like I could not compromise on McClellan. I'm not saying he's not a very useful Senator. I saw some things in the paper that he was supporting and pushing. But I could not support him because he's a symbol of racial oppression and many people who support him support him because he is that symbol, because that's what he means to them.

J.B.: How would you feel about Bumpers as a vice presidential nominee?

Mays: Bumpers would be a beautiful vice presidential candidate. I think Bumpers is a different man. You know, I'm glad to see a Bumpers. I really. . . I know how he, from Charleston. . . . I think Bumpers is a very good. . . . He's pretty flexible, but he's pretty definite in his actions. You know, he's flexible in his speech. . . .

Now Bumpers did several things which impressed me as a white politician during the last legislative session. He vetoed a bill--you know, in Arkansas 51 votes override a veto. Same number of votes required to pass a bill overrides a veto, so a veto is a moral statement by a governor. Now Bumpers vetoed a bill which would have allotted a certain percentage of revenues to the cities and counties. This bill passed in the house by 77 votes. Passed in the senate. The senate, by the way, did override his veto. When he vetoed that bill he alienated the county, lot of the local white political leaders. The county judges, the local structure, the city people. And to do that, you know, took a little courage in my opinion for a pragmatic politician. So this was good. It wasn't dealing with race but it gave a little bit of insight into this man. I mean, you know, he talks very broad, general, sophisticated language. But he's capable of taking definite positions and alienating people for principle. And this is what I liked about Gov Bumpers. He campaigns. . . you don't even know what he campaigns on. He says good instincts bring out the best in people. I mean I don't think he took a stand. . . . Only difficulty I had with him, mainly because I was an incumbent, was because he never did say anything Fulbright had done wrong, really. He usually said Fulbright's been a good Senator, he's just been there too long. That's basically all he said.

But I think that he can deliver that message pretty effectively. And as is apparent. [Something about good advice.] I think he's got a chance. . . . I think Bumpers can compete with any white candidate anywhere or in any area. And that's an attribute.

J.B.: a man of principle, then.

Mays: I'm viewing him right now as a man of principle. He hasn't been in politics long enough to be otherwise, in my opinion. He's been

in politics only four years. So yes, I view him right now as a man of principle. And I think he'll come pretty straight with you and tell you. . . . You know, he's hard to pin down. But, you know, you can [credit?] him. If you talk to him. If you ask him for support [over a proposition?], he'll tell you he's not going to do it. You know, if you pin him down, he's not just going to come out and say "Screw you." But if you'll just pin him down, he'll tell you where he stands. He's just hard to pin down.

J.B.: Do you view his problem then with blacks as one of sensitivity or one of commitment or lack of communication?

Mays: Lack of communication.

J.B.: You don't view it then as a lack of commitment or sensitivity?

Mays: Well, now. . . there may be a lack of sensitivity and commitment, too. You know, it depends on whose perspective we're going by.

J.B.: We're going by yours.

Mays: Yeah, well. . . I think that. . . . I don't know. I hate to say that his sufficient sensitivity or commitment because I don't have any So there may be a lack of sensitivity or commitment.

J.B.: But not insofar as people per se.

Mays: Definitely not. Look at his programs. I think it's obvious. You can look at his programs. Just look at his to some extent now. I think he should have probably included state government and officials, and teachers,

but that's an [intra-school affair?], too. And he didn't. So, you know. . . . But he did include medicare. I think his a very sensitive human man. Now senator Jewell is very opposed to him. You know, lot of people were. But I think that sometimes it's ego. We want to be. . . . I sure want to be recognized. But I think I'm capable. . . . That's the difference. I think I'm capable of going above that. I think if you slight me. . . and I want to be Richard Mays and everybody wants to be important. But I think I'm capable of making a judgment above that subjective judgment. Whether or not you have personally offended me by not recognizing me and giving me all my due. I think if a black had to do that. . . . The press, you know. . . . In the election. . . . But it's common. You know, like in my race, in Johnson's race. But you know, it's just how you deal with state representatives. The black radio station, which is owned by whites, gave the returns basically of the governor's race, lieutenant governor--which is not really relevant--Senator's race, and the Congressional race up there in the 4th district. And omitted, at least both the times when I was listening to the radio the day after the election, the returns in the district race. You see what I mean? District 3. Which means that the general interest, the format, the community interest. . . the white community were interested in those four races. And therefore. . . how do you know? Because you can look at the media, the press and television. And, you know, blacks just adopt that format without evaluating or just, you know, are insensitive to it. So, my point is. . . . You know, I'm having more difficulty. . . . This is why I'm saying I'm kind of getting out of politics. Because I don't really just want to be a state. . . . I would not want to be a state state representative if I were white, because I don't think it's enough leverage.

don't get any benefit. Only those people who are lobbyists. . . . The first thing I recognized when I was elected was that I learned

. I found out who the power structure was.

J.B.: Who is the power structure?

Mays: First of all your utility companies. Because they lobby. They tell you "We want certain laws out there." Certain large business corporations, enterprises, you know. The paper company because they want some kind of special exemption or tax.

J.B.: Are the banks?

Mays: The banks. Savings and loan. They come and they dine you and they tell you what they want. Let you know where it is right away. Your local and county officials. They come to you right away and tell you what we want. Cause, you see, they come to the legislature for money, too. Labor. Farm Bureau is extremely strong. They come to you right away. Let you know.

J.B.: Does the Farm Bureau--

Mays: Not in my district.

J.B.: But are they strong in issue areas that don't involve agriculture?

Mays: They're pretty strong. Pretty conservative.

J.B.: They in effect remain a strong conservative force in Arkansas?

Mays: Yes, yes. In Arkansas.

J.B.: Did any other groups, for example, oppose kindergartens?

Mays: No, I don't think so. Maybe. . . no. Not per se. I don't think I heard anybody just say "I'm opposed to kindergartens."

J.B.: Well, I mean did they work against it?

Mays: I don't know. I don't think so. Might have had some who were--

J.B.: How about the income tax relief?

Mays: [Long pause.] I don't know if the Farm Bureau worked against that or not. But. . . free text books. . .

J.B.: Did they work against that?

Mays: I think they might have worked against that. I'm not sure. They did work against. . . you know, I know they worked against. . . they don't relate to this ecology thing at all. That's a liberal white issue they don't relate to. Social welfare programs. . . they don't relate. . . medicare thing. I know they're not going to relate to that. They take definite issues. I can only remember I went before them the last time. Not this time, but the last time. I don't recall the issues but most of the issues were issues that we were at the opposite ends of. You know. How the money's going to be spent. 70% of the education. . . . Education is a very strong lobby. Education and higher educational institutions in Arkansas have a strong lobbies for state government, too. The legislature. You have that. You don't have what you call just a [rigid?]. . . . You know, you got farmers over there who do not want certain property laws changed. But the rich. . . Whit Stevens [whatever the abbreviation for Arkansas Louisiana Gas Company is], AP&L, horse racing people. [Unclear] They want to extend the season. The dog racing people were lobbying for something. I don't know what they, you know, what they represent. A lot of money flows through them. Now, nobody was really opposed to kindergartens. And nobody was really opposed to free textbooks. But these issues had not been the issues which had traditionally been dealt with. You follow me? They haven't been on the agenda for some reason, you know. The kind of issues which theoretically you could [throw?] back. . . . I mean these have not

been. . . . Well, but you had welfare. . . certain instances. . . .
 Faubus was very. . . he was increasing welfare every time he got ready
 to run. I remember that. So he was [coming down?], I guess.

J.B.: How do you assess the impact of Rockefeller?

Mays: I think that. . . you know, when I see politics, I see bases.
 You know, I see a power base. I won't describe now what it is, what
 it stands for, but I see factions. And these factions are fighting for
 some kind of control. Money machine, or whatever they call it. So
 I see Rockefeller as coming in and having a new. . . he was a totally
 independent faction. And he was a different power base altogether and
 that was very good. And really. . . a lot of factions. . . he took
 over and he was the dominant faction. And a lot of factions just start-
 ed fighting with him or dealing with him or reacting to him. What he
 did, in doing that, an effort to maintain his own power. . . you know,
 he went out and he brought in the black community. Or bought in the
 black community. And made everybody [everybody black was a
 Republican]. All the whites just felt that blacks were Republicans.
 When I ran as a Democrat many people were asking me at this time "You
 think blacks are going to vote in the Democratic primary. You think
 they're going to vote for a Democrat?" So that Rockefeller was a very
 unique, but he was a very personal kind. . . . He had a personal effect.
 Blacks supported Mr Rockefeller. Not the Republican party. So Mr
 Rockefeller had a--

J.B.: Some of his critics claim that he has bought black vote,
 outright. That's the extreme position. How do you relate to that?

Mays: I think he did. . . I think he did things to deserve to
 get the black vote after he bought it. I don't think you can buy a black
 vote and keep it. I think that he came in and got the black vote

initially by buying it. But he had. . . You know, Rockefeller would carry 95%. You can't buy that kind of percent of any community. You got to be doing something. You got to have people out there talking for you. Now I don't think that you can buy. . . anybody can be. . . you know, if you're doing those things. . . . I mean, Fulbright couldn't buy the black vote. He was trying. But he didn't buy the black vote. He didn't take the black community. At least as far as I. . . only took two areas. . . . He took the east end over here. That was funny. East end went for Fulbright which is a very poor community. And Pulaski Heights. Lot of precincts in Pulaski Heights. Which is a very rich community. But basically I don't think you could buy. . . . I don't think the black vote's for sale, really. Any more than any other vote.

J.B.: How did you see it split in that Fulbright-Bumpers race? Did you analyze the returns at all?

Mays: A little bit.

J.B.: What was your impression?

Mays: I think it was pretty close. I think that Bumpers. . . . For the black community or the total community?

J.B.: Black community.

Mays: I think the blacks were, you know, luke warm about both candidates. But I think most blacks kind of perceived, you know . . . they didn't want to be negative about. . . . They could be negative about Fulbright. The few things Fulbright did, like vote against Carswell, were things that I could relate to but probably the average person couldn't relate to. Anyway, no black. So that Fulbright didn't have a good image in the black community. But a lot of people were just of the position that Bumpers hadn't done anything for black people. So that they were negative toward Bumpers. But as it turned out, you know,

Bumpers probably had . . . probably 55-45% of the black community. So that blacks tended to. . . [Blacks might have talked negatively about Bumpers but they didn't like Fulbright either so when it came down to voting they went with Bumpers. (Trans. translation)]

J.B.: In a state like South Carolina, public kindergarten campaign. That was clearly perceived as a black issue. But it was not in Arkansas. Is that right?

Mays: Not at all. Not at all. Cause Arkansas is still basically a very poor state.

J.B.: Right. But so is South Carolina.

Mays: But you don't have that much of a white. . . you don't have a white rich, you know, wealthy people here. The middle class is just expanding. Whites is just getting some of the opportunities that their white counterpart in larger states have had for a long period of time. So Arkansas is still basically agrarian. But I see changes with these new people, who apparently are having. . . you know, got grass root appeal.

J.B.: The Congressional delegation. With the exception now of McClellan and Hammerschmidt. But the rest of them are pretty progressive. Then you have a guy like Clinton just wiping out Rainwater. How significant is that?

Mays: I think it's pretty significant, personally. I mean, I do. I don't know, maybe it's because I want to view the winner in terms of my values. But I mean, if Clinton beats Hammerschmidt, I certainly would view it as significant. I don't know. They say Hammerschmidt's strong up there. I just don't know. Rainwater was not an extremely impressive man. But David Stewart, who was a good candidate--the guy who introduced me to Bumpers--you know, never run before and he just was

edged out by Rainwater. Rainwater had some name recognition and, you know, the senator up there. So he ran a real good race. So that was somewhat significant to me, too. So that. . . Ray Thornton, I think, is a progressive, a moderate representative. Mills. . . I think he's. . . Mills and McClellan are the only remnants of the past and both of them are superior politicians. I mean. . . they take credit for everything. That's the first thing I recognized about a politician. I don't have the inclination to do that. I'm a little bit too honest to do that, at this time. You know, if I want to stay in politics I guess you learn. But politicians take credit for everything. Mr Bussey's the only black politician. You ought to talk to him. I really. . . no, he takes credit for everything.

J.B.: Who is he?

Mays: Vice mayor. I mean, vice mayor, he's on the city board. One of the directors. But they created a position called the vice mayor who presides when the mayor, who is on the city board, does not preside. And the white who is mayor is not nearly as aggressive as Mr Bussey. Mr Bussey is a very aggressive man, energetic man, work hard, deals one on one. So he's really kind of been able to outshine the white mayor. I mean if the white mayor can't make [a function], Bussey's right there. But he takes credit for everything. If you get a job he take credit for your job. Me, everybody. He takes credit for everything. So, you know, the man takes credit for everything, you got to figure the man's done something. And McClellan takes credit for everything. since I've been a little more sophisticated, some of the other white politicians, you know, recognize that the Senator's going to take credit for this. And Mills tries to take credit for a lot of things. He and McClellan. See, Fulbright never did try to take credit for it. So he. . .

that's one reason why I can McClellan wouldn't have. . . you know, supported him. Because he didn't like Fulbright, I'm sure. And they figure Bumpers might come up here and try to take credit for a few things, too. Because he's got that much politician in him. So once you learn to take credit, come back with your record. You've done this; you've done that; you've done this; you've done that. And that's what people really want to hear. And that's why I consider those two very good politicians. And Mr Bussey one of the best politicians I know, you know, in this community. Now he come a long way. I met him when I was junior deputy sheriff. He junior deputy sheriffs. He worked with the sheriff's office. He worked with white politicians all of his life. He has a certain perspective and, you know, that might be a. . . . It's certainly a perspective. And he was elected recently to the board, national board of the locally elected officials, black. Of the locally elected officials. Not the black locally elected officials. The locally elected officials. Replaced Hatcher up there in Gary. You might, you know, you really want to talk to him, I think. He'd be interesting to talk to.

J.B.: What does he do?

Mays: They created a job for him. Trucker came in as prosecuting attorney. He was working. . . . That's when I came back. He was an investigator for the prosecuting attorney's office. Process server. He served process. With another white gentleman. When Tucker [?], Jim Guy came in, Jim Guy fired him. He found out Bussey was claiming to be working for him but wasn't. So he fired him. The legislat--you know, he needed two or three more years in order to get his retirement from the county government. The legislature, 1970 legislature created a position for Mr Bussey as probation officer for circuit judge Atchison, who

was prosecuting attorney when I was in the prosecuting attorney's office and under whom Mr Bussey worked. So they passed a special bill right there for him. And that's what he's doing now. Now he don't ever do. . . . It pays him \$6,000 and he doesn't ever do nothing. He just goes up there and draws his check. Like he did when I was in the prosecuting attorney's office. He didn't do anything then. This one white gentleman who was there, he did all the work. He was very mad at Mr Bussey. Mr Bussey just came up, and, you know, drew his money and left. So, you can see, he's a very effective black politician. He would have been, you know, probably just as effective had he been white.

J.B.: Do you have any other questions?

W.D.V.: No.

J.B.: Anything else you wanted to comment on or what should we have asked you that we didn't?

Mays: Well, I could. . . . I think that the interesting thing that I did about the last legislative session. . . . I dont know if you're talking about politics. . . . Is that although the blacks did not make an impact. . . black community expects a black man to, who's elected, to do things that a governor should be doing. In other words, a black community--

[End of tape. End of Interview.]