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LOUIS MARTIN ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW II

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## INTERVIEW II

DATE: June 12, 1986

INTERVIEWEE: LOUIS MARTIN

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Martin's office, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 2, Side 1

G: In your initial interview, you described a meeting that LBJ had with the black cabinet when he was vice president. I think it was you and Bob Weaver and Marjorie Lawson and a lot of black leaders like that. I wish you would go into that meeting in some detail if you can recall it.

M: Well, as I recall, his political instincts, you know, were very good and he wanted to make certain that--the one area of his career that was sort of cloudy was this relationship to blacks simply because of where he came from, and so forth. So before we had that meeting, the big meeting, that Marjorie and Bob [attended]--I can recall only one meeting that both of them did attend--he expressed some concern because he knew some of the issues. He had a point of view; he knew Hobart Taylor, knew a few guys, but he didn't have a broad, long-term relationship with the group. So the idea was to have frequent meetings with all of the wheels in the administration, and for those meetings to bring to the surface any problems or issues affecting race relations that were relevant to the administration of government. And I think it would also be a forum where he could get close and press the flesh and cement ties with guys who were important.

I was very interested in his doing it because occasionally he would call me over at the [Democratic National] Committee and ask me questions about something. He showed me over the first years, 1961 and 1962, something [he'd] read in papers, something that he had an interest in. I don't know whether I suggested it or who suggested it. It was suggested, "Listen, why don't you formalize this business and draw everybody in?" That was what it was all about. It was a learning experience in many ways for him and it was a learning experience for most of us who didn't really know him. In substance, I guess, that's what it was all about.

G: Did he impress that group? Do you recall?

M: Oh, yes. He stood tall on everything. And he asked good questions. Another thing, he sized us up. I figured what he was doing was trying to determine among these blacks in there which ones he could trust. (Laughter) You know he was always suspicious of everything. I think he was taking a hard look at these guys.

G: What makes you think that?

M: Well, a lot of funny things happened. For instance, Hobart Taylor was supposed to have been very close to him because of Hobart's father. He named Hobart assistant, but he did that late in his term and earlier he didn't give him a title of any kind. So Hobart came to me one day and said--I've forgotten what title he wanted, but whatever the title was, he wanted me to sell LBJ on it. I was sort of surprised that he was not any closer because of the way they talked. Anyway, when I broached the thing to LBJ he looked at me and I said, "Look, it's good politics. What the hell." (Laughter) He said, "Okay," and we got it. I've forgotten now what his formal title was, but it was something about assistant,

special assistant to the vice president, something like that. But Hobart wanted that specific title, whatever it was. There was no problem.

But I was wondering why the Vice President was slow about anything. I tell you, he seemed to always be probing, you know. When he had this program of these pacts they'd signed with corporations on fair employment and all that sort of stuff--

G: The Plans for Progress program?

M: Yes. I wasn't all that keen on that because I thought it was b.s. In a way, I indicated to him it's going to be very difficult to persuade these s.o.b.'s to be fair unless you have a stick somewhere. He wasn't too much for that. At that point, he figured that you could jaw-chaw your way in. I never was all that keen on it. So he knew where I stood. Well, now, Hobart ran with the ball on that. He loved it. Because first Hobart--

(Interruption)

With due respect to all of them--see, my only role in all of this business with Johnson and Kennedy was just one thing: can I sell this, what are blacks going to say out here, what are black leaders going to do, will they see through it as transparent b.s.? I had that problem all the time. I had no other job, really, than making sure that the politics was right because we were in a period when the black leadership was moving--I wouldn't say radically, but they were really moving. For the first time in American history, they were bringing the stuff into the streets and they were using everything to motivate people, and some say to incite them, or whatever. So I wanted to be sure that whatever we were doing was kosher. But that didn't bother some of the others.

Johnson used many opportunities to get to know some of these people. The

problem with him is that he was a quick study, but he was also too quick sometimes, in my view.

G: Give me an example.

M: Well, he would go overboard with, I thought, with some guy b.s.-ing him and so forth, and I would have trouble with this guy later.

G: Can you recall an example?

M: I was trying to think of one instance. Well, I had trouble with Hobart, to tell you the truth. I had an awful time with Hobart.

G: How so?

M: Well, LBJ changed his mind on him. He called in the guy that had--the chief headhunter in the White House.

G: [John] Macy?

M: Yes, Macy. Did I ever tell you that story? (Laughter)

G: No.

M: Macy and I were always together fighting. I'm fighting for jobs every day and Macy's trying to tell me I can't fill some opening, you know. So one day Macy calls me; he says, "Look, the Chief wants Hobart out of the White House by Friday." That's when Johnson was president. I said, "By Friday? Are you out of your mind? What are you going to turn to?" Macy said, "I don't know. That's your problem."

G: How did you handle it?

M: How can I kick a guy out of the White House? I knew before that he was very tight with a friend of mine, a fellow I introduced him to. What the hell's his name? He's a writer,

economist up in New York. I had his name down here somewhere. He's still alive. He's writing a lot of books. His wife is a novelist.

G: Oh, Eliot Janeway.

M: Eliot Janeway. I introduced Hobart to Eliot at one point. Anyway, Eliot and he became fast friends. Eliot used to come down and get a suite over here at the Hotel Sheraton Park across from the Capital Hilton. They were really tight. I called Janeway and I said, "Look"--I'd explained that I had a little problem here--"you talk to him all the time. Find out what he's interested in. I don't want to get into this directly." As I recall--and of course your memory doesn't serve you too well after the passage of time, but anyway--the thing Hobart had always wanted was to head an agency. He wanted to be a cabinet officer. His ideas about his own ability were fantastic. I said, "Well, Jesus Christ, we can't do that. The man wants him out of here. I've got to get him out of here. They're putting the heat on me." So I finally leveled with Janeway on it. So he said, "Well, we've got to find something."

(Interruption)

With reference to Hobart, Macy, I, everybody got into the act of trying to find something that he'll [Hobart] buy so we won't have a big mess. There was a vacancy in the Export-Import Bank, and that was it. I had a problem selling him on it because he had no staff or no big deal over there, he was just a member. So that's when we put that on Janeway. I said, "That's your job. You've got to sell him." Janeway worked on him finally. But we got him out by Friday.

G: Why did LBJ want him out?



M: This is what I'm about to tell you about LBJ. You never completely understood everything about him. Something must have happened. LBJ knew that Hobart was a hell of a nice guy all right, but he was not necessarily a black guy that other blacks looked up to as a hero or anything, because this was a period of these activists.

So he had his problems. I think Hobart had a tendency to overdo things a little. I had another problem with him when he first went into the White House. He was in the White House for about two weeks when I got a call from Lee White. Lee White is a lawyer. Lee just said, "Come over here! I've got to see you immediately." I go over to Lee's office and I said, "What the hell are you talking about? What's the matter with you?" He said, "That Hobart Taylor." I said, "What the hell is wrong with him?" He said, "He's got a designer in there going to redo his goddamn office. You can't do that in the White House." I said, "Oh, God." (Laughter) I had to go get Hobart and tell him, "Look, chief, this is not the way you do things in the White House. Designing and so forth, it's institutionalized. No individual does these offices over here." Anyway, we got it done.

G: Do you feel Taylor was effective or not effective in that Equal Employment Opportunity job?

M: I think he was effective. He was a good salesman. He formed excellent relationships with a lot of the big business people. From an overall point of [view], if you were to sum up the whole thing, it was positive rather than anything else, in my view.

I knew Hobart from Detroit. I went to school out there at the University of Michigan. He went to the law school at Michigan, and I went to college there. So I knew him from Detroit and I had a paper in Detroit, the *Michigan Chronicle*, which I started in

1936 and which I still own part of. Anyway, I had a relationship with him; I understood him, knew him. I thought, because of his Texas background, the fact that his father knew LBJ and all that, he'd be a real ace in the hole. And he was. So I don't have any problems with that. There was a little problem about his private life that bothered me a little but I didn't get into that.

G: Was he more conservative than some of the other blacks?

M: Oh, yes. As between organized labor and big business, he was big business all the way. My background was just the other way around. So I regarded him as conservative.

In those years, in the thirties, through the forties, fifties, as far as blacks were concerned, organized labor was supportive of the civil rights stuff and big business generally was opposed to it. So that's where we came out.

G: In May of 1964 you proposed a meeting between LBJ and black elected officials from around the country. Do you recall that? Did it ever take place?

M: Well, we had those frequently.

G: Did you?

M: Yes, that was one of my routines. I used to take six states at a time and get all of the wheels from those states, black, into the White House. I've been doing that for three presidents. Did it for Carter. So that was just a routine.

G: Kennedy, Johnson and Carter, were those the three?

M: Yes. The most significant thing about the 1964 vote thing was we had to figure out how to reach the rank-and-file blacks without necessarily paying dues to local wheels that wanted money. You had to bribe them to give out your literature.

G: Walking-around money or street money?

M: Yes. The problem was that I would send material to New York, and Ray Jones would look at it and say, "What the hell, it's expensive to distribute." Ray was all right. But then we ran into others who would say, "Well, that cost me--the clubhouse ought to have a thousand dollars to take care of this." And a whole lot of foolishness.

This had been going on for years. I remember, I had been in the campaign of 1944. So I had learned a little bit about how these local--what do we call them?--political figures would sort of hijack politicians. I knew some of them personally. In fact, we used to have to pay off a guy any time we held a meeting at the Hotel Teresa in front of the Hotel Teresa, at 7th Avenue and 125th Street in New York, which was the center of everything in Harlem, the great Harlem speech that every candidate had to make. There were a couple of characters that you either paid them off or they'd disrupt the meeting. I learned all that business, you know.

But, anyway, coming on back to this thing.

G: Did they ever disrupt a meeting that you--?

M: No, we always worked it out. I had to work it out. I didn't do it personally. I had it done.

But, anyway, coming back to this, in 1964 we decided that we were going to experiment a little. This I think was an inspired idea a little bit, but, anyway, it worked. We decided to create a national organization of beauty shop operators and barbers. There was a guy in Chicago, which is a fairly unionized town, and [he] was the head of a barbers' union, and a smart black guy, very bright guy.

G: What was his name?

M: I'm trying to think of his name. [Inaudible] He was a tough character, though, like all those union guys in Chicago [inaudible]. Anyhow, I explained to him that we needed a national organization, he was the biggest wheel I had ever heard about in barbering and he ought to be the national president. He bought it like it was a godsend to him. He loved it. It was for these Democrats, because Chicago was Democratic, [Richard] Daley was Democratic. What the hell, how could he go wrong? Anyway, he went to work all over and started to organize these barbers for president, the barbers for LBJ, all that sort of stuff. And in Indiana, I never will forget that up until that period, we never got any real distribution of any literature in Indiana because we never could get anybody to work.

Well, it worked for about five states, every goddamn beauty shop, every barber shop. The material was there. They didn't have to pass it out. It was just sitting there and the people would come in and see it. The politicians couldn't figure out what happened to some of those [inaudible]. But we shipped it in and that really worked. We got out a bigger vote in the states in which that operated. Now, it didn't operate in the South very well. But in the Middle West and a little bit of the East it was very effective. In Indiana, it was unbelievable. Because Indiana was close to Chicago, I guess, there was the guy that really organized Indiana and before, we never did anything in that state.

G: Did you have to clear this with the Daley machine in Chicago?

M: No, no. You see, we operated from the national office. I knew Daley and [William] Dawson and I had no problem with them because they had given me a pass back in 1960. Before Dawson would ever approve me as deputy chairman of the Democratic National

Committee, he called out to Chicago. I had already worked in the campaign we won, but he still called out to check me out despite the fact that I was a part of the team that won it. Anyway, they gave me a pass. Dawson, of course, after all, I went with Dawson in 1944, so I had no problem. That was Franklin Roosevelt's last campaign, and I worked with the Democratic National Committee in New York City.

But Daley didn't give a darn, you know, as long as Dawson ended up happy, what the hell. Anyway--

G: Tell me, before you organized the barbers and the beauty shop operators, traditionally, who were the local leaders that you would have to go to to pay to distribute your literature? What professions were they?

M: Usually, they were the aides of white politicians who handled the black vote for them. They were not necessarily elected anything but they were sort of precinct-type ward leaders, or something like that. They were part of whatever little machine there was. In Cleveland, Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, you really had machines, fairly active machines. In Pittsburgh, there was a Republican machine. Not Pittsburgh, Harrisburg. Pittsburgh, we had--all right, Harrisburg was one of the places there was a real Republican machine. We had seven wards in Harrisburg; I guess they were wards or precincts, I guess they were wards. They went Republican, I don't care what we did. We finally bought them out but it was a hell of a fight. (Laughter)

So the grass-roots things is what you wanted to do. How do you activate those below the level of the middle-class types to whom you could sell a program? The thing was to get that literature in there. Another thing, we created stationery: the national

barbers this and [that]. I don't know where that stuff is today, but anyhow, we had officers, national officers of barbers and beauty [shop operators].

I'll tell you, too, Marjorie Stewart Joyner was a beautician who did most of the organizing then and in succeeding campaigns. She was a real tower of strength. Two women, Marjorie Joyner took half of them and another lady out of New Orleans, who finally came to Washington, had another beauty organization. But Marjorie Joyner of Chicago was probably the most active. Incidentally, she's eighty or ninety damned years old I think now, but she was something else.<sup>1</sup>

G: And she's in Chicago?

M: Yes. Marjorie J-O-Y-N-E-R. She had had experience in Chicago working with the rank and file and political things, so [with] those beauty shops, there was no problem. As a matter of fact, I think that one of things that inspired me to go national was Marjorie Joyner's success locally. You know what I mean?

G: Yes.

M: And how she was working with the machinery rather than against it. I saw the value of having these tiny little headquarters, so to speak, everywhere. Well, now, it was not as smooth as it might sound. I might be overdoing it a little. There were some people that were active, some people were interested, some weren't. But where you found a beauty operator who was interested, you really had a jewel, and the same thing with the barbers, the guys got into it. I think we introduced a lot of them for the first time to politics. I

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s. Joyner died several years ago.

can't measure the results, but, anyway, that was part of it.

Another experiment we had in that period we never used before was the extensive use of radio. Coming out of journalism, the newspaper business, my interest basically was in print. But Howard Woods of St. Louis, who was editor of a paper out there--I think he was at that time editor of the *St. Louis Argus*. And Howard Woods was close to Augie Busch. Woods was a black guy that liked radio. He had a little radio program out there. And I think Anheuser-Busch was one of his clients. Well, Augie Busch was close to LBJ or knew LBJ or something. Anyhow, Howard was, to my mind--and I knew him well because he was a member of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, and I was president of the publishers association for a couple years in the fifties. Besides, we were close. I got Howard and I said, "Look, let's get into this campaign and I want you to take over radio." So then Howard came in and we worked a deal out. He went to New York and got with these people who cut these records, and so forth. So we worked out a radio approach to things.

On the print side, I used the literature, I used the advertising and the black press--we had about a hundred and fifty black newspapers, about twenty-five of them very effective, lots of them not much, but anyway, we gave money to them. I used to have a formula back in those days. I'd guarantee the boys a full-page ad the last four weeks every week. Most of them were weeklies. That would win them over to run our other stuff--releases, et cetera. Those newspapers were mostly Democratic, but not all. Another thing, all these guys knew me because I was in the business too, remember, I had a paper, and I knew them all. Another thing, I never welshed on anybody. If I said you got it, you

got it. So I was very proud of that record, by the way.

G: I am told that you insisted on paying off the debts that--

M: That was in the beginning.

G: --before it--this was in 1960, is that correct?

M: Yes. I raised hell about that. They owed us nine thousand dollars. Well, you see, one of the things I learned in 1944 [was] you didn't mean anything in politics if you didn't have an operating background. Let's say, well, you're a nice guy, you talk well, I'm interested in civil rights like you are. What the hell you want me to do? This is costing me money, you see? You can't deliver, you can't allow any, so I learned that you had to be straight on it. So when Sarge [Shriver] called we got down here in 1960 [for] that one-day meeting--and I stayed for eight years--over at the La Salle Hotel [?] on Connecticut Avenue, everybody's enthusiastic about Jack Kennedy. Hell, I'd been in Nigeria for a year; I didn't know a damn thing about the Kennedys. I mean, I had heard about them but I wasn't all that excited about them. So, at this big meeting, when they got around to me I pointed out that, hell, the last committee owed the *Defender* and the *Chronicle*, with which I'm connected, something like nine thousand dollars. They owed about forty thousand dollars around to these black newspaper guys. And I didn't see any point in launching any campaign for anybody unless we paid our debts. Sarge never heard of it and he was a little upset. But I was adamant simply because these people are always behind the eight-ball--it's a very tough business, as it is today. It's almost impossible today, but in those years, survival of these little publications was a really serious business. The white newspapers had nothing in them about blacks, well, very little. It was just beginning to open up. So



the black press was the principal medium for communication and I wanted to be sure that that channel was clear.

Another thing I had with LBJ which I--I don't know whether or not I've ever said anything about it or not, but I had to con all--I mean I had to talk to a whole lot of those publishers and say, "This guy's a southerner; I don't want you to do what with him what you did with that guy from Alabama"--

G: John Sparkman.

M: Yes--what you did with Sparkman. And I said, "Look. All I want is fair play. Let him"-- you know.

G: What did they do with Sparkman?

M: Oh, they killed him. What happened is that--I guess it was Adlai. Was it Adlai and Sparkman?

G: Yes.

M: Yes. Stevenson and Sparkman. The *Pittsburgh Courier* ran a six- or eight-page supplement just eating him, killing him, just denouncing him. Sparkman was not bad on economic issues from the point of view of poor people. But you couldn't sell that. Well, here we go again, and we got another guy who's a New Dealer in economic terms but [there's] the question about his relationship with blacks. Well, you know, fortunately, Johnson was smart enough early in the 1957 civil rights thing and other activities to have something of a record. And for a southerner--and he didn't sign the Southern Manifesto, so we had some grounds for supporting him. Another thing is Adam Powell was with him. Adam liked him. I think I told you all that, didn't I?

G: Yes. That was in the first interview, that Powell liked him.

M: Yes.

G: Well, just to sum up, in 1964 you used radio and you used a lot of print.

M: Well, we did that in 1962, but not radio as much. We used a little of it, but we made a major thrust in radio.

G: Did you have some important black figure on the radio or did you have different ones that--or who did you use for the spots?

M: Oh, yes. We had all the hotshots we could find.

G: Who'd you get, do you recall?

M: I'm trying to think now. We had some celebrities but I don't remember now who they are. I think we had--I'm trying to think who they were, and it just escapes me at the moment. I'll have to go back.

G: I wish you would give me a little history, though, of the topic we were talking about a second ago, and that is dealing with the local leadership, before you instituted this network of barbers and beauty shop operators. Were these people often ministers?

M: Well, the ministers were on another track. The ministers actually represented the real engine of black movement. I had a church operation separated from all of these other little things. In 1960 we got guys like the Rev. J. H. Jackson, head of the National Baptist organization, the largest black religious group in the United States, to come out for Kennedy, which was a startling thing. He's a Republican, but anyway, we got that off. And we had people like the preacher in Philadelphia, Marshall Shepherd, that we sent around the country. Anyhow, we had our religious leaders doing their thing. But we had

a sort of separate operation with them. Believe it or not, we didn't have to spend so much money, because if the guy needed a church roof somewhere, we'd--they used to accuse me of buying all the church roofs in the country, which is not true. I bought a few.

(Laughter) But anyway, the Kennedy-Johnson line was sold so well and the support was so great for it, because of [Martin Luther] King and Bobby [Kennedy]--you know, all these things happening in the sixties--that the preachers had no problem with their congregations. You weren't running upstream. So it was not too bad.

And of course, the Democratic New Deal concepts were embedded over the years in the White House so we didn't have too many problems. And in the South, southern cities, the South as a whole was very difficult, but some southern cities were active. Atlanta was active and New Orleans to some extent. And we had very little trouble with them. Actually what they wanted more was recognition. We provided that because we always got them in to see the President. Incidentally, all through this period it was not a matter of waiting for campaign time. We got these people into the White House all the time.

G: Is that right?

M: We worked at that. In fact, I told you about the time in 1963 when we had eight hundred blacks in the White House, Letitia Baldrige almost dropped dead when she saw all those blacks. You know about that, on Lincoln's Birthday?

G: No.

M: Well, Lincoln's Birthday in 1963 was the same year as the March on Washington. But anyhow, this was early in the year. I thought it would be an excellent idea to steal the

Republican show--because we still had some black Republicans in Atlanta and other places, especially in the South--by having a social event in the White House and, for the first time, have a completely social, nothing else, just have a good time and come into the White House. So I know we had a meeting over at the White House--I think it was--the reason I remember is that Art--what the hell is Art's last name? He wrote the book--Art Schlesinger. He was one of them who went with me on this. I described it at this little committee meeting. I said, "Look, if blacks are socially acceptable in the White House, where in the hell will they not be acceptable? This is it." I explained that Lincoln's Birthday is one day these black Republicans celebrate, with some damn Republican speaker, somebody that shows up at these churches. [Inaudible] We sold it to JFK and LBJ.

G: Now, this is while Kennedy was president?

M: Yes, just before he got killed, as a matter of fact. Well, he was killed that year in November.

G: Yes.

M: Anyway, I have pictures of that event. I have a photograph at home of it. Man, we invited leadership-type blacks from every state in the Union. And there was a problem that arose with--what's the singer who was married to a white girl? What's his name? At that time he was married to [May] Britt. He's a very top black entertainer.

G: Sammy Davis, Jr.?

M: Yes, Sammy. The FBI, somebody was always taking him off the list because of his white wife. We worked it out. But we also had guys like Langston Hughes, guys who were

kind of under a little cloud, accused of being communist or something. We beat the brains out of Bobby on all these. I said, "I don't give a damn. We've got to have him." And Bobby gave in.

G: They didn't want to let him in the White House? Is that right?

M: Yes, right. See, the FBI had to okay everybody, and they saw a Red around every corner. We had to submit these lists. And, man, we had a fantastic turn-out. As the boys say, the White House was Uncle Tom's cabin for that night. It really turned them out.

JFK came down and saw all those people--he had the cabinet in, too --and all were shaking hands all over the place. We had all this buffet, the wine, the whiskey, the food and it was lavish. We turned that White House out. Mrs. Kennedy finally came down, and she wasn't too keen on this operation.

G: Mrs. Kennedy was not too keen on it?

M: Well, you know, she was kind of slow for the politics anyway. Anyhow, she did her job, but didn't stay too long. But JFK had a ball, shaking hands everywhere. LBJ was there, all of them were there. But the thing of it, it was the high point psychologically, I think, with millions of blacks who, for the first time, understood that here, this is a new crowd. Blacks don't give a damn, you know, about how somebody feels about them. They want to be accepted socially. I knew that point had to be made.

Frankly, it was a weird situation. Following the big thing at the White House, after midnight, the guests moved to all the other places around town. So there was just one hell of a night for all of these people, all over the nation. I never will forget Esther Peterson, who was with the administration, in [the Department of] Labor. Esther said to me one

day, "The part I don't understand, we had all these people in here and nobody had to introduce anybody to anybody else. They all knew each other." Well, you see, the national black community [leadership] was so small, [for example], two or three doctors from Austin or Houston, and they all knew each other. So there was a natural network there. This was a memorable occasion for middle-class blacks all over America.

And I tell you what's really funny. I never will forget seeing those black writers and authors and others we had there, who just never thought about politics at all, you know. I knew many of them personally; for example, Langston Hughes was a columnist at the *Chicago Defender*. Anyhow, I can see myself now, I walked into the--at that time I guess it was the East Room where we had the tables loaded with gorgeous gourmet food, and met them, all intellectuals talking. I came in there with my brash bull, and the guys, you know, they were all thanking me. They said they couldn't believe it. They didn't believe it would happen. But I was so proud that we could get all of these elements into the White House, because these were the people who, intellectually, could influence millions. You never knew the reach of any of them. It was remarkable.

But anyway, I said all that to say that while that's one project, we were cooking up things all the time. The standing routine was to invite a group of leaders from a state or two states or three states, take them over to Room 400, EOB, Executive Office Building, and give them a briefing. We called it a workshop or briefing, whatever. We'd trot out somebody from Justice maybe, or a little foreign policy stuff, or domestic stuff, legislation, and everybody talks for ten or fifteen minutes, and the audience asks questions and whatnot. And then the climax: we'd haul the boss out, the President. Sometimes we'd

take them all over to the East Room and march them across the grounds. That was according to what kind of time [we had]. I never will forget when LBJ--that meeting there--was arguing with us. You see, while he was arguing there a bunch of black newspaper publishers were sitting in the Cabinet Room. [Marvin] Watson had okayed it but the President was telling me, "I didn't okay [this]. I didn't want to see all these damn people. They'll give me an awful hard time." Watson didn't respond. I said, "What the hell are you talking about?" So we really got into an argument over that one. Do you know what the President did? He got up, went in there and just wowed them.

G: Did he?

M: Oh, yes, then he took them back into the Oval Office and said, "Now, this is the way I run this country." It was a scream. But, you know--

G: He didn't want to meet with them though.

M: He was giving me the bad time. He didn't care. You've got to understand, LBJ tested everybody, white and black. You never knew when LBJ was serious or when he was up to some mischief. That was mischief there.

Tape 1 of 2, Side 2

M: If someone comes back and tells me things about LBJ doing this and so forth and, you know, half the time you've got to figure out, now, what was it that motivated that? What was LBJ doing? You'd be amazed at the times LBJ was just being cranky, just sort of mischievous in his actions.

G: Who were these blacks that you wanted him to meet with?

M: The newspaper publishers, NNPA [National Newspaper Publishers Association].

G: Oh, NNPA, I see.

M: He'd done it before so it was nothing new. We did it every year. See, I had newspaper publishers in every year. I had a lot of other groups in every year. We did it annually; I don't care who was in the White House, at least during my experience.

But poor Watson. The President intimidated Watson so. LBJ sent me that damn picture, because I didn't know about the picture, I didn't know the photographer was there. So LBJ sent me the picture. He asked me one day, "Did you get that damn picture?" But, you know, you couldn't believe a man with as big a load or as big a plate and as much of a burden [as] he had could have time for a little foolishness, but he did.

G: Any other examples of that kind of mischief?

M: Well, the biggest one, I think, was that appointment of [Robert] Weaver. I told you that one, I think.

G: Yes.

M: Where he would tell Lee White one thing, and tell Joe Califano another, and then tell me another. Then he would tell me what he told Lee and what he told Joe. It was a scream. (Laughter) It was unbelievable.

G: You mentioned the black preachers. Were there any organizations of black preachers, any national groups or regional groups that you mobilized?

M: I tried to get in between them and mix them up. I didn't always have preachers alone. I had preachers with other groups. But what we really looked for was significant, influential people.

G: I see. But there were no church organizations that you could go to.



M: There were some. But as I recall, we tried to get away from denominational stuff.

G: How did Kennedy's Catholicism in 1960 affect the black church?

M: That's what I was saying about J. H. Jackson and Marshall Shepherd. J. H. Jackson wrote this pamphlet, which we distributed by the millions, stating that he did not hold John Kennedy's Catholicism against him, although he, Jackson, was a Baptist. There was a hell of an orator out of Philadelphia named Marshall Shepherd, the Reverend Marshall Shepherd. We sent him around to these Baptist preacher meetings. They had a big one, big preachers' conference down in North Carolina. And, man, Marshall Shepherd--I said, "Oh, my God, we've got to stop that." And so Marjorie Lawson, who knew him also and was in charge of the office, Marjorie said Marshall Shepherd would take care of it. And he did. He was a fabulous talker. You talk about eloquence, you have never seen such eloquence, in the [Martin Luther] King tradition. As a matter of fact, I think a great story that's untold in America is the sheer eloquence of these black preachers. Some were not even trained, could hardly read their Bible. I mean, they could read but not very well. But once they get on a platform, they can talk and draw verbal pictures and analogies and describe things. It was just unbelievable.

G: And Shepherd was the best in your opinion?

M: Oh, Shepherd was one of the greatest. And he was also with it, you know, with contemporary life, he knew everything that was happening. I never will [forget] how he wooed Mrs.--he had Mrs. Roosevelt once at his church. Mrs. Roosevelt remarked about it, I remember. He was preaching a sermon in Philadelphia. There was a great song, "Lay That Pistol Down," some sort of song, I've forgotten now what, and so his sermon was

"Lay That Pistol Down." But the way he drew it out was that he started talking about the segregationists and the racists, and he said [Theodore] Bilbo [U.S. Senator from Mississippi] had a gun pointed at the heart of America. So we come up with the title of his sermon--but the way he did it, man, the place just roared. Now, he was just gifted --he could do all these things--and his voice was great.

You see, that's another thing about King. The quality of his voice--because I was in Oslo when he got the Nobel Prize. I couldn't believe those university people understood that English that well. But the cadence--it was almost like music, the way he talked. And that element is still in black life. Jesse Jackson hasn't been able to approach King's eloquence but so far. But if you watch some of these popular preachers, they will have a sermon and a text, or if they are making a speech--not in the church necessarily--toward the end of the speech they will say some things that are almost like a chorus and you don't quite get it. But they're quoting from some Biblical reference, but it's almost like music. And Marshall Shepherd was one of the greatest. He was also a full-fledged politician in the Democratic Party. He was a popular minister but he was a real politician. As a matter of fact, he had an office down here in Washington--Registrar of Deeds.

G: Were there other professional groups in addition to ministers that you worked with, like black insurance executives or--?

M: Business types, yes.

G: Tell me what some of these business types were that were especially political.

M: [A. G.] Gaston of Alabama, you've probably heard of him, he bankrolled some of King's activities and had a motel down there where King used to make his headquarters in

Birmingham. He was one of the businessmen. I had a group of businessmen on whom I called, because among other things, I had to raise money. I didn't have to, but I always boasted that I brought as much money into the damn committee as I spent, which was not true, but at least I tried. We had a group called the President's Club started early in the Kennedy and Johnson era. It cost a thousand dollars to become a member. Now, Gaston, A. G. Gaston, who had an insurance company, a motel, and an S&L, he was one of those southerners that I always called on from whom I could get a thousand dollars on the telephone.

There was a funny thing; I knew a physician in New York, C. B. Powell, who was a Republican. But I knew C. B. well. He was a publisher of the *Amsterdam News*, a New York newspaper, [inaudible] publishers that I knew. I remember, surprise--I wrote C. B. and told him I needed a thousand dollars; I wanted [him] to be a part of the President's Club. He said, "I don't want to be a part of the President's Club. Here's the five hundred dollars for me and five hundred dollars for my wife. Here's a check for two." I got the thousand dollars.

So I tried to cultivate the wealthy blacks wherever I could find them and bring them into the clubs. I used to argue with them: you've got to integrate these damn things. We have these President's Clubs and the whole damn room is white, there's not a black face in it. [Inaudible] And I got them in it.

G: Well, now, let's say you got a thousand dollars from Powell or a thousand dollars from Mr. Gaston for the President's Club. Was this earmarked toward your activities or did this go into the general President's Club fund?

M: No, the general fund.

G: Okay.

M: But I had a funny experience that--I never will forget that. I almost got trapped. I tried to keep the money thing away as far as possible because I know everybody gets excited about money. But I knew a lawyer who was a very distinguished lawyer here in town. He brought a man to see me who was a wealthy citizen. This guy was after us--for some sort of job or something--and he was totting his pluses up and building him up as a great person. He wanted me to help persuade the administration to give him this post. I listened to it all and I knew the guy very well.

G: Was the guy black?

M: Yes. We were members of the same fraternity, Alpha fraternity. So anyway, when he left he shook hands with me. He said, "Here are two tickets" to something. He put it in my hand. I took the tickets and when he walked out, between the tickets was a five hundred dollar bill. I said, "Oh, Jesus. What am I going to do with this man?" Well, I figured that if he gave me five then he must have stuck this guy for five thousand, coming in here to say, "You meet the deputy chairman of the national committee and ask him to get this job." So I said, "Oh, God." So what the hell, I took it. Then I decided that I'd talk to the treasurer, Dick Maguire, I think it was. I said, "We've got to do something here." And the five hundred, I explained the thing. I said, "The President's Club is a thousand dollars. I want you to send a bill to this guy for the other five hundred." And we did. The guy was so embarrassed he didn't know what to do. He said, "We appreciated this part down payment to the President's Club membership but you still owe us five hundred more." I

really enjoyed that one.

G: Did you get the other five hundred?

M: Yes, we got it.

G: One state leader, political leader, indicated that in recruiting the black vote and helping to turn out the black vote he would often go to the guys that ran the policy games. He said that they were reliable and were useful in helping to get out the vote. Was this your experience, too?

M: I never regarded them as very useful on anything.

G: Really? Why not?

M: Well, to tell you the truth, they didn't have much influence. They might--I'm trying to think--because of the policy guys that I knew--I don't remember ever having found them useful in any particular place. There were a lot of guys around, but they were--the Chicago policy guys were organized. They dealt directly with downtown. They didn't have to bother about anybody. They didn't need any political influence. They bought everything. I never found them, in fact I never even bothered to fool with them, you know? I'm not saying that there aren't some instances where maybe in the past that I--now that you ask, we never got any money out of them for the committee or anything. Most of them were professionals. But one thing about most, in those early years, as I recall, they didn't want recognition. In later years, things changed a little. They preferred not to be in the forefront of anything.

I started a business in 1936 in Detroit. The only wealth there was policy--not policy, it was numbers, they called it. Policy, they called it that in Chicago. Watson and

John Roxborough were the two biggest wheels. Roxborough's bankroll was Joe Louis. And the problem there was race, because he had to pay off all the newspaper guys to get Joe's stuff in the paper, which startled me. And he finally got Julian Black, who was another policy guy in Chicago who had money. The two of them operated. But what I didn't understand was how difficult it was to build Joe Louis. Russ Cowan, who was Joe's secretary, worked for me, also, and wrote sports for the paper. But Roxie, his brother was a big Republican politician, but he [the brother]--the only thing that he would do was straight politics. They wanted to buy whoever they needed, you see. In fact, one Christmas I went in his office. My office was in the same building, on St. Antoine Street, in the heart of the black ghetto. They had dollar bills in packages, in envelopes, stacked up all like this. And it seemed every damn police lieutenant in Detroit came by and picked it up.

(Laughter)

None of this was a problem. It was wide open. It was pay-offs. Johnny--a guy named White--who was a good friend of mine in Detroit, was an outright banker of policy, not a numbers guy. He told me, "Look, I'm on the way downtown." I said, "Where are you going downtown?" He said, "I'm going to see the Mayor." He went to see the Mayor personally, just the Mayor, and gave him seventeen thousand dollars. It was wide open.

G: Was it any different in the South than it was in the North?

M: I really didn't know the South very much. I didn't have any dealings much with the South, I really didn't know.

G: What about in New York? You've talked a lot about Chicago and Detroit.

M: New York was a little different.

G: How did you get out the vote in there? Did you use the policy?

M: You had a problem with New York. Unlike any other city, you had the West Indian group which was strong. Ray Jones, the first borough president of Manhattan, was West Indian, from the Virgin Islands. My father came from Cuba so I got to know many islanders. So I got in tight with a lot of them and I knew all of them. They had a sort of a--I don't know how to describe it, but the West Indians trusted other West Indians. But they didn't trust any other people much.

Politically, the West Indians were more active. They worked at it. They took leadership positions and mobilized the voters to their ends to a greater degree than the other blacks. So when you went to New York, you had to be sure who you were dealing with. See, Adam Powell, when he married that black girl that played the piano--what's her name? [Hazel Scott]--everybody said that was a political deal. She was West Indian. Adam was a white-looking black. He's got a problem: if she's black, dark black, he's got a problem of making sure all of this color stuff works. And also the island crowd--there were fifty thousand West Indians here in the middle of Harlem and that was a very tight group. And they'd turn them out. The two biggest apartment buildings in New York at the time in Harlem were owned by blacks, West Indians. The gambling--one of the biggest gamblers was West Indian. The New York insurance company, United Life or whatever it's called, was created by West Indians, the biggest insurance setup.

The *Amsterdam News*, the co-owner was Savory, who came from the islands. C. B. Powell, Clayton Powell, and Savory together bought it. But Savory was a quiet guy.

So you had to know the West Indian culture and you had to know their rivalries and so forth and so on. Well, I learned that in 1944, you see, in the campaign. I knew Adam very well; I was close to Adam. He was a hell of an operator. Anyway, Adam showed me and taught me a lot of that, you know, how you operate with them, but my own personal background didn't hurt me. So that while I was born in this country, the guy said, "What the hell, Louis is all right, he's from . . . ." So I got by, but it was difficult because you didn't know who you were talking to half the time. And the way you operated was, when you saw a guy for the first time, you didn't talk so much business; you talked about his family, you know, where he comes from, so forth and so on, to get a feel, you know. Very difficult.

Another big insurance company, Victory Life in Chicago, at one time was West Indian. And Bindley Cyrus, who was the president of it, was from Barbados. Well, they had a little group out there. I was a member of the little group. What did they call it, some sort of social name, but not a social group? They met occasionally to talk about better relationships, you know, and all that [inaudible]. So what the hell. I was in the newspaper business, of course, I was full of stuff and [inaudible] and got to know them well.

But Bindley was a real nice guy. He had a beautiful wife, I think they had about nine children. He was unbelievable, very bright and a great lawyer. And he was president of this Victory Life, a brilliant guy. He was trained in, I think, Barbados, but I think he was also trained in London. And he was sharp in mind. Bentley had all these children. And Bentley said, "I wouldn't give a million for this last one, but I wouldn't give a dime for



another one." (Laughter)

But the significance of the West Indian element in this society was more pronounced in New York, very little in Chicago. But New York, Harlem rather, was a real problem.

G: Was Powell the key to getting out the black vote in New York?

M: No, no. Ray Jones did a better job than Powell. Ray Jones is a real operator. He's down in the Virgin Islands now. He's writing a book on all this mess. He was a remarkable guy, Ray Jones.

G: Why was that?

M: Well, he walked with authority, spoke with authority and you never could figure out what the hell was the source of the authority.

(Laughter)

He was an amazing human being.

We had an intellectual there, Kenneth Clark, who has written a lot of books. When the administration put him in that poverty program up there I told Ray to make sure that he and Kenneth worked together, so we would tie up everything. We had the intellectual and the operator. It worked out beautifully. I think Ken Clark has referred to it in some of his books. But I was the one who made sure that that thing happened. But Ray was a hard-working operator in the precinct, and he had a club. I joined his club. His club was on Amsterdam and 145th Street. Carver Democratic Club--it was a real clubhouse, a real operation. But Ray was a tough character. He milked all the guys, whites, trying to get the black vote; he took their money, there is no question about it. So

I had to pay attention to him. And while he wasn't too much interested in the national stuff as he was in the local stuff, he built it up very well.

In 1960 he came down here with--and the reason I think Sarge and I got on so well was that was the first test that I had as an operator with Sarge. It was funny; Sarge told me he had a meeting with the leaders of Harlem in his hotel suite. And I come out of Chicago, so he didn't know my background, but anyway, they had presented Sarge with a national program for mobilizing the black vote, half a million dollars or something like that, the whole goddamn works. I said to myself--I had to laugh because these guys were blowing smoke. They had these lieutenants here, lieutenants there, and a lot of b.s., you know. The funny thing about it, when I walked in the room there and Ray Jones looked up and saw me, his feathers just fell. (Laughter) He said, "Why, you son of a bitch." He didn't know I was tied in there, you know. So we made a deal right there. I said, "Look. I went through it, you know, and pretended he could do it all. I said, "Look, can you guarantee Adam? That's all I want to know. Can you guarantee Adam's presence? We want him to make some talks. He'll make speeches and he's great, but can you guarantee him?" Ray said, "I can guarantee him." See, the deal with Adam was always a problem, because Adam was always acting up, you know. I think I told you this, didn't I?

G: No.

M: So Sarge didn't know what was happening; he's just looking at us. I said, "I'll tell you what. I'll make a deal, two thousand five hundred dollars each, pay you once a week." And when I added it up it was a pretty good sum of money. And Sarge said, "Well, wait a minute here." I said, "Well, look, he's the best guy we've got." There's no question about

it. Adam was a fantastic orator, particularly in the sticks where they never saw him. He would go to Detroit and tear it up. Pittsburgh, all that stuff. We made a deal. The problem I had, though, was to get him on that weekly basis. Sarge couldn't understand that. I said, "The reason I want to do that is because the son of a bitch won't show." And I said, "Well, how are you going to pay him?" I said, "We'll get Mayor [Robert] Wagner to do it."

G: Get Mayor Wagner?

(Laughter)

M: Whose side's going to do it? [Inaudible] Let Bob take care of it, see. Because I knew Wagner a little bit, you know, because I'd been in New York in 1944 and Earl Brown, a councilman, had introduced me and I knew Bob Wagner a little bit. But I knew that Bob was a good operator and he had a guy with him, a Jewish guy, Julius Edelstein, who was a hell of a smart guy, a brilliant guy. He's still brilliant, there now I think, he's old though. But anyway, I knew him very well. So it's knowing people, you know, and knowing how you can operate. Anyhow, before Ray left we had a deal. And Sarge never got over it. He thought it was the greatest thing that ever happened. He told Harris Wofford, "This is fantastic," because they were worried about Adam. Adam, you know, went for Eisenhower. He was a Democrat, and he said, "To hell with you guys," he went over to Eisenhower. Adam was also for LBJ.

And you're talking about Kennedy now in 1960, do you see what I mean? When I got back from Africa in 1960, I saw a column, somebody wrote in a column that Mrs. Roosevelt said that JFK could not get the black vote, or something like that. There was

some question that Mrs. Roosevelt felt that he would have problems with the black vote. I think it was generated by something that Adam said. I don't know how it got in there. But, see, Adam went to Congress in 1944, so he had learned a little bit about LBJ, and he and Ray Jones had talked about him a little. And I found out at a social affair I had down at one of the hotels, the Hilton Hotel; Ray told me what he thought and Adam told me what he thought. Adam showed up at the affair uninvited. So I got a line on what it was all about. It was a funny period.

But the thing that I found fascinating to me as a newspaper guy--you know I always considered myself a newspaper guy because I was always thinking of a story. But to see how ingenious and clever people who are so-called stupid can be, you know, I learned never to make judgments beforehand. Take your time. You never know who in the hell you're talking to. Do you see what I mean? A guy could be a genius and you [would] never know it. And I think that has saved me a lot of problems that I might have had otherwise. You take your time and listen to him, watch, listen. And then act when you have to, you see. There's no hurry. See, because these characters can be fantastic. I must say that about LBJ. LBJ made a cardinal error, in my view, by thinking that he could mastermind the country through the Senate. In politics you just can't do that.

G: This was in 1960?

M: Well, when I got back--I told you how my knowledge of LBJ as a candidate grew out of this dinner at Eliot Janeway's house. I think I told you that story, when John Connally brought it up. Earl Brown, who was a member of the city council, took me to this dinner and I didn't know what the hell it was about. Earl said that it would be interesting. So

we're sitting at dinner with about ten or fifteen people around there. John Connally started talking and he's talking about LBJ. And Earl was there because they were asking him questions about civil rights and race and all that sort of stuff. So every now and then, Earl would throw one at me because I don't know what the story is and don't what the hell's going on anyway, because I'd just come in from Nigeria, where I had spent the previous thirteen months. But anyway, it was fantastic. But Connally couldn't sell. Their approach was wrong. You can't tell anybody that.

G: Was Johnson there also or just Connally?

M: No. I met Johnson two weeks later--I think I told you about that--with an African, [Chief] Rosiji.

G: Anything else on getting out the vote in New York? Were there other local leaders, perhaps rival leaders to Powell that you needed to--?

M: Well, I tell you, getting the vote out in New York was most difficult because the clubhouse people were pretty stubborn. But Adam having been in the forefront of black politics in New York helped us a lot, because the word was out that Adam was with us, you know. Therefore they couldn't hold us up but so much. He did have a mass base which most of them didn't have.

G: What was the secret?

M: The Abyssinian Baptist Church, the biggest organization and the largest black church in the country. He had a fabulous church, the largest Protestant church in America. And those people in there thought that he was Jesus Christ. Everybody says he had no organization. He had the best organization there was. It was the best clubhouse in New

York. [Inaudible] He had this West Indian working for him as his assistant--what the hell was his name?--I knew him well. He spoke with a little accent, he said, "And let the word go forth," with a little accent there. (Laughter)

G: You mentioned Powell in Detroit. Was Powell also effective in the South?

M: I don't know how much Powell did in the South. I knew Powell through his visits to Detroit and Chicago where I was operating, and he was fabulous. As a matter of fact, that's one of the great experiences. You know, if you are a spectator and you're looking at it like you do as a newspaper guy, you got a fifty-yard-line seat for the greatest show on earth. And Adam was one of the greatest showmen.

G: Describe him to some extent. Tell me.

M: Well, the first thing, Adam was absolutely as handsome as a man could be. He was also almost white, in terms of his color. He was olive. You didn't know whether he was black or white, he'd get mixed up. But anyway, he was also amiable. You know, smiling, and when he walked into a room, the lights go on. You know, everywhere. And that was true in the White House. Mrs. Kennedy even talked about how good-looking the son of a bitch was. And he knew it, you know, but you didn't resent him. It was how to operate. I'll tell you one thing. I never will forget--did I tell you about the speech in Detroit at one of the churches? Well, I met him at the airport and took him to the church. And when we got there the church was wall-to-wall blacks, every damn seat taken. Anyhow, he gets up and starts talking. And right in the middle of the thing he says--what's this thing that went into orbit? What was the name of that thing, in 1957?

G: Sputnik?

M: Sputnik. He says, "You know this thing up in the sky, Sputnik, is sending a message and nobody in America knows what it's saying." He says, "You hear that beep, beep, beep, beep. All of America is trying to find out what it's saying. Beep, beep, beep." Everybody had read about it and knew about it and everybody's listening. [I don't know] how he got off on this subject. Anyhow, he goes on at great length about this Russian beep, beep, beep and the influence of Russia in the world and scientific breakthrough. And he got way up there. He says, "I am the only American, only one who knows what it says, what it means." And then he says, he's marching across the stage and says, "It means Jim Crow has got to go." The goddamn place exploded.

(Laughter)

People stood up and cheered, you know, because Jim Crow is segregation. This was now right after Sputnik was up in 1957. I took him back out to the airport and I think he drank a half a bottle of Scotch. But he was a performer.

G: Was he persuasive with other political leaders?

M: Yes. He was persuasive anywhere. He was a good speaker, too. He could speak to any audience, intellectual or middle class or rank and file; he knew how to talk. He would say things that you would not expect, you know. He would bring in some aspect of contemporary life along with the Bible and do a lot things like that. As a matter of fact, he had some southern white friends and one congressman, and he told the congressman, "Now look." I think it was Jack--something. He said, "Jack, you know we're buddies. I'll do whatever you want me to do. If my going down there to talk for you will help you, or going down there to talk against will help, I'll do that, too."

(Laughter)

And he's just weird. I had a problem with him, though, on money and stuff, oh, God.

We had a guy at the White House who used to imitate LBJ--what the hell's his--  
Henry Hall Wilson. Did you ever know him?

G: I knew who he was. I never knew him.

M: Well, this guy that worked for Adam has written a book about him.

G: Was that Chuck Stone?

M: Chuck Stone. Chuck would tell Adam that the President had just called and told him so and so and so and so. Well, I found out, I was over there, you know, and we were down at the mess eating. And Henry Hall said that somebody was kidding Adam. "This person sounds just like LBJ," he said. "Yes, Adam thinks it's him." The guy fooled Adam every time. But what happened is that, on occasion, without LBJ knowing anything about it, Henry Hall would call up and tell Adam something or get him to do something and LBJ didn't know a damn thing about it. And Henry Hall is a long tall guy from North Carolina, I never will forget him, he looked like a preacher. But Chuck Stone reports a lot of things that LBJ is supposed to have done, but LBJ had nothing to do with it. Adam never found out.

G: Stone was fooled, also?

M: Yes. Stone didn't know.

G: What did LBJ think of Powell?

M: Well, you know, he was white, you know, mulatto. He was a sport in the biological species. But LBJ liked him because he thought he was effective. And one thing, if you go



back in his record, he was effective. And in fact I think LBJ is quoted as saying Powell did more, passed more legislation through there than anybody on that job, as chairman of that education committee. I thought LBJ admired him in a way, you know, in a mischievous sort of way.

G: Did he ever say anything to that effect?

M: Well, you know, he would make--LBJ would say some very nasty things occasionally. But I can't think of anything on Adam particularly, that's not in character.

G: Did LBJ utilize you to get Powell back for votes? Let's say if he was off in the Virgin Islands or wherever?

M: Every now and then he would say something but actually he used--I think Henry and somebody else in the White House were active with that.

G: Did the administration help Powell on his tax problems?

M: Oh, yes. Well, a little bit. You know Adam would call you up and say, "Look, I've got to have five thousand dollars. I've just got to have it," and so on and so on. And he'd really put the screws on you, you know. We had a news guy over there at the committee, he came out of Texas as a bottler from one of the small towns. That was after [John] Bailey; I don't think Bailey was there then. Bailey must have left.

G: Are you talking about Cliff Carter?

M: Cliff Carter. I said, "Look, I've got to get this guy some money." I think it was Cliff Carter. Anyhow, he didn't understand anything, you know. So I said, "Well, shit!" So I took five thousand in a book and met Adam one Saturday in this place and gave him this book with the five thousand in there. Adam patted me on the back.

(Laughter)

G: Was this DNC's money?

M: Sure. Straight out of DNC. Well, in those days, you see, cash was fed in. In fact we went up to Bob Wagner's once and I was with Dick Maguire and he had a big suitcase. So we flew up there and we get out there in the Mayor's house, we're out there on the porch in the swing and Bob's in a meeting in there. Dick said, "Why in the hell don't he come on out of there so I can give him this damn money?" I said, "What money?" He said, "I've got forty thousand dollars in this damn briefcase." (Laughter) I didn't know a thing about it.

G: Who was saying this? Who had the money?

M: Dick Maguire.

G: Maguire?

M: The treasurer of the committee. So I said, "Oh, my God." I never will forget Bob because Bob came out of there--he was mad at [Anthony] Celebrezze, secretary of HEW. He wanted Celebrezze to speak up there--I think I told you this--and Celebrezze turned him down. So he said, "What the hell does that son of a bitch think--he got that job on merit?" (Laughter) That's Tony Celebrezze.

But they used a lot of cash in a lot of instances. But it's no big deal. In Chicago--I came out of Chicago--they use so much of it that it's not even funny. You know the Mayor, incidentally, Daley was unbelievable. He would have a visitors' day or something, you know, and he would be sitting in the middle of this room and the guys would come in one at time and hand it to him, just like that. Nobody was there but just that guy and

Daley. It was unbelievable.

G: These were local leaders?

M: Yes. I mean not black. I'm talking about corporate types and anybody else. But Daley never--he always did something with it, you know. I mean, like Dawson. They tried to find out that Dawson was a crook. The [Estes] Kefauver committee did everything to figure out. They could never put a finger on him, because of the way he operated. I think he learned from Daley.

Dawson wanted to get something done. And you wanted a favor. You gave Dawson the money, you would think, but Dawson wouldn't take the money. Dawson wanted this guy over here to do something. He tells you to go over there and give that guy the money. He'd call the guy up and say, "Look," so he'd know where it came from. And they pyramided the thing, you know, it just built up and up. And you can understand it. Dawson had all of these people doing what he wanted. All of them got paid. Dawson never saw a nickel of it.

G: That's amazing.

M: Kefauver almost went crazy trying to find it, you know. Everybody, my wife was going, "That terrible politician you're dealing with. I said, "I know, but I can't figure out what the hell, how it happened." It took me a long time to figure out how he did it.

(Laughter)

Tape 2 of 2, Side 1

M: --merely talking, you know, I ramble on, but I leave in the things that happened. But it's fascinating how ingenious--really, as a newspaper guy, I guess I have a sense of wonder

about everything. I sort of enjoy new experiences, just learning, you know. So much to see.

G: Let's talk about the South a little bit. Did you have a difficult time convincing the blacks that the established white Democratic leadership really did want them to get out and vote in big numbers?

M: Well, if you call it Texas, now, Texas is a different animal. You know that guy in Austin there, Anderson, M. J. Anderson--do you know him?

G: Andy Anderson? Yes.

M: Andy was very helpful to us. He had a group in Houston that was active and helpful. But Andy, I used Andy as a state guy. He handled everything. And I think it was in 1964 we had him up in Pennsylvania, because he had some Masonic Lodge business and he was tight with that crowd.

To tell you the truth, we never really, as far as I'm concerned, I [don't] remember doing much except in 1961. We asked the Colonel--what was the Colonel's name; a guy down in Atlanta, a guy for whom Vernon Jordan worked?--to call a conference of blacks in seven states of the South. Seven, I think it was seven states. And we met at the YMCA in Atlanta. And we had representatives from Nashville, Birmingham and several other cities. The reason I can remember well is that [Orzell] Billingsley who is still a lawyer down there in Birmingham--I think he's a little confused; he still thinks it's 1961, that he's the head of something, and he's not.

G: Billingsley is his name?

M: Yes. But, anyway, that was the first serious effort I made, because I organized it and got

the Colonel--what the hell's the Colonel's name? I tell you I'm really getting--I put a lot of names down but I don't think I have his name. Vernon Jordan, when he got out of law school, worked for this guy. It was in 1961, I know that. But, anyway, that was the first serious effort we made to bring some order and begin to understand what was happening in the South. In a few cities that voted fairly freely--in Atlanta they voted freely, Nashville, and you had a group in Memphis that was active, two or three guys, one a lawyer, and that's before the Ford crowd [Rep. Harold Ford and his family], [they] preceded the Ford group.

G: There was some sort of voter check-off system in Memphis.

M: Yes.

G: Tell me about that. How did that work?

M: Well, I can't think of the guy's name but there were two guys in a partnership, law partners. One was a Harvard lawyer and one was from the North [?]. Anyhow, as I recall, they organized the hell out of that place. I'm not sure now of the details of it. I'm trying to think. I don't really know how that thing worked, but there's another group of civil rights types who weren't as political. So you had two sorts of leadership groups working at the same time. One of the guys I knew when I was in prep school. I went to prep school in the South. He was the head of the Universal Life Insurance Company. This was the biggest business blacks had in Memphis. When they started a bank and they put a guy in charge of the bank who was also in the NAACP, so you had that NAACP business-type leadership. And you had these two operators. I can't think of their names now. But most of these guys were appendages of the white machines, the white

operations. And they were quid pro quo types; they delivered the vote for certain things.

I don't really know. I have forgotten the details, to tell you the truth.

G: Well, what came out of the meeting in Atlanta? What did you do or what did you decide?

M: We publicized the event. We had pictures in all the black newspapers; we made a lot of noise about it. This was no election or anything. This was just right after they took over. What I did finally get was a list of names and I got to know individuals, or learned about individuals who later were useful, but not really as an organized southern operation. See, the problem, as you may well imagine, [was] the more intimately acquainted you were [with] certain leadership types in these various cities, the easier to handle them over the telephone; you know, you can do business. Working up a leadership roster across the nation was a real problem. I got to know this guy and these people in Charleston--one of them I think is an undertaker [who is] still in the legislature down there named Fielding [?], or something like that.

I came originally from Savannah, Georgia, and we didn't have much activity because most of the folks on that side were Republicans. My father-in-law [Walter S. Scott] was a big Republican. He was a businessman; he owned an insurance company and some other businesses. But we got along fine. He was thrilled with Kennedy, though. He loved Kennedy. He died in November of the year that Kennedy was inaugurated, but I had him up for the inaugural affairs. He was really thrilled.

But anyway, we lost Atlanta in 1960. Blacks went Republican. They had a Republican organizer, black, down there. I tried to steal that guy and never could do a damned thing with him, really fabulous. But despite the fact that "Daddy" King said some

nice things at the end because of what the Kennedys had done when his son was in jail, all that shit, we still lost. The majority of the blacks in Atlanta voted Republican, voted for Nixon. People don't believe that but they did. I don't make a big noise about it but it happened. As it did in a lot of other spots, like Harrisburg [Pennsylvania]--there are pockets of Republicans around. We learned, however; those little meetings like the one in 1961 in Atlanta gave us a chance to find out who's who and stuff like that.

G: One of the memos that you wrote indicated that you were coordinating leadership among about twelve black organizations in the South. The organizations that you listed were NAACP, Urban League, CORE, SNCC, National Newspaper Publishers Association, National Council of Negro Women, Delta Sigma Theta, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Daughters of--

M: We used everybody in all of that.

G: Tell me about the NAACP here, traditionally nonpolitical.

M: Well, the NAACP at the national level is very careful about being nonpartisan. But the clue to it was they also were very clear on reading the record. So we made it our business, I wasn't trying to sell anything but the record and that's all, with the NAACP. They had a fabulous guy in Mississippi who is now in the state legislature, the NAACP head in Mississippi for a number of years.

G: Who was that?

M: I'm trying to think of his name. He's down there now.

G: Was it Aaron Henry?

M: Aaron Henry. That's right. Aaron Henry. Aaron was a very, very good operator. He had

his problems, but he knew how to operate. Anyway, you could depend on Aaron to do the political job. And one of the problems you had everywhere was who you could depend on. Do you see what I mean? Money didn't do it, necessarily. So you had to find a person with commitment. That's difficult.

G: How did you tie into the NAACP in the South? Did you do it through the New York office? Did you do it through Washington?

M: Well, I knew the New York office completely. I knew everybody there.

G: Where did you--?

M: Well, I got the roster. And we worked with NAACP people in the administration. I had NAACP guys coming in on those meetings. Part of the leadership crowd, and NAACP guys, also. We'd invite them to the White House.

I would say this: this business of inviting people to the White House was the key to everything, because they had never been invited to the White House in their lives. You got people who were given some recognition that they never got in their lives. And here were people who could not even meet their own mayors, having the President shake their hand. In fact, the guys who were telling me, said, "You know, the one thing that was so important was keeping the door open."

The other thing is, even in 1961, when Roy [Wilkins] walked into the White House with that agenda for JFK and LBJ, they talked with Sargent Shriver. I was there. I was with Sarge. We were going over it. So we were tied right in in the beginning and even before that, because I was tight with Walter White before Roy got in. Walter was a great friend of mine. Walter had his problems with his white wife, because some blacks didn't



think the head of the NAACP should marry a white woman. So we helped him with that in the newspaper. (Laughter) So you're in the business and you know everybody and you've been working with them.

Another thing is, always do a favor. I figure any time you can help somebody, help them quick. Because what the hell, you know, you can put it in the bank. So we would always be helpful to the NAACP or anybody else. I found those people full of commitment. The NAACP types were committed types and they understood what you were trying to sell and some they bought and some they probably wouldn't. But I mean, I think by bringing them closer to the cabinet officers and another thing, by the way: we called these cabinet officers all the time. I used to call [Arthur] Goldberg and say, "Look, man, you've got to come over here and do so and so." We had--we're talking about the President--we had everybody over there. Even in Carter's operation. I never will forget this foreign policy guy--what the hell was his name?--the head of the--he had never experienced black spots, you know.

G: [Zbigniew] Brzezinski?

M: Yes. Zbig, you know. I told him, "Zbig, look, man, you've got to come over here." Zbig saw all this black audience and--but Zbig is a brilliant son of a bitch, you know. He put it on a world plane, people of color of the world and all this other shit.

But what I'm trying to say is that we exposed leadership from all over black America personally to these people. And all I did was set it up, you know what I mean? And the way I would do it, I'd start out sort of as master of ceremonies, welcoming them and all of this. Then I would trot out a big shot here, and a big wheel there, and a big

wheel there, and then wind up with the President of the United States, and then take pictures with them. See, we had that all worked out. Everybody shook his hand. You couldn't miss. So we sold them intellectually. We made a social situation out of it because we usually fed them or did something like that. And the guy walked out of there on cloud nine. Now, you do that every week or two for all those years. The guys say why is it that blacks are so Democratic? Those sons of bitches have been exposed to them. See, we worked at it. That's why they got me back here with Carter. I ain't never been this comfortable with Carter. The guy says, "What the hell does this guy do?" Nobody could figure out what I did. They said, "Whatever the hell it was, do it over here." Because there was no real genius to it, simple commonplace stuff.

But you'd be amazed at the chemistry. Here's a guy in Yazoo, Mississippi, who had trouble with his sheriff, goddamn cops giving him a ticket every damn five minutes. [Inaudible] And he thinks he's a wheel. He comes up here, he meets the cabinet officers and the president of the United States, shakes hands, eats dinner with him. What the hell, he goes back and says, "Jesus Christ, there's a future in this world for me." And you're talking about loyalty to the party? And the Republicans are stupid. The Republicans never did a damn thing. Really, you've got to think: this was done for eight solid years. And a little bit with Carter.

Another thing is I found out a long time ago you never ask for anything for yourself. So nobody regarded me as in the way. "So what in the hell does that Louis Martin want?" "He don't want a goddamn thing. He's got money; he's rich anyway." I had to lie that I had money, which was not true. I didn't need any but I mean I wasn't well

off. But anyhow, I never asked for nothing. Never wanted anything. Never wanted to be on anybody's anything. And I still don't. That's still the way I operate here. I don't need any damned thing. Just leave me alone, but in the meantime I want you to take care of so-and-so. And this is what's happening.

I'll tell you one thing, I was thrilled. You know, it was almost unbelievable to me to see how people would change. You take a guy from down some place who's been kicked in the ass, you take him to the White House and show him around. He meets the secretary of state; he meets so-and-so. And the guy is talking like he's making sense to him. And at the end of that day, he's another man. I could see him change, you know. I used to come home feeling like I'd done a fabulous job. And the guy said, "Why did you do it?" I said, "Because I enjoyed it." I really did. And I'll tell you this, it would work for other minorities and whites, too, if they did it right. But they didn't understand it.

When I first came here with Carter, I couldn't believe the attitude. You see, the poor whites had never had a chance. They would respond to the White House, too, if you picked them out. But you had to know what you're doing. And they had all this trouble with their congressman and all that stuff. Well, I took my time. I didn't move fast but I sort of watched them. But at the end, in 1968, I had them all. had two thousand over there that day, the windup. The goddamn black caucuses, all those antis and dissidents over there, having fun. But the thing you've got to do is realize they're human beings and give them some respect and indicate your interest. I think that worked for blacks in the Democratic Party. And you know, Roosevelt understood this better than anybody, I think.

G: You've described this process at work in the White House. Did the same process come into play when the President would travel and, say, meet with different groups in different cities?

M: Well, we had that list, you know. We'd tell him whom to see. Then we'd call up guys, you know.

G: You would plug that into the--

M: Yes, I wasn't always successful in it, because sometimes the field team was not altogether straight, you know, because the local people made certain arrangements and they had to fit in. But every now and then we'd have a ten-strike.

G: Did you?

M: But I'll tell you the truth, the biggest thrill I've ever had is putting a guy in a good job, a hell of a job, and opening the doors of power to the rank and file. It was just thrilling to me.

G: You have presented this as a real difference in getting out the vote. These people had been to the White House---

M: Yes.

G: --and they had gotten a new respect--

M: They got a taste.

G: Got a taste. So then they would go back to their towns and cities and really work for you at the next election.

M: That's right. You wouldn't believe it but, you know, you would find guys walking around in cities with a letter six months old where they had been invited to the White House. The

guy would be showing everybody the damn letter that I'd sent him, some of them. It was unbelievable. You know, the guy said, "You've been invited to the White House." It's a thrill.

G: But you believe you can attribute their support to personal politics rather than just, say, the substance of the legislation that was being passed?

M: Well, you had to have both. You see, I had a good case to make, and that was important. When you add that, you can't miss with the two of them. Here we were talking about helping people and the Republicans were talking about kicking them in the ass. And when I got the other thing, the combination was absolutely unbelievable. You see what I mean? And I'm telling you, you couldn't believe it. And I had bus loads come in. I used to take about a bus load. Do you know this Gray who was in the [Congress]?

G: Bill Gray?

M: Yes. Bill Gray. Bill Gray was clever. As soon as I went over there with Carter, Bill Gray called me. He said, "I want you to take care of some of my people." I said, "All right." We worked out a deal. "You bus them down and I'll give them the works." Man, he started busing them down and I had them visit. And Gray was home free because he had a lot of opposition in Philadelphia. The machine was against him up there. But he beat the hell out of them.

(Laughter)

But you see, we also gave them literature and we had people talking policy. You know, you're talking about policy, but these administration people explained what the administration was doing, why it was important, how much help that would be to them.

And then we gave them all this other stuff. And I tell you, it was something else. Man, I tell you, if you had said something against one of our candidates they would have shot you. (Laughter)

We also did our leaders that way, like M. J. Anderson. If you had M. J., you know, the White House is yours, good. M. J. was a wheel down there, but he was also a wheel up here.

I really think it is a real mistake though--the Chicago model has been denigrated so much nobody pays attention to it. But there's an old story there: in the Chicago precinct, the precinct leader would say, "What is the difference between a pile of bricks in a brickyard and a skyscraper?" And the answer can be summed up in one word: organization. But nobody understands organization.

I had breakfast with [Paul] Kirk the other day and they don't understand organization. Intellectuals say yes, yes, yes, but they don't know what the shit you're talking about. Somebody has got to get people together at a level where you can operate and work on them. And you've got to do this every day. You can't do this at campaign time. He's right now trying to get the media--trying to think of a slogan or some goddamn catch phrase that's going to work. That's bullshit.

I had lunch yesterday with John Hobie [?] who got Kirk, the two of us together. I said, "Look, I'm an old man and all this, but you guys are crazy." The same goddamn people that'll work for you, you have to motivate them. You've got to inspire them and motivate them and you've got to get with them and organize on a basis that you can communicate with them. And otherwise you're at risk. Some guy's going to read

something or hear something over the radio and be influenced. That's not the way you build it. It's hard work. In your university or this university, it's the same damn thing. I'm trying to sell these damn people the same thing.

You can't keep your distance from everybody and expect people to support your operation. You've got to get down there with them somehow. I'm trying to get this crowd over here [at Howard] to tie this in a little closer. But you see, you've got a lot of egos, and the ego gets in the way of a lot of things and that's a tragedy. You take King and that church operation. It's an organizational operation. Every church is organized. You move in and get the organization, but there are people talking to people, sharing ideas, sharing ideals and moving together on something. You string that up, you get twenty of those, and you've got a hell of an operation.

G: Was it difficult to get Martin Luther King to support you in 1964?

M: No.

G: Tell me.

M: The problem with King was that King had his own approach to things and I tried to sell him on going into politics, really organizing politically. And I always argued with him that marching is fine but that damn march to that ballot box is even finer, you know. And he understood it and appreciated it, but he was slow because it was hard to move his people that way.

G: But you were talking with reference to political involvement to support others rather--and not himself.

M: Yes.

G: Not run for anything himself.

M: Yes, that's true.

G: Let me ask you to describe the relationship between Johnson and King.

M: Well, it was very odd. It was all right up until the war. That was the Vietnam War that broke it all up. But at the very last, the very last appointment, it was Richard [?] over there, I put it up.

G: Really?

M: But King didn't come, and LBJ was hurt. And I felt like a heel because it didn't work out, but I couldn't work it out.

G: Did Johnson understand him?

M: No. Well, he understood him in one way and he didn't want to understand him in another way. I can't explain it. But Johnson was a guy who felt that his blandishments were adequate; you should respond. But King wasn't that way.

And another thing, King was a peculiar guy, King was a very peculiar guy. You know, you have a bunch of people in a room, we used to have them in the Cabinet Room. And unless somebody told you, you wouldn't know which one was King because King was very modest, softspoken. He wasn't an aggressive leader, but at the right moment he'd start talking and that would tear it up, you know. But he was--I can't explain it but he had the quality that I noticed when I was in college, of great athletes. I used to watch him carefully. I never was an athlete, but on the football field you find all these characters out there looking active and ready to score. There's one son of a bitch that looks like he's lazy as hell. He's not nervous and excited, he's just sort of--and you say that son of a bitch is



not going to be worth a damn, he's lazy. That's the one guy that tears the place up. I don't understand it. Do you know what I mean? But I could go right now and pick out, just watching, the one that's going to do the heroics. It's that relaxed, supremely confident but not particularly aggressive type that somehow comes through in the clutch.

And that's the way King was in this business of leadership. He had a lot of front-runners around him. In fact, he never started a program, you know. [Ralph] Abernathy would open it up and warm the audience up. And then King would come on. But it was always interesting to me that King never started anything. He had one of these guys do it, which is a fantastic technique. Cliff and I went over to Baltimore to see how it would work. And he thought King was going to do a whole lot of talking. King just sat there and Abernathy tore the place up. He got them all--and then King comes on. But when King got through with them, you could wipe up the floor with them. But that's the something that I don't understand, but it's part of the person, partly charisma and partly a sort of sixth sense. I can't figure it out either.

G: What did LBJ think of King?

M: That he was bullheaded and arrogant in the fact that he did not respond to his blandishments. I think that's what he thought of him. I think he respected him in terms of his capacity. But you see, there are some people that would just say go to hell, and King was one of them.

G: What did King think of Johnson?

M: Halfway between, he thought he was--he gave him the benefit of the doubt, coming from Texas, that he had made great strides forward. But he thought LBJ was selling soap oil. I

mean selling--

G: Snake oil?

M: Snake oil, yes. He thought he was a snake-oil salesman. But not completely. I mean he was cynical, but not only toward Johnson; he was that way with most politicians.

G: Did Kennedy and King get along better than Johnson and King, do you think?

M: I'm not really sure. I would say on the surface, yes, he and Kennedy probably did get along better. But that was at a different time and Kennedy was less of a salesman in that sense and he didn't come on so strong.

G: Aside from that last meeting that didn't take place, did Johnson use you as an intermediary in working with him?

M: Well, everybody used everybody. The problem--I was usually involved in getting the right people at the right place and so forth and briefing them more or less on the way things are looking. But sometimes I think there was some resentment on the part of the staff people of the way things would go.

G: What, for example?

M: Well, I think Kenny O'Donnell and I had some problems at times. Although I must say he was very wonderful in doing what I asked him to do. But, see, there was a little feeling on the part of a lot of them that I was a little too militant inside, because I'm not much of an ass-kisser, you know. If I didn't like it I'd say, "Shit, I don't think it's worth a damn." That was the wrong attitude. So I could feel the little negative vibrations. But I overcame them because I was always smiling, you know. I didn't have any fight in me; I wasn't trying to fight anybody. But he was an Irishman and he was a Daley Irishman. And

sometimes he didn't see the need for being as accommodating as I thought he might be.

You see what I mean?

G: Yes.

M: He liked to do business with somebody. He'd call up Daley and "Yeah, we'll do it in five minutes, yep, yep, yep." Well, I would try to slow him down a little and say, "Well, let's go around Robin Hood's barn a little while." And I said, "You can't treat them like cattle." I wouldn't say it that way but I got the point over. But he was tough. He was tough with everybody. Kenny was real tough. It was a real tragedy to see him in the end, though. Jesus Christ, I saw him in the airport and I almost cried, looking at him. He was such a wonderful guy, mentally, and he was a great friend of mine; he did a lot of things for me. I'd say, "Look, I've got to get this guy. I want a judge here," or something like that, "and they say that everybody is against me." He'd say, "They're all full of crap. This is the right guy." Every now and then he'd say, "Okay. We'll take him on." So I mean I had no problem.

He gave me hell one day. I never will forget a lot of little things. We were supposed to go to a convention--I mean JFK was to speak at a black sorority [?]-I think maybe I've told you this story. It stuck with me. Kenny tells me, "Go out and get the limousine." I go out there and get in. I'm sitting down in the limousine waiting on JFK. The chauffeur's there. He looks out the window. Kenny comes up, "Goddamn it, you never sit on the right side. That's where the President sits. You sit over on that side." The right side of the limousine, that's the number-one side. It had never occurred to me where the shit it was.

(Laughter)

G: This is O'Donnell who came out?

M: Kenny O'Donnell. Yes. But now he was the one that told me to get in the limousine and go over there with him and brief him while he was going.

G: The President had told you that or O'Donnell had? Who had asked you to get in and ride with him?

M: It was Kenny. I was going to brief Kennedy anyway but I wasn't thinking about necessarily riding over there with him. But Kenny, you know, he said, "You get in the limousine and ride over there with him." So, you know, I had to make sure on this damn thing. I said, "That's fine with me." That was the first time I'd ridden with the President, too, by the way. And you know, the White House is crazy. Everybody is looking, and every little thing matters. And I, being black, I never said--some of the things that they thought mattered, what the hell, they didn't matter to me. Because it didn't mean anything to be close, you know, because you ain't going nowhere nohow. They're going to take you at their speed anyway.

G: Was Martin Luther King reluctant to be a partisan in 1964?

M: Well, we got to see him on another account, you see. I went down to his home. I flew down to Atlanta and met with him on another matter.

G: What was the matter?

M: I thought I'd told you about that. The telegram. The Republicans in New Jersey had printed up a lot of things that looked like telegrams which urged the blacks to vote for King for president because the Democrats were no damn good and the Republicans

weren't either. But the purpose was to kill the black vote. I got a copy of one of them, called King up, flew to Atlanta with the goddamn thing and told him that this is terrible. I said, "I think you personally ought to repudiate this because this is absolutely negating the black political power. It's not partisan." We talked for--it was the first time I'd talked with him at his home. And his family was there. Anyhow, King was very nice. He thought long and hard, read it over and over and over. I had described what had happened. My people had told me. You know, another thing you have to do, you have to have spies everywhere. Well, you cultivate people everywhere, anyway, so soon as anything hits the streets somebody calls you. That's the way I got the telegram. Of course, they asked me to come in and said, "Where the hell did you get this goddamn thing?" "Someone made sure I got it."

So King said, "Yes, I think you're right, think you're right." And I said, "Well, now, the guy who owns WSM is a friend of mine." It's a TV station in Atlanta. In 1944 we were together in--what the hell is his name?--New York at the headquarters. I said, "We can set up a press conference and knock this thing out in a minute." And so we did. On the way to the airport in this cab I turned the thing on and King was on the air kicking the hell out of it, that fast.

G: Did you talk to him also about some support for LBJ?

M: No. I didn't say anything. I didn't want to--you see, he couldn't do it without doing what I wanted him to do. And he came out more or less for LBJ without saying so. But nobody that heard him could believe that he was not for LBJ. That's the best kind of stuff, you know what I mean? Of course everybody was upset, "They're taking advantage of it."

And they think it was a Republican plot. What the hell, you're fighting Republicans.

(Laughter)

G: Did King do anything else for Johnson?

M: I don't know whether he did anything specific. He may have. To tell you the truth, I don't know about that.

G: How about his organization?

M: Well, it was full of our people. Our people, Andy Young, every damn body up in that place was ours.

G: Did they work with you on get-out-the-vote?

M: Oh, yes. They did that, you know, that's part of being black and a citizen. We didn't sell that as partisan. In fact, I was the biggest nonpartisan guy in the world in getting that vote out because they know where to go. As [inaudible] told me, "All Louis wants is to get them to the polls. He don't give a goddamn about telling them anything." Well, that is all I wanted. We'd done all that work for all these years, you know.

And that was the beautiful part about it, because, you see, we organized that vote thing in Atlanta. That was a hard [?] deal anyway. We set that up back in the first part of the Kennedy Administration, the thing Vernon Jordan was the head of. We set that up ourselves and made Wiley Branton the first head of the thing. And that was part of that brain trust over there in the Justice Department. Harris and I and two or three others got the foundation to support the damn things that aren't a policy operation, and had Roy Williams and other civil rights leaders picking the leader. They picked Wiley Branton. That's fine.

G: This is the voter registration project?

M: Yes. The big Atlanta voter registration drive takes credit for registering a million black voters in the South. We set all that up. We had King in on that, too, by the way.

G: Did you?

M: Yes. We had a luncheon over at the White House and King was our black leader. Yes. I never will forget the thing that King--see, I set it up, a big luncheon. We started paying the bill; the guy comes to me to pay the bill, and I paid the bill. So King said to me, "Did you pay the man?" I said, "Yes." That's all right. But he didn't understand where I fitted into the thing. He said that if I had the money I must have had plenty more. But we turned them out there. I think I've told you about that, that thing.

The Atlanta vote drive--we had to tie it in with the Southern Regional Council (SRC) and use that as the umbrella. Then we got commitments that all the foundations would give them money. And they in turn gave money to local registration efforts. And Wiley did a good job on it. Wiley didn't know how it got started, though, because we were sworn to secrecy because we didn't want to have anybody say that it was a Democratic deal. And my argument always was you don't have to say it.

LBJ used to say that, too. I heard LBJ say, "I don't give a damn what party he thinks he belongs to. When I get through with him he belongs to us." And that was the way he would take the credit. But he was remarkable, I'll tell you. The only trouble with LBJ was he had a bad tongue. He used to call me up, "I'm on the toilet and I was thinking about you." He'd say any damn thing, you know. He was a pistol.

End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview II