Civil Rights History Project
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Interviewee:	Walter Tillow
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Interviewer:	David Cline
Videographer:	John Bishop
Length:	01:48:09

David Cline: Great.

John Bishop: Okay, we're on.

David Cline: Okay, so I'm just going to introduce all of us first, and then we'll start the interview.

Walter Tillow: Go right ahead.

David Cline: Okay, so today is June twenty-second, 2013. I'm in Louisville, Kentucky. This is David Cline speaking. I'm from the History Department at Virginia Tech, also working with the Southern Oral History Program at UNC-Chapel Hill, recording this interview for the Civil Rights History Project of the National Museum of African American History and Culture of the Smithsonian and the Library of Congress. Behind the camera today is John Bishop from UCLA and Media Generation.

And I'm very pleased to be speaking with Walter Tillow today in Louisville. If you could introduce yourself, tell us where you were born and your age, and then, we'll start a conversation.

Walter Tillow: I'm seventy-three years ago. I was born in New York City and raised in the Bronx in New York City.

David Cline: Okay, and as I said off-camera, I like to sort of start with people's childhood. So, if you could tell us a little bit about your family, and if you see sort of any influences from your family or your upbringing that may have influenced your work later on.

WT: Well, as I said, I was born in the Bronx, New York City. My mother was a—worked for the state of New York in the Unemployment Insurance Division. And my dad was a—had a small business in washing machines, laundromats-type, just becoming technology coin-operated laundry. I grew up in a basically middle class lifestyle.

My parents had been radicals, members of the Young Communists League in the 1920s, although the Depression and family kind of calmed them down. You know, they kind of went on to other things. But that was a background in my growing up, the Cold War. The execution of the Rosenbergs was something that—I was thirteen at the time. I remember a discussion in my—in the kitchen between my mom and dad, as to whether my mother should go to the funeral. They were executed on a Friday. The funeral was—according to Jewish law, they had to be buried in twenty-four hours, so the funeral was Saturday.

They eventually decided that my mother shouldn't go, and so my father insisted on taking me with him. And so, that was a memorable impact on my—and also, I had a—half of the family that was kind of radical. The other half was conservative. And so, you know, family arguments

through the Cold War, you know, I kind of was aware of progressive left politics, you know, and Soviet Union socialism and so forth.

DC: Um-hmm. But your parents' radicalism was a little bit removed at that point, or it was still there?

WT: Yeah, it was—they weren't members. They weren't subscribers. I had an aunt who was a subscriber. I had another aunt who was a member of the Communist Party, but I didn't know that. You know, I knew them as aunts and as I say, progressive arguments. But for me and my family, it was not, you know, nothing was in family life, meetings or something like that. No, there was no—that was, as I say, it was sort of a basic middle class existence, 1950s middle class existence.

DC: Um-hmm. What about race issues in New York at that time when you were growing up? Any impact?

WT: My sister had a friend in school. My folks became friends with her family, her parents. You know, they became socially acquainted. [Clears throat] At that time, in New York, there was—I grew up right outside of Parkchester. Parkchester was the largest development, private development apartments funded by Metropolitan Life. And it was segregated, although it wasn't officially segregated. They just wouldn't rent to African Americans.

And under rent control, you had to keep an apartment vacant for one year in order to decontrol it. So, Metropolitan Life would—somebody would move out of Parkchester. They would keep the apartment vacant for a year, you know, and then it would become decontrolled.

So, there was a housing movement. It wasn't only—it was here in Louisville at the time. You know, that's the Bradens' origin, you know, [0:05:00] the same movement. People would

chain themselves to the door, you know, on these vacant apartments. It was a movement to try and get MetLife—you know. So, I was aware of that kind of a movement.

But other than that, we didn't participate, you know. It was just my sister's friend's parents lived in Parkchester, so we kind of knew—they didn't participate either, but you kind of got reports, you know, there was an incident. You know, people would chain themselves to the door in this building, you know, and kind of talk, you know, that way.

But other than that, as I say, the Rosenbergs—you know, the Cold War more. I came upon my father in the garage one day, you know, throwing out literature that he had collected, you know, newspapers and, you know, he kind of showed me he was getting rid of it.

And then, another incident. My aunt lived in Westchester County. My uncle was an artist and a cartoonist. So, it was a rural—at that time it was rural [laughs]—rural upstate New York, you know, although it wasn't too far from New York City. And some friends of theirs had given them some books. Actually, they gave them a collection of the works of Lenin, because they had to get them out of—they felt they couldn't keep them in their apartment in New York, if people came, you know. It was that kind of an atmosphere. The Cold War atmosphere was, you know, kind of impinged upon your consciousness, you know, what-have-you.

DC: Sure.

WT: But those are just incidents, you know, looking back, you know, kind of, at the time. When I was in college, she gave me the thirteen volumes. [Laughter] You know, she wanted—had no use for them. So, I actually got a collected works of Lenin, you know, when I was in college, because she had been holding them for somebody. They finally said, "To hell with them! Throw them away," and rather than throwing them away, she gave them to me. So.

DC: Interesting, yeah.

JB: Could we pause for a second? I'm—

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: We're rolling.

DC: Okay, fantastic. So, what—I guess if you could tell us a little bit about college and just sort of what brought you into the Movement. I don't know if there was one moment or if it was a gradual process.

WT: Well, I went to Harpur College, which was a State University of New York. At that time it was in a bunch of Quonset huts and converted mansions in Endicott, New York. And now it's a big graduate center campus and [7:45], you know, nearby. But when I started, it was a school that relied mainly on vets coming back on the G.I. Bill, you know.

And in 1960, I was a junior, and the sit-in movement broke out. And we decided—we had a lot of kids from New York City at the school because it was cheap. I think tuition at the time was three hundred dollars a year. And there were no dorms, so you could live off—you know, when I went there, there were no dorms. When I finished, there were dorms. But when I went there, there were no dorms, so you had to live off-campus. So, you know, it drew a lot of people that didn't want to go to City College, but wanted to go—couldn't afford a private school.

DC: Sure.

WT: So, we got involved with picketing Walmart. We were one of the first or second school to picket, have a sympathy demonstration at the local—not Walmart [laughs]. Woolworth! Woolworth, Woolworth Company.

DC: Yeah.

WT: And, you know, the administration fought us bitterly, you know, and we had this argument with student government. And, actually, we found a clipping that Harvard did it, and

that was kind of—convinced student government that we could do it, you know. [Sound of sirens in background]

DC: Okay.

WT: So, you know, so we picketed the Woolworth in Johnson City, you know. That was, you know, but that was kind of—that was the first, you know, kind of—[sirens get louder] you want to wait for that?

DC: Thank you.

WT: That was like we responded to the times, you know. The sit-in movement broke out. You know, it made perfect sense. You know, segregation—why, you know, we had Woolworth all over the place, you know, at that time. They all had lunch counters and so forth. So, that was when I was a junior.

And we went on to some more radical activities. When I—between—in my senior year, we were moved onto the new campus, which was—we had to live on the campus in order—they needed the money, so they made everybody [laughs] live on the campus. [0:10:00] So, we had, you know, we got involved there with—at that time in New York state—at that time nationally, but in New York state, they had a one-day shelter drill. It was in the Cold War, you know. They were afraid the Soviets were going to bomb, nuclear bombs. So, you had to find a shelter, you know. And so, they rang a siren at noon. All over the state, people had to take cover, you know, that was on campus.

So, there were a couple of pacifists in the school, and we heard that they were going to go have a picnic rather than—you know, they were going to go in the woods, you know. It was sort of a rural campus. So, we said, "Look, let's just stand outside in the quad, you know." So, we had fifty, sixty, seventy kids, you know, defied the take-cover drill, you know, and stood out

there. The president caught hell, you know. We had a dean that had some principle, and he stood up for us. But, you know, one thing led to another.

And from there, somebody had an idea—not me. There was a Young Democrats, a Young Republicans. We wanted to organize a Young Socialists. And we organized it, meaning you got money, you know, from the student government.

DC: So, it was an official organization.

WT: A recognized student organization. And we invited a communist—well, we invited a socialist worker person to speak. Nobody knew—you know, the name would pop up. Yeah, you know. And because of the air raid drill protest, the president forbade her to speak. He barred her from campus.

And the faculty was—because the state paid better in the lower positions, you know, assistant and lecturer, you know, we had a lot of future names, you know, that took a job out of graduate school to pay off the loans because the money was better. So, it was a conscious, aware, smart faculty, and they kind of took away his power to bar anybody from speaking on campus, as a result of barring that Socialist Worker Party candidate.

So, the next name that came up was a guy named Herbert Aptheker. He was a prominent communist historian Ph.D. from Columbia. And we had a big battle over him, you know. The American Legion threatened to picket, you know. The president wanted to bar him, but he couldn't do it. The question came up whether you're going to charge money or not charge money. And the result was the place was packed, seven or eight hundred people in the newly-opened auditorium, you know. And he had another impact on me. He was a particularly effective public speaker.

So, you know, that was sort of my [laughs] academic career, you know. When I went out to the University of Washington as a graduate student the next year, there was another fight. I wasn't involved, other than to attend his lecture, but he was barred from speaking at the University of Washington at Seattle.

DC: The same guy, yeah.

WT: He spoke off-campus, you know, and I attended the meeting. And so, I had some contact that way, you know, with progressive ideas, radical ideas. Or, in some cases—at the University of Washington, actually, there were some Young Communists that organized that meeting, and I got to know them. But at Cornell—so, that was—I went to the University of Washington as a graduate student in '61-'62.

DC: What were you studying?

WT: Economic history. And then, I went back to Cornell '62-'63 as a graduate student. At Cornell, we had sort of a, kind of a breakfast—you know, a group of us graduate students, undergraduates, we'd meet every morning for breakfast in the student activity center, I forget what it was called. There was a big major strike of the newspapers in New York City. It was a strike over technology. The printers were striking to bar, you know, cold type technology. That was linotype days and, you know, they wanted to go to cold type.

DC: Right.

WT: And it was a long strike. And, you know, in a place like Cornell, the *New York Times* not being—you know, everybody was starving.

DC: [Laughs]

WT: So, somebody had a bright idea that we could read various—and in deference to the *New York Times*, since it was a major issue for the whole industry, other newspapers, the *Washington Post*, they wouldn't send in copies to areas where the *New York Times*.

DC: Interesting.

WT: So, [0:15:00] as I say, people were starving, [laughs] you know. So, somebody had the bright idea if we subscribe to a variety, or read them in the library, and came in once a week with clippings, you know, then we would reproduce them and put them up around campus. So, somehow I got to read the *Baltimore Afro-American*. That was my choice. And we would bring in the articles, somebody would paste them up and duplicate it, and then we would post it up around the campus.

And the annual SNCC convention in the spring, the Easter meeting, came up in the *Afro-American*. It was in April of 1963, so a couple of us decided to go. And I went, you know, a carload of us went, and that's where I met Anne Braden. And that's how I got involved. You know, that's the story of how I got involved.

DC: Very interesting. So, you had read about it and just got in the car and went?

WT: Well, we—no. No, there was an announcement. You know, they covered a story about SNCC's annual Easter conference.

DC: Yeah.

WT: At that time, they had founded in 1960, so '61, '62, this was like the third, you know, third Easter conference of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

DC: Um-hmm, and where was it held?

WT: It was held in Gammon Theological Center in Atlanta.

DC: Okay. Atlanta.

WT: You know, old Gammon.

DC: Yeah, yeah.

WT: You know, the old theological seminary.

DC: Became Interdenominational.

WT: Right.

DC: Yeah, yeah.

WT: So, we were looking, though we had an idea about a summer project, you know, going south for the summer, a couple of us, and the only person that would talk with us seriously and had an idea was Anne. She suggested that Fayette County, Tennessee, you know, the Movement there needed some people.

So, three of us, you know, Charlie Haney, he was in mathematics, his wife Bunny, and their infant baby, you know, a month old—you know, it was a couple of months old when they went down—and myself went to Fayette County, Tennessee, for that summer of 1963. We must have got there in May or June. Stayed through the March on Washington, in other words—.

And Fayette County was a—it was a place where in the 1930s, the federal government had tried an experiment, in terms of increasing black land ownership. It was a WPA—or I don't know if it was—no, it wasn't WPA. But it was some project to increase black ownership of land. Eleanor Roosevelt, you know, was involved.

So, there was a—it was a county that was probably ninety—there were two counties. They were just east of Memphis, Shelby County. They sit right on the Mississippi border. They're like an extension of the Delta, Fayette and Haywood counties. But while they were ninety percent African American, they had a higher percentage of black landowners, of blacks

who owned their own land, you know, in the county, although they had a sharecropping system for whites.

And there was a case, a criminal case, where a preacher, you know, was charged with murder. And he fled the county and he had come back. This was before my, you know. And the lawyers that defended him, they asked every prospective juror did they, you know, did they have any problem with African Americans voting, because you couldn't serve on a jury unless you were on the voting rolls in those days. So, of course, everybody answered, "No," they had no problem, you know.

So, there were a number of vets, Korean War vets, World War II vets that, you know, had attended the trial because of the prominence of the minister, you know. And they heard everybody say, well, we don't object to African Americans voting. So, they went out to try and enroll African Americans, and that's the origin of the Movement there.

The whites retaliated by expelling sharecroppers from the land. Because there were African Americans that owned their own farms, they set up tents on black-owned land to house sharecroppers that had been expelled. And there was a Movement guy, a minister in Cincinnati, Maurice McCrackin. It was some sort of Community Church. I think it was called a Community Church, got involved, and the Bradens got involved, and there was a big movement in Chicago to support Tent City. It became Tent City. [0:20:00] And it so happens that, you know, they were sending food and clothes, you know, because the winter was chilly. You know, it was the winter.

DC: Who was organizing on the ground as sort of core local organizing?

WT: Well, I don't know who was at that time. It was before my time. There were night riders. People would ride by and shoot into the tents. It got some national publicity, you know, at the time.

DC: Right.

WT: In the fifties, you know, in the what-have-you. But the Movement in Chicago, you know, there were unions, a guy name Jesse Prosten from the Packinghouse Workers, his wife, and some others, they hired somebody to kind of coordinate between Chicago and the local movement.

DC: Interesting.

WT: And that guy that they hired was Jim Forman.

DC: Oh, okay.

WT: Who became, you know, the executive director of SNCC. So, when I got to Fayette County, you know, Forman was in Atlanta as the executive director of SNCC.

DC: But had been in Fayette County?

WT: But he had had this role, you know, as coordinator, down and back, you know, with the supplies. And as I say, it had national attention. There were other—you know, there were efforts to self-help projects, you know. There was an effort to set up making leather book bags. Or, you know, in Haywood County, I think, there was a project to kind of build homes for these people on land that was purchased, because we stayed in an uncompleted home. I mean, I did. I think the Haneys, with the baby, they stayed with some family. But I stayed in a vacant house, interior, just—no walls, you know, framed but not walls, no plumbing. You know, I just was able to sleep there.

But we took a trip to Atlanta in the middle of the summer. That's where I met Forman, and he had this affection for Fayette County because of his involvement there, so he kind of took an interest. And while I was there, you know, there were a couple of teenagers, two or three teenagers that were in hot water. The police were looking for them in south Georgia, in Albany.

And so, Sherrod wanted to get them out of there. So, they sent them by there, so I could keep them in Fayette County.

So, they came back with me and they spent, you know, the summer. And that was the summer of the March on Washington, and so there was—you know, there were several buses from Fayette and Haywood County that went to the March.

DC: Went to the March, of local people?

WT: Went to the March on Washington. And Forman indicated—I went back from the March to Atlanta. You know, Forman indicated—

DC: Did you go to the March?

WT: Yes, I was at the March on Washington.

DC: Yeah, so you went. And did you go with these local people?

WT: No, I didn't. I was trying to think. I don't remember the circumstances, but I didn't go with the buses that went. I may have gone home, you know, back to New York first. I don't know what the Haneys did. It may be that the three of us did something. But I went back from the March to Atlanta. And that's when I started to work for SNCC, you know, for—

JB: Can we pause for a second?

DC: Pause for a second?

WT: Sure.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: Okay, we're back. Wait, wait, wait, you're wired. Okay, got it.

DC: [Laughs]

WT: [Laughs] I know I'm tethered.

DC: [Laughs]

WT: Tell me when you're ready.

JB: We're ready. We're rolling.

DC: So, but before you went down to Atlanta to work with SNCC, the SNCC office there, the project in Fayette County, was that a SNCC project?

WT: No, it wasn't a SNCC project.

DC: Okay.

WT: It was not a SNCC project. As I say, Anne Braden, they had covered—SCEF had covered—the Bradens were friends with McCrackin in Cincinnati. Carl Braden, you know, when he was blackballed by the *Courier-Journal*, I think he worked for the *Enquirer*, one of the newspapers in Cincinnati. He commuted, you know. And so, they knew McCrackin.

So, it was just a matter of they knew somebody was—you know, it was typical Movement. [Laughs] They thought somebody—we got there. We were told to go to this white guy's—he was a farmer, Redfearn. He was friendly with the African Americans. He had tried to run for sheriff, you know, and didn't make it. You know, but—so, we spent a couple of nights with him, but we couldn't stay there because of what we were—we did voter registration primarily.

DC: And that was dangerous for him to have you around?

WT: Yeah, it was dangerous for him to—and also destructive of his political, you know, intentions. You know, in those days, you courted the black vote privately, you know.

DC: Um-hmm.

WT: So, [0:25:00] we moved over and we did voter registration work, you know.

DC: Going out every day?

WT: Yeah, trying to talk in churches and trying to take people down.

DC: Um-hmm, and how did that go?

WT: Well, it was—didn't go very far, you know. [Laughs] I got jumped once coming back from downtown. And the other thing, we did something with the youngsters. As I told you, we took a bunch swimming in Memphis at a black YMCA, or a YWCA, I forget which one it was. You know, the kids had never been swimming. You know, they didn't have bathing suits, so Bunny—we were in touch with the guys back in Cornell, and they rounded up donated bathing suits, you know, women's and men's, girls and boys. And we had enough suits to take three or four carloads, you know, to swim. So, we did stuff like that, you know.

DC: Um-hmm.

WT: You know, you go around to speak and—at that time, we also had an incident where McFerrin—the head of the Movement there was a guy named John McFerrin. He had a gas station-grocery store, small, you know, and he had been subject to boycotts, you know, couldn't buy gas, you know, and so forth. And he was an effective guy. And, as I say, the core of the leadership were black farmers that owned their own land. You know, it wasn't preachers, you know.

DC: Um-hmm.

WT: It was—they were a little bit different, you know, kind of—. So, some woman accused him of rape, you know.

DC: A white woman?

WT: An African American woman. No, if it had been a white woman, it—[laughs].

DC: Yeah.

WT: And so, it became a family problem. You know, I mean, we spent a lot of time kind of educating him and his wife. She was pregnant at the time, you know, herself. And, you know,

what—kind of how things work or, you know, what-have-you. So, we did a variety of those kinds of things.

And it was a completely—it had been a big movement at the time of Tent City. You know, there were no more tents. As I say, some Movement people, I think maybe the Community Church or others, were building houses slowly, because the Haneys stayed in a house that had been given to a woman who had been evicted. So, it was a little bit—you know, extra bedroom and indoor plumbing, you know, and what-have-you. And I stayed in a house that was incomplete, you know, no interior walls.

DC: But it was being built for someone.

WT: But it was being built, yeah. You know, I mean, they weren't the only two. So, the Movement had kind of died down, so it was a matter of registration. We had a couple of days, you know, trying to get a lot of people to go down to register. And it was a process in Tennessee, you know. You had to read the Constitution or whatever the clerk wanted you to read. You know, I mean, it was—there was no violence. There was no violence at the courthouse. But it was just a dragged-out procedure, you know.

DC: I was going to ask: The clerks made—did they make that difficult?

WT: Yeah. In other words, it was like a two-hour or three-hour—it could be anything. They'd make each individual—you had to go in there, and reading was a—so, if you couldn't read, you know, if you had difficulty reading, you know, you had all these kinds of problems. So, it was slow-moving.

DC: Right.

WT: They thwarted it by slow moving.

DC: Right. And did you encounter resistance by African Americans that you were trying to encourage to enroll?

WT: Well, you know, people don't go. [Laughs] You know, only the brave go.

DC: Right.

WT: So, in that sense, but there was no resistance, you know. There was no opposition, you know, in the sense that, "Don't do it. We can't do it." But they just didn't go. So, you got who wanted to go, you know, who you could get to go. If the minister was sympathetic, you'd get some people, you know, and you spoke in his church. If he let you speak in his church, you could get some people to go.

And then, you would have to take them down. Or, as I say, we had one or two days. I think we had a march around a courthouse square we organized, you know, in Summerville. That was the county seat, Summerville, Tennessee.

DC: And what was the white resistance or white response?

WT: Well, you know, you don't encounter it too much, because you're in the black community exclusively, virtually exclusively. As I say, I was driving back from Summerville once. It wasn't that far from McFerrin's store. I was staying near the store. You know, and I got waylaid by—I was alone in the car, [0:30:00] you know, so somebody in front of me stopped on the road, came back, and tried to beat me up, you know, and what-have-you. But other than that, you know, it wasn't prevalent. You know, I mean, it wasn't like—

DC: Yeah. Can you tell me a little bit more about that experience?

WT: [Laughing] You try to get away as best you can!

DC: Yeah, yeah.

WT: You know what I mean? It was just one-on-one.

DC: Okay.

WT: So, you know, I was able to get away. It wasn't like a gang. You know, if it had been a gang, I would have been in big trouble. But it was just one guy, you know. It was sort of like road rage, you know what I mean?

DC: Um-hmm.

WT: It wasn't like organized. I'm sure there were organized Klan members. But, you know, in Fayette County, the worst had been seen in the Tent City. You know, there were beatings and shootings and drive-by shootings into the tents, you know, back when the Tent City—so, this was sort of like the continuation and it wasn't as dramatic. As I say, the tents were gone. You know, housing had been replaced. And McFerrin—I mean, Redfearn, the white guy, had run once or twice for sheriff, you know.

DC: Okay, so there had already been a little bit of—

WT: So, you know, he was courting—you know, the word would go around, you know, "Vote for Redfearn," you know, those that could vote, you know, what-have-you. So, as I say, but it was like eighty-five or ninety percent African American, the population, you know, in both counties, Fayette and Haywood, you know, that sort of thing.

DC: But still somehow the—well, not somehow, but it's pretty obvious when someone comes in from out of town, and so people knew who you were.

WT: Right. There were three of us came, you know, and there hadn't been anybody in a while, you know, what-have-you, because the thing had kind of petered out. As I say, there was some self-help project in Haywood County, the next county over, to make these leather book bags and sell them by mail, you know, but it wasn't going anywhere. And so, things had kind of, you know, slowed down. So, three new people show up. You know, it starts it all over again.

DC: Right, right.

WT: So,

DC: Hmm, okay. So, from there to Atlanta.

WT: So, I got to Atlanta in—[sighs] I ended up working with Julian Bond in what was called the Communications Office. In those days we would put out a news release or a packet of news releases every three days. So, three times a week, you know, you could send five pieces of paper for a stamp, one stamp, first-class mail. I think Carl Braden had given Julian a press list, you know, so the African American press and the white left press and the liberal press, you know.

So, we would do these releases about incidents, you know, when somebody got beat up or what-have-you, some incident. And we would write letters for John Lewis, you know, outraged letters that we could quote in the release. You know, I mean, condemning the Justice Department for not acting or the FBI, you know, I mean, we would kind of write a letter for John to send that would have a quote that we could pull out and use in the press release about—

And, you know, Julian was like one of the early scientific PR guys, you know, kind of understood the PR, you know, and what-have-you. And he had worked for the *Atlanta Voice*. He had started his career with some black upstart newspaper in Atlanta, and sensationalism, you know, [laughs] was the order of the day.

And so, we were looking for those things, and we did some—you know, we found at the time, Byron De La Beckwith was being tried for the murder of Medgar Evers, the federal government was buying land from him to build a post office in Greenwood. You know, we found—we had a clipping service, so we made a stink over that, you know.

And we also had a WATS line. We were one of the first. It's an 800 line. I don't know if you remember—

DC: [Laughs] Yeah, yeah.

WT: [Laughs] Technology. So, there were—people were coming to Jackson or to someplace, you know, and it was a segregated audience. So, there was supposed to be *Bonanza*. I don't know if you remember *Bonanza* was a big TV, Western TV show, you know, Lorne Greene, and they had some sort of a side business doing these shows, you know, [0:35:00] the Bonanza cast or some of the Bonanza cast, whatever they did. I never saw the show.

So, they were booked to be in Jackson. And we contacted them on the WATS, we tracked them down at the city before. That's what we did. We would call them, you know, we'd try and get from their agent what the tour was. And so, we would reach them before they got to Jackson. And actually we got the *Bonanza* people to cancel. They wouldn't appear before a segregated audience. Blacks could buy tickets, but they sat upstairs.

DC: Right.

WT: You know, it was a segregated audience.

DC: Right.

WT: So, they wouldn't appear before a segregated audience. And that was a big, big stink, you know, because that was the highpoint of the *Bonanza*, the TV show. You know, television was coming into its own.

DC: So, you publicized that.

WT: So, we did things like that. No, we'd get them to cancel. So, you know, we had a couple of guys who wouldn't cancel. I remember we went after some pianist. He was a foreign guy. I don't know what his name was. We got him in Kansas City, but—we would call each

hotel, "Okay, do you have so-and-so registered?" You know, "Do you have so-and-so registered?" And so, finally, we got the hotel where he was registered and we called him, you know, and he wouldn't do anything. But the *Bonanza* people did.

So, and then, we published—we had the *Student Voice* was like a four-page newsletter that came out. I don't know how often it came out. But that was for Friends of SNCC. I mean, that was a big mailing. You know, and we had these old Addressograph, used these mimeograph stencils, you know, you had to type the stencils. That was like typing an old mimeograph stencil. I don't know if you remember that technology.

DC: Yeah, yeah.

WT: Well, we had to type the stencils and mimeograph the press releases, you know, and fold them and stuff the envelopes. We did all that stuff. But the *Student Voice* was an operation just to mail it, because several thousand—the list was always growing. If you wanted it to get on it, it was, you know, you got it for free. And it went mainly to northern Friends of SNCC, you know, people, you know, as a way of keeping the Movement informed.

DC: Can I ask you just to describe the office?

JB: [36:17]

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: We're back.

DC: I want to ask you just to describe—because you're talking about all this activity—describe the office physically and how many people were there and what it felt like to be a part of that.

WT: It was like—it was on 3½ Hunter Street. [Laughs] It was above a barbershop, you know. We had one, two, three, four—seven rooms with a hall in the middle. And the first room

in the front of the building was a tiny—that's where Julian's office was, you know, so we had three or four of us with four typewriters, you know.

In those days, you know, that was the introduction of the Selectric typewriters. I don't know if you—we were working with manual typewriters. When I started, we were working with manual typewriters. Type a mimeograph stencil with a, you know, an impression. But then the Selectric came in, and you could fool with typefaces, you know, because you could change the balls, you know.

DC: Right. That was a big deal. [Laughs]

WT: That was a big deal, right. [Laughs] That was a major—spruce it up, you know. You did the headline in one type, one ball, and the body, you know. And you could italicize. You had a ball for italics. So, it was a tiny office, four of us, Bob Weil, Mike Sayer, myself, Julian, you know, in that office. And then, there was a little room outside that office. And then, the next room down was Dinky Romilly, who was kind of Forman's secretary. And the back room was an even smaller room where Forman had his office. And the other side was the bookkeeper in her office. And then there was a larger room, and then, the front office was Ruby Doris Robinson, was her office. She was kind of coordinating the campus field people. So, we would—we had the machine, Addressograph machine and the folding machine in the big room, you know, and so, when we did the *Voice*—

And then, at one point, we took the building next door. We had a guy come down that said, you know, "Why mimeograph if we could offset?" AB Dick had started to make desktop offset machines. And they made a 360, which was like a—it was a floor machine, but it was, you know, akin to a big mimeograph. So, his name was Mark Zuckle. He came down, and we bought

an AB Dick 360. [0:40:00] So, in the building next door we did our own printing. You know, eventually we went to the offset. We gave up the mimeograph, you know, mimeograph thing.

And so, that was the facility. And then, there was a little room next to where we had the printing press where we stored, you know, SNCC made a record. I mean, the Freedom Singers, you know, we pressed a record. Pete Seeger, you know, got them to press a record they were going to sell as a fundraiser. But it sat there, stacks of them, piles of them sat there, because I think Mercury signed them, the group, you know, to a contract. You know, it was a better deal.

So, I have a copy somewhere. I don't know where it is. But that was destroyed, that pressing that was done by SNCC was kind of destroyed. And then, there were posters. Danny Lyon, you know, the photographer, would do these. So, a lot of the posters were there. Of course, they were fundraising tools, you know, they were being sold.

DC: Yeah. I remember an album called *Freedom in the Air* that was on the SNCC record label.

WT: Well, that's it.

DC: Is that it? Okay, I've seen that.

WT: Yeah.

DC: And it had outtakes of Sherrod lecturing. It had Freedom Singers. There were a lot of Southwest Georgia things on it.

WT: Yeah. Well, the group was mainly, you know, Southwest Georgia. Bertha Reynolds and Bernice Reagon and Cordell and Chuck Nesbitt.

DC: And Rutha Harris, yeah, yeah.

WT: And, you know, a lot of them were—the original—there was another woman, Rutha Harris.

DC: Yeah.

WT: You know, she was Southwest Georgia.

DC: Still going strong.

WT: Right, right. So, they are—yeah, so I think that's a record that never got distributed.

DC: Okay.

WT: You know, they may be around somewhere. But because they signed, you know—Mercury, I think, was the label that put them out. And they put out a couple of records on Mercury, you know, and so forth.

DC: Interesting.

WT: I think Pete Seeger recorded that—what was that record *Freedom in the Air*.

DC: Well, the Carawans were part of it and Lomax was part of it, too.

WT: Actually, no. That was one was—it has a picture—?

DC: Is it a different one?

WT: That has a cover of them praying, the four of them praying?

DC: I can't remember if it's that or—

WT: The record jacket? I think that is.

DC: Yeah, probably.

WT: No, that's the second one. No, this one, the one I'm talking about, never got—Pete Seeger recorded it. It never got—there was no jacket.

DC: Okay.

WT: They hadn't designed a jacket when they signed. So, it was like in white—

DC: Oh, right, just in a sleeve.

WT: CDs used to come in sleeves, right. I may have a copy somewhere, but—

DC: Well, yeah, [laughs] I was going to say, if you could find it, I'm sure the Library of Congress would love to have a copy of that. That's fascinating.

WT: [Laughs] Well, they may have a copy. But I'm just saying—

JB: It would be nice to [42:50]

WT: Maybe we can look after we finish.

DC: That's great!

WT: So, that's what I kind of did when I got there, through that year, you know.

DC: So, you were there for a year?

WT: Well, no, I was there until—that was fall of '63. In the spring of '64 at the big staff meeting, Ella Baker and Bob Moses came to me and asked me if I would go to Washington to work on the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party challenge. What had happened was, is that the summer project, you know, that year was when the summer project was hatched, you know, and everything, and Moses had been in Washington.

Part of the summer project was to send to the Democratic national convention in Atlantic City in August of '64 an integrated delegation. In those years, from the southern states only white delegations came to the Democratic Party national convention. So, part of the summer project was to organize a delegation under the rules of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, you know, to send an integrated delegation to Atlantic City. And so, the idea was to mimic, you know, to mirror the procedures. In other words, to try and go to the Democratic Party meeting, they would be expelled, and they would hold their own meeting.

And, as I remember, there were like precinct meetings, which were largely sometimes in people's homes, businesses. There were county meetings, and then, there was a state convention. So, if they could find out where the precinct meeting is, they would try and go to a precinct

meeting. They wouldn't be permitted to go in, so they would hold their own precinct meeting, elect delegates to go to the county meeting. [0:45:00] They would try to go to the county meeting, get turned away, and hold their own county meeting. And then, they held a state convention.

So, this was part of, and the people that went, the Freedom Summer, you know, that was part of freedom schools. But the Freedom Democratic Party, and they had some freedom vote, you know, during that spring as a test. I forget what the vote was over. They were trying to demonstrate that African Americans wanted to vote, you know, that they would vote, you know. I forget what the freedom vote was over.

But anyway, Moses was in Washington in February and he was speaking at a fundraiser and outlining what the summer project was going to be. And when he talked about this challenge at the Democratic national convention, a guy in the audience who was named Joe Rauh, who was—if he wasn't head of the ADA, Americans for Democratic Action, he was very prominent in it. He was a general counsel for the United Auto Workers. He was a D.C. attorney.

And he had been with Hubert Humphrey and the delegation from D.C. in 1948, when they first raised the question of segregation. You know, that's Humphrey's signature, you know, association with civil rights was that fight at the '48 convention. So, Rauh, you know, publicly said, "If you bring a delegation, you know, an integrated delegation from Mississippi, you know, we'll see that it gets seated," or some, you know.

So, that meant that we had—you know. So, the decision was made to open an office in Washington in the spring. And Ms. Baker and Moses asked me if I would go there and staff it. And the idea was to try and commit northern state Democratic Party delegations to support the

seating of a rival delegation from Mississippi, you know, an integrated delegation from Mississippi.

So, Ms. Baker was in charge of the office. She had moved from Atlanta to New York, but, you know, we kept in touch with her with telephone. She came down, you know, periodically. And a guy named Frank Smith, from Holly Springs, you know, he came up from Mississippi to work in the office. And a woman named Barbara Jones from—she was part of the summer project from, I think, she was from Queens. You know, she worked there, the three of us. And, you know, we visited—we attended state Democratic Party state conventions. We did mailings to delegates. We assembled a list as delegates were chosen. You know, we were on top of the process.

And we visited, for instance, I remember Ms. Baker insisted we go see Adam Clayton Powell, you know. She had known him from Harlem in the thirties, you know. And she told us, "You're not going to get anywhere, but [laughs] we've got to go see him." So, we all went to see Adam Clayton Powell with her, you know. She got us the appointment.

DC: What kind of response did you get?

WT: Oh, he came in, "Oh, Ms. Baker! How good it is—," you know, like a—but she was right. He didn't do anything. [Laughs] Because I remember I saw him in Atlantic City, you know. The New York delegation had a caucus meeting at the hotel where they were staying, and we were looking for help, you know. But anyway, no, he was tied to Lyndon Johnson, you know. But we did that sort of thing. So, I went to—I think I attended the Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan conventions, state conventions of the Democratic Party.

DC: Okay. Why were you based in D.C.? Was that just for lobbying?

WT: Well, yeah, because the Democratic National Committee was there, and the Democratic National Committee was organizing the convention. They just thought that—I mean, rightly or wrongly, they thought that they should be in D.C. So, I was—we went to D.C. And I opened the office. It was on 14th and U Street, you know.

And it was, you know, there were people like Kastenmeier. He was a Congressman from Madison, Wisconsin. He proved out to be very helpful.

DC: How was that—total aside, but what was that neighborhood like, 14th and U, at that time?

WT: It was like the commercial strip of the African American community. Now, it's—I was there not too long ago. [Laughs] Hard to recognize. But it was like kind of a little bit seedy—not really, but, you know, like a commercial strip in a poor neighborhood, you know.

DC: Yeah. That's the area that really burned after—that's the area that burned after King died, I think, right?

WT: Ah, maybe, you know, maybe. [0:50:00] But—

DC: And now it's a hipster area. [Laughs]

WT: Now, it's an up-and-coming area, yeah. Now, it's a booming area, booming. [Laughs]

DC: Yeah, absolutely.

JB: [50:12]

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: We're back.

WT: So, that was our plan. That was the plan. And, you know, we were pretty good at doing it. As I said, we had resolutions out of the—well, Mondale was a power. Mondale had

taken Humphrey's seat, you know. No, Mondale was the attorney general of Minnesota, so he was the featured speaker at the Wisconsin, you know.

DC: Okay.

WT: And we had a table, you know, at the—you know, and there was a couple of students, you know, from—well, there was one student from Madison, and somebody had come over, her boyfriend or something, a friend, had come over from Minnesota—he was a graduate student at the University of Minnesota, you know—to man the table. And I remember Mondale cautioning me about him, you know. [DC laughs] He's too radical, you know.

But the conventions were supportive in those days, you know, all segregated delegation, so we had resolutions.

DC: So, they would pass resolutions in support?

WT: Yeah, absolutely, you'd pass resolutions. And, you know, in Michigan, the power in the convention was a woman that she was a Democratic national committeewoman and she was an aide to Walter Reuther. She was—kind of ran the convention. Millie Jeffrey was her name. You know, we got a strong resolution out of Michigan.

And we had a guy, a former Congressman in Oregon, was helping us, you know. And we were looking—strategy was Rauh kind of knew, you know, he wouldn't work directly with us, but he would work with Bob Moses. Actually, we went to New York. We talked to A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin. And they, you know, I think Bayard had been asked to do the job that I got. He didn't want to do it. [Laughs]

DC: [Laughs] Okay.

WT: So, but—

DC: But you talked to them for advice?

WT: Yeah, we had a meeting in A. Philip Randolph's office. And Bayard was there, Mrs. Baker was there, Frank Smith was there, I was there, you know, and telling them what we were doing and what the strategy was. The strategy was to—in order to get it onto the floor of the convention, you needed a minority report of the committee. The rules require that you have ten percent of the delegates of the Credentials Committee sign a minority report, you know. And then, you had to have so many delegations vote, you know, to have a—so we were trying to get delegates as they were chosen to the Credentials Committee and we were trying to get the delegations to agree that we would have a roll-call vote. In other words, to get a minority report, you needed ten percent of the delegates of the Credentials Committee. But to get a roll-call vote on either the minority or the majority report, you know, you needed ten delegations to vote to ask for it.

DC: Yeah.

WT: You know, so that was our strategy. We had to get a roll-call vote, and we also wanted a minority, because the minority report is voted on first. And if you had a roll-call vote on the minority report, you know, we were in good shape. [Laughs] We thought. So, and the Credentials Committee delegates were chosen differently. You know, some delegates at the convention were chosen at state party conventions. Some were chosen in the balloting for the primary. So, in Oregon, for instance, Wayne Morse was the leading vote-getter, and he had his choice. Under the rules in Oregon, he had his choice. He wanted to be on resolutions, you know, because he was concerned about the war, you know, what-have-you.

So, Edith Green became—she was a congresswoman. She became—she took the position on the Credentials Committee. And she was a strong—she stayed with us to the very end,

virtually. She turned out to be a very strong supporter, you know, because of Mrs. Hamer, you know, her testimony.

Kastenmeier was on the Credentials Committee. You know, we asked him to get on. You know, that was one of the things we did in Washington.

DC: Oh, okay. Yeah.

WT: So, we were interested in who was going to be on the Credentials Committee. And could we get the delegates of a state contingent to vote to ask for a roll-call vote.

DC: The planning of this operation is really impressive. I mean, there was a lot that went into it.

WT: Well, yeah, because at the same time, you know, we weren't involved, [0:55:00] although they were heading up towards the state convention. Ms. Baker became—Dr. King wouldn't keynote the state convention, you know, in the middle of Mississippi summer, you know, so Ms. Baker was the keynote. That's a famous speech that she made, you know. It's an important speech.

But, you know, so we were using the parents of the kids in Mississippi, you know, to pressure people. It was all kind of what we were doing. Whatever the constituency was, we were trying to involve them in this thing. And at the same time, you had the freedom schools, you had the Schwerner, Goodman, Chaney thing.

DC: So much going on, right?

WT: Everything was going on. And we had to find housing for the delegates. That was our job. We rented a hotel in Atlantic City. Reggie Robinson came up, you know, to help us towards the end, and we sent him to Atlantic City. He found this small hotel, a hundred rooms, but they would rent the whole thing to us. [Laughs] So, we had all that to do.

DC: How many delegates?

WT: There were like sixty-eight. You know, Ed King and Aaron Henry were the co-chairs. Ed King was a—he was, I think, a theological guy, a reverend. He was a reverend, but he taught at Tougaloo College. And Aaron Henry was the president of the state NAACP. You know, and we had Mrs. Hamer, Mrs. Devine, and Victoria Gray, the three grand women of the Mississippi Movement.

JB: Let's pause.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: We're back.

DC: Okay. And what was it like working with them?

WT: Well, I didn't have much contact with them, you know, Mrs. Hamer more than the others, you know, but they were in the delegation. And I don't know if you want to—so, we did what we could. Like I said, I attended those three conventions. We were mailing to delegates. You know, we were dealing with parents, trying to get parents involved, you know, when their kids were in Mississippi, in terms of pressuring, you know, back home.

DC: Right.

WT: In Atlantic City, the Credentials Committee—the convention opened on Monday night. And so, the committees met, you know, before the convention. And the Credentials Committee met on Saturday and Sunday. And Lyndon Johnson was the presumed nominee. You know, there was no—nothing going to happen at the convention, you know, other than who was going to be the vice-president.

DC: Right.

WT: That was the only question. So, there was no news, you know. So, this challenge—

DC: Except this, [laughs] yeah.

WT: Except—and it became news, because they had a hearing and it was televised. You know, there was kind of a slow, you know. And Mrs. Hamer just had a lot of the women on—the Credentials Committee was half men, half women, that was way it was—and so, she told about being beaten and jailed in Winona, Mississippi. And she had half of the women there crying, you know. And Johnson broke in, you know, broke into the TV by calling a press—he went into the pressroom in the White House. And, of course, they cut away. He had nothing—I don't know what he was talking about, nothing, but they cut away—

DC: Purposefully to draw away—

WT: Yeah, to cut the TV away. It was kind of an early indication of how powerful TV was. But Mrs. Green was moved by that, so that kind of put her, you know, in our camp. So, we needed like ten percent, like eleven signers on the report, you know, the minority report. I don't know if you want to go into all the machinations of what happened. [Laughs]

JB: It's fascinating. It's absolutely fascinating.

WT: Well, let's see. So, you know, the delegates had come up, you know, an integrated—it wasn't well-integrated, but it was integrated. There was two or three whites in the delegation. The Mississippians, they sent what we called the "no-name delegation," because they didn't want anybody—Eastland or Stennis or the governor, Ross (Barnett)—you know, to be in the delegation, where they would normally be in the delegations. But they sent absolutely [laughs], you know, nobodies, you know.

DC: And what was the reason for them not to put these—?

WT: Well, because, you know, if you put Eastland or Ross Barnett as chairman of the delegation, it's going to draw [1:00:00] attention. You know, and that was the strategy: not to draw attention to it, you know. You had these two rival delegations claiming the seats.

DC: Right.

WT: You know, and you had the Goldwater phenomenon. Everybody was worried about Goldwater was going to nuke, you know, and what-have-you. So, Mrs. Green's strategy was to give a loyalty oath to everybody. If you wouldn't sign a loyalty oath, you know, you couldn't be a delegate.

DC: Okay.

WT: What happened was, actually, [laughs] the white delegation, they went back and they worked for Goldwater. You know, Goldwater carried Mississippi in '64. So, it was kind of—you know, looking back on it, you know, you see a fool, because they had no intention of supporting Johnson and Humphrey.

DC: Anyway, yeah.

WT: You know, what-have-you. But so, they had the hearing. And, you know, we had a brief. Rauh wrote a brief, you know, about—a legal brief. You know, and we had five thousand copies printed. Everybody got a copy on the Credentials Committee. The Mississippians, they wouldn't distribute their brief, you know. [Laughs] They had a brief. And, you know, they barely said very much, you know. They were counting on Johnson, you know, and Humphrey.

So, as I say, the initial response was all in favor of the Freedom Democrats, you know, to seat the Freedom Democrats. And the delegates, you know, you can imagine, all the northern and western—nobody, you know, at that time—everybody was against segregation and what-have-

you. But, you know, Humphrey and Reuther came to town, you know, and started twisting arms and—

DC: So, did individual delegates from other states reach out to you? Do you remember that level of support?

WT: Oh, we had a lot of support. There was a—like there was a twenty-four-hour vigil on the boardwalk, where delegates were coming. And delegates gave us their badges.

DC: Okay.

WT: See, you couldn't get into the hall without a delegate's or observer badge. And what happened was, is that the Mississippians went home, the whites went home, you know, after the hearing.

DC: Oh, they did?

WT: They didn't stay there. So, the seats were empty. You know, and then, when the final—the final affront was that the Freedom Democrats could get two seats in the balcony, you know.

DC: As observers.

WT: As observers. And they wanted to pick Ed King and Aaron Henry, you know, as the—not even let the delegates choose who they would. So, they had a sit-in in the seats. They got delegates to give up their badges, you know.

DC: So they could get into the hall?

WT: So they could get into the hall. And, you know, that's—Dan Rather got roughed up. You know, I mean, that's famous kind of footage there. So, yeah, the delegates were supportive. But it was a controlled situation by Johnson, although he wasn't there—the White House, you know, using Humphrey and Reuther. Humphrey was held out, dangled, as his nomination was in

jeopardy if this didn't get—you know, if the South bolted, you know, that sort of thing. And so, they twisted arms in meetings, you know.

And they had the timing. You know, they dropped the compromise, what was the so-called compromise, at the last minute, you know, and then they spread the word, you know, that it had been accepted. You know, I think maybe Henry and King in a meeting, Ed King, not—even Dr. King accepted it. But, you know, in a meeting with Reuther and Humphrey, they said they would accept it. So, the word went out. So, kind of the steam went out of the delegates. It was hard—we were at a loss, in terms of communication, you know, with the broad delegate. You know, we didn't have any operation that—

DC: Can you describe the compromise?

WT: The compromise was that the Freedom Democrats would get two seats as observers in the balcony, that would be Ed King and Aaron Henry, and there would be something about the '72 convention—no, the '68 convention. Actually, if you remember, in '68, Julian was a delegate from Georgia, I mean, Chicago.

DC: Right.

WT: That was a result of the ruckus in '64.

DC: This pressure, yeah.

WT: You know, they would look at the rules or what-have-you. So, it kind of ended all-white delegations to the Democratic national convention.

But there was—it was a major Rubicon for the Movement, especially the SNCC Movement, you know, the SNCC people, in terms of trying [1:05:00] to force the delegation to accept that compromise. You know, they wanted the delegation to vote to accept that

compromise. And they wouldn't do it. You know, so we had a meeting in a church that morning and we had all the luminaries of the Civil Rights Movement.

Most of them came to try to convince the delegates to accept it: Bayard, and Dr. King, and Jack Pratt of the National Council of Churches, and James Farmer, and, you know, Wayne Morse. You know, they all had their arguments, you know, what-have-you. And some of the SNCC people got their, kind of, first taste of Democratic Party politics, you know, in terms of when you kind of rub up against the essence of the Democratic Party, you know, what the resistance is.

DC: So, what were some of the arguments coming from these luminaries to accept the compromise?

WT: Well, Wayne Morse's argument, I think, was Goldwater. You know, if we don't do this, if we force them to walk out, the other—you know, they'll help Goldwater. You could say that was an honest—I mean, it was an honest concern. In retrospect, you know, when you look at the results of the election, [laughs] it was—you know, Johnson won in a landslide, you know. Looking back at the whole thing, you know, Johnson didn't carry those—he won the popular vote in a landslide—he didn't carry the southern states anyway. So, you know, if they had forced them out, it really would have—but that was the argument.

Others argued, you know, "This is a great deal," you know, and "We shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth," you know, and that sort of thing.

So, you know, people kind of were affronted. You know, young SNCC people were kind of affronted. And everybody was there, you know, I mean, and even a lot of the summer volunteers had come there from—this is the end of the summer for them. So, if you had worked on the Freedom Democratic Party, as I say, the precinct, the county, and the state convention—

the state convention was a big deal in Mississippi and that summer. You know, because it was a chance for everybody to get together. They had delegates from all the counties, all the Delta counties, at least. You know, I mean, Ms. Baker was a speaker. You know, they were trying to hoopla, you know, kind of make it like a state convention. So, a lot of the volunteers had worked either on freedom schools or helped this—whatever you did, you know, you knew what was going on with the Freedom Democratic Party convention, you know, Atlantic City convention. So, a lot of youngsters went back, but a lot of kids came to Atlantic City on their own, you know. And they saw—

DC: So, there was a lot of energy there.

WT: Yeah, and they saw the attempt to force the compromise, you know, down their throats. And so, it led to a lot of disillusionment, you know, kind of. And it led, you know, to a kind of red-baiting. You know, there was a famous Evans and Novak article that appeared shortly thereafter, you know, kind of red-baiting SNCC, because of this, you know, it was a threat to the Democratic—they didn't put it as a threat to the Democratic Party, but clearly it, you know, they saw it as a threat to the Democratic Party and uncompromising. So, that kind of opened up a can of worms, with the red-baiting, you know, Evans and Novak, they were—Novak was a red-bait, you know, kind of thing. But that was a syndicated column at the time, you know.

DC: Right.

WT: So, that was—that challenge led to the challenge in [laughs] in '65 of the seating of the three Congressional Democrats from the Mississippi Delta, Jamie Whitten and two others. You know, they actually—they were actually forced to stand aside. [Clears throat] I didn't work

on it, I mean, I was tangentially connected to it, but they—I went back to Washington and we wrapped it up, you know, whatever we had to do.

And the people that worked on the Congressional challenge, [1:10:00] they took over from there. There were a lot of lawyers, Kinoy, Kunstler. You know, Ms. Baker, I think, was involved, John Conyers, Elizabeth Holtzman. They actually got the House to force the three—you know, the House is sworn at the first day of the new session. So, if you object to somebody being sworn in, they can't take the oath. So, they objected to the three of them on the basis that it was unrepresentative, you know. And so, Tip O'Neill didn't want to do it, but he forced them to stand aside.

They were kind of incumbents, so they continued to do what they were doing, but they hadn't actually been sworn in and there was a commission or a hearing. They actually got a chance to have some hearings. So, the Congressional challenge, you know, had some substance to it, and it took a while for it to play out into the next spring before they were finally resolved and they were sworn. You know, not that they weren't functioning as congressmen. They weren't voting, but they were functioning as staff and office, you know, that sort of thing.

DC: Right. Yeah, I was going to ask if there was—because you talk about disillusionment, but I also imagine that there was some momentum coming out of the MFDP fight. So, this is one thing. But were there other ways in which sort of where the getting stirred up played out?

WT: Well, I think people turned their attention to Alabama. You know, I'd say that it wasn't—I think it was more disillusioning than energizing.

DC: Okay.

WT: I'd say—you know, historians may, may—you know, you had the beginnings of kind of a bickering built into the situation, those that kind of are close to the Democratic Party—

DC: Power structure.

WT: Yeah, and those that weren't, you know, kind of—and people kind of gave up. I mean, if you saw it as the Demo—what-have-you, you know, you kind of went off. You had Black Power, you know, kind of beginning.

DC: So, you see that as kind of a—?

WT: I don't know whether it's historically valid, but I'd say, you know, it's a—with the red-baiting and what-have-you, it's something to think about. You have to look at it more, the history of it. But the year after the challenge, in Mississippi, you know, the congressional challenge kept on and what-have-you. Moses left there. You know, his attention turned to Alabama. You know, Stokely in Lowndes County in the next year, you know, kind of—that must have been '64, '65, you know.

DC: So, it was a turning point [1:13:00].

WT: It was a—yeah, because, you know, you look back at it from this vantage point, and you say, "My goodness!" [Laughs] "What tragedy would have been created had you, you know, found some formula. You know, if you had the white delegation under your thumb, which they did, you know, by and large, they could have found some kind of way. They didn't have to seat them in the same area. They could have found—to kind of force this, and they really had to force it down. If you look at Taylor Branch's book, I think he has it.

You know, I think I gave an interview to Anne Romaine about some of the machinations. But, you know, I was in a room with King, you know, a bunch of us were in a room, in his hotel room, you know, at the time. But the underhandedness, you know, and the arm-twisting. [Sighs]

Rauh, who said, "I'll be with you when nobody's with you," [laughs] you know, that's almost a direct quote. Publicly, "I'll be with you." You know, push came to shove, he said, "I can't sign that."

You know, Reuther told them, "Forget it. You made so much fun of the [laughs] UAW last year, you know, you won't get a penny," you know. And some woman, an African American woman, her husband was up for a judgeship in California. They told her, "Forget about it." So, when they put the head on, you know, the only people that stood were Kastenmeier and Edith Green. Everybody else, you know, they couldn't sign it. [Laughs]

DC: That's pretty eye-opening.

WT: Well, I mean, that wasn't generally known. But, I mean, you know, that was the kind of pressure that was put on the Credentials Committee people, who were regular people, some of which we didn't know and what-have-you. The pressure put on the delegates, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegates, [1:15:00] to accept a compromise, you know, what-have-you, was equally as, you know, as I say, every—I don't know if Wilkins was there at that meeting or no, but every significant person in civil rights that had been involved in Mississippi summer, you know, came to argue for that compromise, you know, kind of thing.

DC: Yeah.

WT: And as I say, Morse, you could say, "Well, he believed it," that Goldwater, you know, I mean, so there was some element of sincerity, you know, kind of. But the others, you know, they were—

DC: It was just politics.

WT: You know, they knew Humphrey, you know, they knew Reuthie, you know, Johnsie, you know, what-have-you. They knew more than we knew at the time, you know, what

the other side was saying and doing, you know, because they were confidants. So, that was more disillusioning, I'd say, you know, in terms of what could be achieved.

JB: Okay, let's pause.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: We're back.

DC: Really amazing story.

JB: It is.

DC: And what about your personal journey from there?

WT: Well, I went back to Atlanta.

DC: Let me—before you say that—just, for you personally, and for those in the office, what was the mood afterwards?

WT: [Laughs]

DC: I mean, you talked about disillusionment, but can you tell me a little bit more?

WT: Well, you know.

DC: You've been working on this for close to a year probably.

WT: No, I was just working on it from May, April or May, until August.

DC: Oh, that's—okay, so a few months.

WT: All of us, we—you know, even in Mississippi, I mean, the precinct meetings didn't start until that summer.

DC: Okay. Yeah, right.

WT: You know, I mean, they were—you know, you were getting a delegation. You know, the Democratic Party has its own rules. I mean, each state has its own rules, so—no, they—so, we were working, it was like a three or four-month project.

DC: Months, yeah.

WT: And, you know, depending on how into it you were in the Democratic Party, and what you thought—you know, I mean, [laughs] I wasn't too into the Democratic Party, so it's kind of—the red-baiting thing, the Evans and Novak thing, kind of indicated that there was more coming, you know. And, you know, it was a more—it was a bigger thing.

But Frank Smith, he stayed in Washington and became a—he was elected to city council. I think he heads a nonprofit now. You know, he became prominent in Washington, you know. Barbara Jones, I think she must have gone back to New York City. I'm not—I met her at some function for Ella Baker, and I don't know what she was doing, you know, what she ended up eventually doing. And Ms. Baker went to back Reggie Robinson, went on—you know, I mean.

So, it was like it was expected. You know, you kind of expected it. You know, I mean, I think most, when people thought about it, they kind of, you know—well, it wasn't unexpected, you know, I mean, that they would do, you know, do this, you know, put the clamps on.

DC: Right. It's kind of like a political campaign in some ways. You put your all into it and then you move on.

WT: Yeah, right. And the other thing is that, you know, you're kind of proud of the rank and file Freedom Democrats, that they stood up to it and that they voted. You know, it didn't make—there was no big deal. And for Aaron Henry and Ed King, it was a big deal to be recognized by, you know, the powers—you know, Johnson, Humphrey, you know, what-have-you. But for Hart—

DC: Um-hmm. And I can imagine seeing the support from delegates from other states [phone rings]—

WT: For Hartman Turnbow and Mrs. Devine and Fannie Lou Hamer and [phone rings], you know, it wasn't, it wasn't a big deal. You know what I mean?

DC: Yeah.

WT: The rank and file delegates [phone rings] that had been elected, a lot of them were freedom fighters, you know, [phone rings] in their own little community, you know, what-have-you. They got Amzie Moore or—

DC: Sure.

WT: I don't remember if he was a delegate or not, but—

DC: But to even get to go—

WT: No, they got to go, but I'm just saying that they stood up. They understood, you know, that two seats didn't mean anything. You know, I mean, they kind of saw the compromise as—it wasn't, you know, *anything!*

DC: Sure, sure.

WT: You know, it wasn't related to the real issues. So, you kind of had to take heart that their understanding, you know, was that good that they didn't fall for it. And—

DC: Right, right.

WT: And lived to go on to the next. So, that was kind of what we thought, although I don't think we ever had a meeting, you know, afterwards. [Laughs] We all—we all kind of went on. You know, you went on to the next thing. That was the Movement days, you know. You went on to the next big thing or the next small thing or the next thing that you were interested in. And so—[1:20:00]

DC: And not a lot of time to sit around and lick your wounds.

WT: The people that were interested in the Freedom Democrats in Mississippi, Lawrence Guyot, you know, they went back, I mean, they tried to work with the Freedom—[cellphone tone plays in background] you know, I mean, they had electoral ambitions and, you know, they paid attention to it. But for us, it was just the convention challenge, you know, and move on, you know. As I say, the Schwerner, Goodman, Chaney murders and the Freedom Schools and—you know, what's her name? Didn't Jane Stembridge get involved with some of the curriculum, you know?

DC: Um-hmm.

WT: You know, so people were on to other things and, as I said, they moved on. And there was kind of a feel, I mean, there was kind of a consensus, say, that it was a good thing that the compromise wasn't accepted. Democrats were who they, you know, turned out to be.

DC: Yeah.

WT: But, as I say, people moved on. That was the times, you know what I mean?

DC: Right.

WT: You didn't—unless you were involved in it, you know, had some connection to it or some outlook for it, like Guyot, you know, you did something else.

DC: And so, what did—how about for you?

WT: I went back and I got involved in trying to work with the labor movement, encourage the labor movement to get involved with the civil rights and try to stimulate some organizing in the South. And I organized one or two workshops, I forget, at Highlander, you know, where we had some—more than labor people and some, you know—but, I think, actually, first—actually, this may have been before.

I was involved with Carl Braden and Jim Williams in trying to found a white student organization, a white southern student organization, which eventually became SOC. So, SNCC kind of put up—Carl had a list of contacts, and SNCC kind of agreed, formally agreed to let me send out a letter. Or, you know, we had a meeting in Nashville with Sue Thrasher, I think, and that went on on their own to become SOC, Student Organizing Committee.

DC: Yeah, right. And was SNCC actively supporting this idea at that point of focusing on whites?

WT: Yeah. They had—

DC: Whites focusing on whites?

WT: Well, they had, originally, Zellner—you know, Bob Zellner and Stembridge and, at that time, there was a guy, Sam Shirah, you know, came onboard, was kind of traveling white campuses.

DC: Yeah.

WT: And so, there were an increasing number of white Southerners, and even some Northerners, that kind of saw the potential, you know, of the labor movement, in terms of its money and clout. So, I organized, as I say, one or two workshops at Highlander, you know. We had Jesse Prosten from the Packinghouse Workers. They were the Amalgamated Meat Cutters at the time. They had merged. The Packinghouse Workers was one of the leftwing CIO unions. He had been active, as I say, in that Tent City committee in Chicago. Bob Lewis, I think, was—came down. He was the general counsel for the United Electrical Workers. There was some teamster guy from—Tony Zivalich from Atlanta. He was a business agent in a big teamster local in Atlanta. Maybe some guys from the clothing workers, the ILW, ILGW, yeah, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, ILGWU. So, you know, there were a lot of—not a lot, but a

number of white, you know, and some black—I think James Orange ended up, you know, in a relationship with the union—that actually went to work.

So, towards the end of—into ’65, I left. I went to work for the UE [United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers], you know, not in the South, because they didn’t have any membership in the South. Actually, Kay and I, we had met at Highlander, and we both—

DC: That’s where you met?

WT: That’s where we met, at Highlander, yeah, one of those workshops, you know.

DC: Okay. And just for the record, can you tell the people out there who Kay is and—[laughs]?

WT: My wife. We’ve been married since 1967, so it’s a long, [laughs] [1:25:00] long, long time. She—her name was Kay [1:25:04] at the time. She was—she had come south to one of the Freedom Vote days in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, with the University of Illinois NAACP chapter. They had done some work in the Cairo, Illinois—that’s a famous, you know, in—

So, I don’t know how she got to Highlander. We met at Highlander and—yeah, she had worked in the—the Bradens got her involved, not the Bradens. Actually, she got involved in the Committee for Miners. It was called the Committee for Miners. There was a wildcat strike movement in eastern Kentucky, led by a UMWA guy named Berman Gibson. And in typical eastern Kentucky fare, you know, guys were charged with blowing up a bridge that was still standing, you know, [laughter] conspiracy to blow—you know, so there had been a—Paul O’Dwyer, he was kind of a labor attorney, city councilman, and—

DC: Paul O’Dwyer?

WT: Yeah, he was a progressive, genuine progressive guy. He was the brother of a not-so-progressive [laughs] mayor of New York City. But Stanley Aronowitz, Paul O’Dwyer, and

another guy whose name—he had a funny name, kind of Irish name—they formed a support committee for this rank and file movement in eastern Kentucky, and they hired Kay to go there to work with that movement.

And she went there and she produced a—it's unfortunate that—probably the Braden papers have copies of—she produced a newsletter. I remember the newsletter called "Miners for Justice," kind of, it's a record. So, she was working in eastern Kentucky when we had this workshop, and they got wind of it, and so she came. That's how we met. She was working, you know, in eastern Kentucky.

So, we left. We both went to work for UE. She went to work as a colonizer in Altoona, Pennsylvania, in a Sylvania. She *tried* to get in. And they sent me to Lynchburg, Virginia, to try and get into a General Electric plant. I got to observe a fairly prominent trial of a youngster whose name slips my—he was a rape case. William Kunstler and Philip Hirschkop were the attorneys. Some elderly woman had been raped, and all she could tell the police were that the guy had big ears. So, the police rounded up everybody in Lynchburg that had big ears. And this youngster had an alibi that, you know, was less than solid, so he was the one that was charged. Yeah, the rapist had approached her from behind and knocked off her glasses, so Hirschkop had to—Kunstler was sort of like the public face of the trial, and Hirschkop had the difficult task of cross examining her, you know.

But it came out in pretrial, you know, that the publisher of the *Lynchburg Times* had instructed the editor—they had a sentence, "William Kunstler, radical civil rights lawyer from New York City," something like that, you know. There was a standard sentence that he had to drop in every story the first time he mentioned Kunstler.

DC: As a radical.

WT: And he mentioned Kunstler in every story, you know. I noticed that, just parenthetically, that the Charlotte newspapers apologized for its characterization of Local 22 Tobacco Workers Union. It was a left-led union to try to organize tobacco workers in North Carolina. So, the Lynchburg newspaper needs to apologize [laughs] for this. I don't know—I forget what his name was. He was eventually acquitted, I mean, he wasn't acquitted. He was convicted, but they—it was eventually overturned, and he never went to jail. So, I got to observe that trial there in Lynchburg, but I never got into the plant. Eventually—

DC: Which plant, again, did you say?

WT: What?

DC: Which plant?

WT: The General Electric had a nonunion plant there in Lynchburg.

DC: Yeah. Okay.

WT: So, Kay didn't get into the plant at Altoona, or I think—but they had an election. They lost the election, you know, and they moved her to Pittsburgh, because that's where the district office was. And she kind of decided to [1:30:00] finish. She found out that she could finish her BA at the University of Pittsburgh.

DC: Okay.

WT: So, I was commuting. I was working in Detroit, you know, for the UE and going back and forth. So, eventually we decided to get married, and I moved back to Pittsburgh, and we spent about twenty years living in Pittsburgh.

DC: And continuing to do this kind of work or—?

WT: Yeah. We got involved in the—actually we got involved before in the anti-Vietnam War Movement, you know, the People's Assembly, Moses, and Staughton Lynd and Howard

Zinn, you know, what-have-you. There were some famous Washington peace demonstrations in the spring of '65, you know, that we were involved in. And then, when we got back to Pittsburgh, you know, there was big Antiwar Movement all over the place. Actually, the Committee to End the War in Vietnam, the national—I think they had a conference—they may have been founded at a conference in Pittsburgh that we helped to organize. You know, but Pittsburgh had a big Antiwar Movement.

DC: So, you got involved in that? What were you doing to support yourselves?

WT: Well, I was like, uh—when I left the UE, we both left together, you know, pretty much. So, we were living on Kay's subsidy from her family to go to school, you know. My family, you know, contributed. I was working—we had a little Peace and Freedom Center in Pittsburgh. I went to work for the Hospital Workers Union, 1199 in New York City. They were at that time thinking about expanding. They had organized in Johns Hopkins, and they were talking about Charleston. They had a campaign in Charleston, West Virginia.

DC: Right. Yeah.

WT: It wasn't as successful, but the one in Hopkins. So, I knew a guy that was working as a, you know, a housekeeping aide in a hospital, and he was interested. So, we hooked up with 1199, and they put me on the staff, you know, to work, to try that. Then eventually, Kay was also hired. The two of us were hired, and she stayed. At some point, they came to us and said, "We can't—we don't believe in men and women, you know, kind of couples on the—."

So, Kay stayed, and she organized a—Pennsylvania in 1969 passed a public employee bargaining law, which included community hospitals, nonprofit community hospitals, under the act. So, you could get an election. You could get recognition, you know, of your state labor board, you know. And it was before the national board, you know, did it. So, she organized quite

a few Jewish Home and Hospital—Scranton, you know, Lewistown, Washington. She organized quite a few workers there.

And I—I went to work for the Communist Party, you know, unpaid, because, you know, we had the one salary. And I joined the Party after the McGovern campaign, 1972.

DC: And worked for—?

WT: Yeah, I kind of was a—kind of worked, you know, unpaid, you know, from then on, you know, until we left Pittsburgh. And then, when we left, I worked and I ran the print shop where the newspaper, the *People's Weekly World*, was printed.

DC: Okay.

WT: You know, from 1990 to 1995, the plant was in Camden, New Jersey.

DC: Okay.

WT: So, I was—you know, I may have had—I did a stint with the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union, you know. I did a stint with the NEA affiliate. I was trying to organize the University of Pittsburgh faculty, you know, PSEA, Pennsylvania State Education Association. But basically, I was—you know, they were short. I actually got canned by the Amalgamated when they found out I was—[laughs] I was a member of the Party, but—

DC: [Laughs] I was going to ask.

WT: Yeah, you know—well, I was fired. I got a job at US Steel [1:35:00] and got canned, you know, because of that. So, you know, it—Kay's worked a decent job, so we've kind of made it on her one income for, you know, what-have-you.

DC: Um-hmm. And what other issues or interests have you had? I know we were talking sort of off-camera about—the movements are all related. And you talked a little about the Civil

Rights Movement, the Antiwar Movement, Labor Movement. Any other big issues for you or campaigns you're involved with?

WT: Now? [Laughs]

DC: Yeah, or over—yeah, at various times or now.

WT: Well, you know, [sighs] we were involved in 1968 to try and get [Martin Luther] King-[Benjamin]Spock to run for president and vice-president, you know. [Laughs] Actually, we petitioned—at that time, it was terrible. Pennsylvania had a huge number of signatures. You had to get them in the winter, the King-Spock, you know. But they wouldn't, you know, they didn't do it, so it was Dick Gregory. We got Dick Gregory and Mark Lane on the ballot in Pennsylvania.

DC: Okay.

WT: It was Peace and Freedom, or Freedom and Peace, you know. But there was a big, you know, New Politics conference in '67, yeah, you know, where that was put forward. And that was a memorable [laughs] cold, cold effort. But Gregory was a good candidate. He campaigned for us a couple of times. And he had that one-dollar bill with his picture on it that was the best campaign literature ever, you know, that the Secret Service seized from us, you know. [Laughter]

And, you know, I got involved in the Party. I was involved, you know, with some Party-initiated stuff around a shorter workweek. It was a bill that Conyers had in 1978 to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act to reduce the eight-hour day to seven and six hours, to raise the overtime penalty to double time-and-a-half, and ban compulsory overtime, as a way of stimulating employment. At that time, there was a recession, you know. We were involved in anti-Reagan efforts, you know, and what-have-you. So, one thing or another—Cuba, pro-Cuba,

Cuba solidarity work, we were involved in, you know. And some of the other—Chile, you know, at the time of the coup in Chile, we had a big effort in Pittsburgh.

DC: Yeah, I was going to ask about Central America.

WT: Yeah, Latin America, more in El Salvador and Nicaragua, you know. But Chile was in ’73, you know. You know, the coup was in ’73. And we actually had a guy, a friend of ours in Pittsburgh that had married a Chilean woman. He had been in Chile, and she had half her family were communists and the other half were reactionaries. So, the communists got them out of the country, you know. And they came to Pittsburgh, and somebody got him a job at Westinghouse Electric as a machinist. So, you know, we had a big movement against Pinochet at the time, in ’73.

And you know, all the wars, you know, Angola, the wars in Africa, you know, we were kind of involved. But they were big ideological battles in the Movement, you know, at the time. You know, whether Allende did the right thing or didn’t, what-have-you; you know, the Soviet Angolans; you know, they’re all big—Cubans and so forth. So, you know, we kind of—that’s what we’ve been doing.

So, when I went to, in 1990, to manage the plant that produced the paper, I largely spent my time, you know, kind of making that a profitable operation, you know, which we were able to do. You know, so now it’s gone, but I spent fifteen years, you know, 1990 to 1995. Kay was here, you know—

DC: 1980 to 1995?

WT: 1990—I mean, 1990 to 2005.

DC: 2005, okay.

WT: 2005. Actually, we left Pittsburgh in 1990. But Kay got a job here with organizing nurses in Paducah. She started with a campaign in Paducah at the Lourdes Hospital in Paducah. And then, she moved here because they tried to organize nurses here in Louisville, Audubon and some other hospitals.

DC: Right.

WT: So, either she commuted to New York or I commuted here. And then, that went on for like fifteen years, 1990—and then, in 2005, I retired and I moved here. She was born in Kentucky. She was born in Paducah, you know.

DC: Yeah, right. So, this is coming back, yeah.

WT: Her family was—she grew up [1:40:00] right across the river in Metropolis, Illinois. So, you know, her mother, who just died about a year ago, lived to be about a hundred and one, hundred and two.

DC: And this was—

WT: So, we stayed here because Kay was the closest daughter, you know.

DC: Yeah. And, of course, this is Braden territory, so there's some connection, I'm sure, there.

WT: Yeah, we knew the Bradens.

DC: Yeah.

WT: Well, we hadn't too much contact with the Bradens. Over the years, we had contact with them, you know. We had Anne speak in Pittsburgh once, you know. And when Carl died, you know, and what-have-you. But, yeah, they were—you know, it was largely because of Kay developed some roots here, doing all this organizing. And her mother, you know, she was the closest daughter, so we had a responsibility.

DC: Right, right. Well, we've covered a lot of great ground. [Speaking to JB] Do you have any questions you want to ask?

JB: No, I learned a lot.

DC: [Laughs] And is there anything that I didn't ask about that I should have asked about or anything else that you would like to say?

WT: I don't—if you don't ask, you know—

DC: [Laughs]

WT: You know what's relevant. I mean, you kind of have an idea what you—what's relevant.

DC: Well, you know the history. You lived it.

WT: Well, you know, I could give you more, like in terms of the Freedom Challenge. But I think that that history has been written about, you know.

DC: Um-hmm, somewhat, but this was really—this was really great to get that from the inside, yeah.

WT: Yeah. Well, I think, you know, what-have-you. But, as I say, my interpretation is—my interpretation, as I say, it could be challenged. It could be off. But it seems to me that people came up against the Democratic Party. Some illusions were stripped away at that moment, you know. And, you know, they've been re-created, [laughs] you know, but they're being stripped away now. I mean, you have a similar thing with Obama, you know, kind of the illusions and—

DC: And reality.

WT: And, you know, after five, six, seven years, you know, people kind of—but that was a moment in time. And when you look back at it, as I say, how ridiculous the issue was, you know, it looks like in retrospect, you know, it's not even segregation. You could say segregation

was ridiculous, you know, but it was kind of a system. You know, but, you know, this was the kind of a thing that—but, as I say, it was politics. They could not—they had some commitments.

I'd say, you know, it kind of played itself out, in terms of—you start with judgeships. If you looked at Eisenhower appointees, they were the civil rights judges: Minor Wisdom, you know, in New Orleans; Elbert Tuttle, chief judge of the Fifth Circuit; Frank Johnson, you know, in Alabama. They were the titans of save-the-system, you know, judicially, of the Fifth Circuit at that time.

Kennedy's appointees, you know, they were all, you know, Eastland-approved. They were terrible. You know, you have some judge in one case telling a lawyer, "Keep those pickaninnies, you know, from jumping," you know, right in court! And, you know, [laughs] if it hadn't been for Eisenhower's appointees, the system would have been in big trouble. They were the ones that saved, you know, the big rulings that, you know, that saved the kind of confidence in the system that the system could change and what-have-you. There was no Republican Party in the South, or if there was, it was African American, so Eisenhower didn't have to clear judicial appointees with, you know, Eastland. You know, he could make them!

So, you had these really fine jurists, you know, appointed. And, as I say, one way or the other, they saved the day. If it hadn't been for the Fifth Circuit, the system would have been in big, big, big, big trouble, you know.

JB: The Supreme Court, too.

WT: Well, the Supreme Court. But, you know, Johnson's appointee, what's his name? Who's the guy that was forced out? You know, the guy that got Johnson elected the first time, you know, that they forced out.

DC: Oh, yeah.

WT: But they weren't—Eisenhower, you know—but Frankfurter and Douglas, they weren't Eisenhower appointees. Were they Eisenhower appointees? I don't think they were.

JB: No, they weren't. Who was the chief justice that—?

WT: Warren, Warren!

JB: Warren! Yeah.

WT: But, as I say, the same kind of a situation. But, you know, you don't think about it on a local level, you know, [1:45:00] on a day-to-day basis.

DC: No, absolutely.

WT: Without those judges, you know, and aggressive lawyers, you know, the Lawyers Guild that were willing to, you know, use it, it would have been in big, big trouble. And eventually, you know, the court stepped in, in terms of the all-white delegations, you know, you couldn't have all-white primaries, you know, what-have-you.

DC: Right. No, there are some really interesting issues there. We were just talking about that, these local lawyers, these heroes at the local level all over the place.

WT: Yeah, Smith and Waltzer in New Orleans, you know, Ben Smith and Bruce Waltzer; and, you know, Len Holt; you know, and some lawyers in the North that, you know, Goodman and Crockett, you know, Judge Crockett, George Crockett; and a lot of people, you know, Kinoy, Kunstler. You know, they were all—it was like a split, you know, the more conservative—the more liberal lawyers and the more radical lawyers, you know, kind of.

DC: Right, exactly.

WT: You had that split in the room, you know, kind of. You had the split in terms of the congressional challenge, you know, whether you're going to force these guys out, you know, or whether you're going to compromise, you know, and that kind of thing. And so, "chilling effect,"

you know, that was Kinoy's—you know, but they had to get a judge to accept that. You know, I mean, you know, eventually the court accepted it, but you had to first get a district court judge to accept it. I think it was Minor Wisdom, you know, that accepted it.

So, you know, if it hadn't been for the left, you know, kind of—SCEF [Southern Conference Educational Fund], you know, the Bradens, and the people that—Virginia Durr, Ms. Baker, you know, these kind of people that had principles, you know, that weren't compromisers. They may not have been radicals, you know, but they just weren't compromisers. They believed in kind of basic—

DC: Right, in the long legacy, yeah.

WT: You know, we would have been in bad trouble. So, that's what you had, you know. You had some illusions about the Democrats. When I grew up as a kid, you know, this question about, "Oh, if only we could, you know, African Americans could vote, you know, we wouldn't have Dixiecrats," you know. So, if you could do away with the Dixiecrats, if you could get African Americans to vote, you could do away with Dixiecrats, you know, it would be a better system.

Well, here was an opportunity to do away with the Dixiecrats and, [laughs] you know, it turned out they really didn't want to do away—you know, Reuther and Humphrey that had railed against Dixiecrats, when they had an opportunity, you know, there were bigger fish to fry. So, it's instructive, you know, what-have-you. [Laughs]

DC: Very. [Laughs] Well, great. Thank you so much!

WT: [1:47:53]

DC: This was really terrific, and thank you so much for your time.

WT: [1:47:56].

DC: And for all of your work.

WT: Okay. You're doing a good thing. I hope you get some funding. I hope [1:48:01]—

DC: Well, I think we're—

WT: Doesn't cut you to pieces.

DC: Yeah, I think we're doing—

JB: We're doing okay.

DC: We're doing okay. We're—it looks like we're going to be able to—

[Recording ends at 1:48:09]

END OF INTERVIEW

[Transcribed by Sally C. Council]